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Longhaul prizes

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Bad first impressions



Raini Hamdi
Senior editor

“Applying for a visa (to the US) indeed was easy and once passed immigration, Americans really are a friendly, kindly folk. But the immigration – it’s shocking.”

For all the glorious natural and manmade wonders it offers, many Asians still think twice before visiting the US. Often, their immediate groans are about visas, the length of time it takes to get there and the immigration hassle that greets them after an arduous journey.

The US is signalling it is seriously back as a player in getting revenues from international tourism. Brand USA, which began operations in May 2011, now has representation in Austria, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, India, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Switzerland, the UK and, most recently, Taiwan and Hong Kong. As a measure of the importance of Asian markets, procedures to schedule appointments, pay visa application fees and deliver passports free to home or office have been streamlined and implemented in China and Hong Kong. Asian countries such as Taiwan and Singapore are included in a Visa Waiver Programme.

All this helped put the US back on my radar so, in July, I went. Applying for a visa indeed was easy and once passed immigration, Americans really are a friendly, kindly folk. But the immigration – it’s shocking.

I landed at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). I didn’t mind a queue – LAX, after all, is the fifth busiest commercial airport in the world and the third busiest in the US. But I did mind seeing how two odious immigra-

tion officers were practically herding passengers tightly into the queue, like sheep for the branding. One of them roared above our heads: “Now make sure you fill up the exact address of where you will be staying. We don’t want just the hotel name, we want the full address, you understand that?”

Next, he called on Air China and Turkish Airlines passengers, asking his colleagues to “line them up, line them up” (don’t ask me why).

We all watched this repulsive man in silence. People who did not know each other in the queue rolled their eyes at one another when he behaved offensively again. And right under the immigration counter was a code of conduct, one of which was: ‘We treat people with courtesy, dignity and respect’.

We watched in exasperation how the officers who were processing the entry simply took their time. From my line, I could see an officer processed a grand total of two entries in an hour, then he went off for a break.

The US might want to pay for immigration officers to travel to other countries to see how the world – and immigration in many parts of the world – has changed. There remains an issue with immigration and it is one which must be addressed in the US’ quest to change long-held perceptions that it was neither friendly nor welcoming to international visitors. ■

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OCTOBER 2013



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Talk of the Trade

MALAYSIA

Malaysia intensifies courtship of associations

By S Puvaneswary



The new ADP will help Malaysian associations put up stronger bids for international congresses

Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) has launched the Association Development Programme (ADP) to support the development of the country's associations and encourage the hosting of international conventions.

Under the new programme, member associations are entitled to a variety of strategic initiatives such as financial and non-financial bid support and international engagements. A series of association management and conference planning seminars will provide training for association officers.

Commenting on MyCEB's latest initiative, Yap Sook Ling, director of AOS Conventions & Events Malaysia, said: "ADP is good as it will help associations to better understand the bidding process, which in turn will make it easier for PCOs and DMCs to work with them. It will also help associations understand that there are many opportunities available for them to bid for world and regional meetings.

"Many associations still think that the job of DMCs merely involves booking of hotels and ballrooms. ADP will dispel that notion and create a better awareness of what is involved in making an international conference successful and the tools that are available, such as specialised software that can be used for the entire event, from registration to session booking to delegate payment."

TALKING NUMBERS

9 The percentage of travel managers who are in favour of unmanaged travel, an approach to corporate travel that allows travellers to book through any channel, found a global study by Carlson Wagonlit on "rogue" booking behaviour and new technology solutions.

9 The percentage difference in economy airfares that are booked through travel management companies instead of outside channels, according to a CWT analysis from February to October 2012.

60 The percentage of respondents who would continue to use travel management company channels often or very often even if they had the freedom to book elsewhere, found the same study.

CHINA

HRG debuts online booking mobile app in China

Hogg Robinson Group (HRG) has introduced its new mobile solution in China for the corporate travel industry – a BlueSky-enabled online booking tool for mobile users.

Said Yates Fei, director of sales and account management at HRG China: "The (new tool) highlights the ability of HRG to anticipate and address the needs of our clients – giving them access to an integrated booking system on the

go. The current BlueSky platform that HRG provides on desktop computers is now available via the new mobile app, elevating the experience for the business traveller. This is in line with the global HRG strategy in relations to mobile customer solutions, where the provisions of localised solutions are available."

The app aims to integrate all value-added services seamlessly into a single platform and gives users access to a

range of information, including real-time flight searches, booking details, and corporate travel policies and approvals.

It is available for all mobile operating systems such as Android, Apple, Windows and BlackBerry.

Tests of the upgraded online booking tool with an international client showed that the app was positively received and an adoption rate of 70 per cent was achieved among users in the test group.

AUSTRALIA

Melbourne strengthens word-of-mouth power

Club Melbourne Ambassador Program, which has won more than 70 international conferences for the Australian city through leaders of multiple industries since 2005, has been relaunched with a fresh direction and six new ambassadors.

The new direction will address international competition to create an even stronger and more supportive network to secure and host international conferences in Melbourne.

Victoria governor, Alex Chernov, who is the patron-in-chief of the programme, said: “*Club Melbourne* provides a unique opportunity to connect prominent thinkers and leaders in the promotion of Melbourne as one of the world’s premier conference and event destinations. Its influence is global and the way it drives knowledge is pivotal to all our future as a...smart economy.”

According to a press statement from the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, where the programme’s relaunch was celebrated, business events contribute over A\$1.2 billion (US\$1.1 billion) annually to the local marketplace.

Over the last 12 months, Melbourne hosted 10 international conferences that were secured by *Club Melbourne* over the last eight years. These events brought in almost 10,000 visitors from 49 countries, and contributed A\$41 million in economic impact to Victoria.

Meanwhile, two of the six new faces that will join the programme are Cathy Foley, chief of CSIRO’s Materials Science and Engineering Division; and Christina Mitchell, dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University.

MALAYSIA

Malaysia’s KIP Group moves into hotels

Business travellers to Malaysia will get more accommodation options come mid-2015 when local developer Kepong Industrial Park (KIP) Group opens its first hotel in the capital city.

Valerie Ong, director of KIP Group of Companies, said the property would be located in the commercial district of Sri Utara in Kuala Lumpur and operated by The Lexis Hotel Group, whose management portfolio includes Grand Lexis Port Dickson and Lexis Port Dickson.



Noordin: more rooms needed

Said Ong: “KIP Hotel will boast 199 rooms and will be positioned as a premier three-star hotel with four-star service. The average room rate will be RM180++ (US\$55++) per night.”

Hotel amenities will include a banquet hall, conference facilities, business centre, rooftop bar, show kitchen café, infinity pool and fitness centre.

Meanwhile, the group has two more three-star hotels in the pipeline – the 250-key KIP Sentral in Sepang and another property to be located in Malacca that is still being planned, according to Ong.

Yap Boon Teck, CEO of KIP Group of Companies, revealed that an opening in 2016 is planned for KIP Sentral, which would sit approximately 10 minutes from Kuala Lumpur International Airport by car.

KIP Group’s portfolio includes property investment and development as well as shopping mall and hypermarket management.

Tourism Malaysia’s deputy director-general (planning), Azizan Noordin, told *TTmice* that more accommodation facilities were needed across the country to support the tourism ministry’s target of 36 million international tourists by 2020.

Presently, Malaysia has 100,000 hotel rooms across all star categories. – **S Puvaneswary**

AUSTRALIA

Sea World bulks up event capability



Sea World Resort in the Gold Coast has laid out plans to develop a multi-million-dollar conference centre that will be able to cater to gatherings of up to 1,000 people by 2015. Occupying 750m² and featuring an al fresco verandah, the latest audiovisual equipment and a porte cochere with vehicle access, the new venue will join six other existing conference spaces at the resort. It can be divided into three sections, promising flexibility for events of various sizes.

THAILAND

Asia, Europe fuel MICE growth for Thailand

By Greg Lowe

Spurred by strong demand from Asian feeder markets and expanding trade from Europe, Thailand's MICE industry grew 12 per cent over the past three quarters, chalking up a revenue of 64.3 billion baht (US\$2 billion), according to the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB).

TCEB is confident the industry will bring 940,000 delegates to the country with revenue of 88 billion baht this financial year, which ends in October.

Nopparat Maythaveekulchai, TCEB's president, said: "We expect the fourth quarter shall bring (similar) growth. The progress will be (driven) by the execution of strategic marketing movements... as well as the strengthening of Thai MICE to tackle the launch of AEC (Asean Economic Community) in 2015," he said.

International conventions were the key driver of the industry's growth during the first three quarters of the current financial year, drawing 223,463 delegates, or 29.9 per cent of total MICE arrivals, and generating a revenue of 22.1 billion baht. Incentives drew 196,088 travellers (26.3 per cent), generating 12.5 billion baht, followed by meetings (174,701 delegates, 18.2 billion baht) and international exhibitions (152,820 delegates, 11.5 billion baht).

Asia accounted for 72.7 per cent of MICE travellers (543,016 delegates) and revenue of 46.8 billion baht. During the same period, 83,772 European delegates visited Thailand, generating 7.2 billion baht, while MICE arrivals from the US were 43,165, contributing 3.7 billion baht.

Thailand-based DMCs have witnessed similar trends.

James Drysdale, director of Inspired Event Travel, told *TTGmice*: "The MICE market has been very buoyant, driven primarily by the Asian markets. We have seen both conference and incentive groups coming into Thailand from Australia, the UK, Europe and the US, so while Asia is the larger of the feeder markets, the other markets are performing too. Yields from Australia, the UK and the US remain higher than Asia, as has typically been the case."

"Quoting activity is up on prior years. However, we are seeing significant downward pressure on costs. Clients are looking more than ever to maximise the reach for their spend," he added.

Asian Trails also saw growth in its MICE business but had not experienced shortening lead times from Asian clients, which is an emerging trend across the industry.

JAPAN

Dining events with a French flair at Conrad Tokyo

Conrad Tokyo is offering event planners a luxurious dining venue option at Collage, the hotel's new signature French restaurant led by Michelin-starred chef Shinya Maeda.

Perched on the 28th floor of the hotel, Collage tantalises the eyes with stunning city views and the palate with

unique interpretation of traditional French cuisine.

Pick from four specially designed lunch menus, ranging from a three-course Quick Lunch to a five-course Tasting Lunch, and dinner menus with seven, nine and 11 courses. The restaurant seats 50 guests and offers a private dining room for 10.



2013 Calendar

October 1-3

IT&CMA and CTW
Bangkok, Thailand

October 23-25

ITB Asia
Singapore

IN BRIEF

Refresh for free in Seoul

Korean Air has introduced its KAL Premium Arrival Shower Service, offering first- and Prestige (business)-class passengers arriving on international flights at Incheon International Airport complimentary use of showers and saunas at the airport's Hyatt Regency Incheon Hotel. To enjoy the service, which is available from 05.00 to 11.00, eligible passengers need only to show their identification and boarding pass.

Room for more bags

Qatar Airways has upped its game to remain on a par with rivals Etihad Airways and Emirates by giving its passengers more baggage allowance since September 1. Economy-class passengers are now able to check in up to 30kg of baggage on most international flights, business-class travellers will get 40kg instead of 30kg, while first-class travellers can take with them 50kg of luggage instead of 40kg, reported Bloomberg. Most European, Asian and US airlines allow each economy-class passenger 23kg of luggage.

Emirates beefs up network

Emirates has boosted capacity between Dubai and Bangkok by adding a second daily Airbus A380 service and upsizing its aircraft on existing operations. The airline began its second daily A380 service on October 27 and upgraded its regular Bangkok-Dubai route from an A330-200 to a Boeing 777-300ER since September 1. Meanwhile, the Dubai-based airline will debut six-weekly direct flights to Taipei's Taoyuan International Airport on February 10 next year.

INDIA

Singapore seeks to INSPIRE Indian incentives

By Shekhar Niyogi

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has launched the *In Singapore Incentives & Rewards* (INSPIRE), a rewards programme for Indian outbound MICE groups.

Produced in partnership with Singapore's major tourism players such as Changi Airport Group, Gardens by the Bay and Sentosa Leisure Group, among others, INSPIRE categorises and rewards incentive groups according to three tiers – basic, value and premium.

To qualify for INSPIRE's basic tier, groups must travel to Singapore before December 31, 2014 and book a minimum of 1,000 room nights. Value and premium tiers require 1,500 and 1,800 room nights respectively.

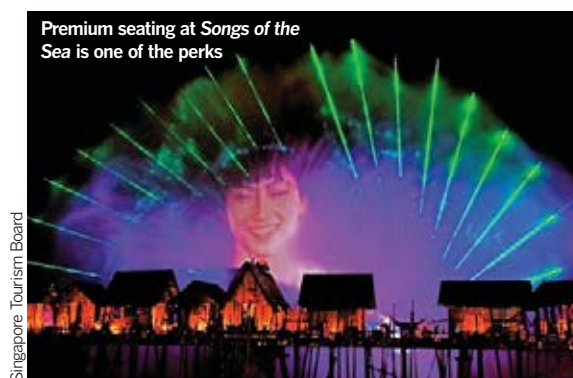
Groups accepted into the INSPIRE pro-

gramme will receive a S\$20 (US\$16) Singapore Changi Airport shopping voucher per visitor. Other rewards include a guided tour of the Singapore Turf Club Parade Ring and a trackside marquee dinner, a *New York Street Party* dinner at Universal Studios Singapore, a specially chartered zoo tram expedition at the Night Safari, reserved seating at Jurong Bird Park's new *High Flyer* show, and premium seating for Sentosa's *Songs of the Sea* show.

STB welcomes applications from now until July 31, 2014.

STB executive director for South Asia, Middle East and Africa, Chee Pey Chang, explained that Indians were increasingly seeking unique experiences while on business travel.

Premium seating at *Songs of the Sea* is one of the perks



"INSPIRE was created to appeal to this growing segment by developing a selection

Continued on page 8



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SINGAPORE

New Carlton City hones in on business travellers

By Karen Yue

Carlton Properties (Singapore) has opened its second hotel in the Lion City and is seeing "satisfying" demand from corporate travellers, a segment the new Carlton City Hotel Singapore is keen on.

The 386-room upscale business hotel in the Tanjong Pagar business district has seen a quick pick-up in bookings since its soft opening on August 5, according to general manager Mark Bulmer.

"We are impressed with the speed at which bookings are picking up along the way. There is now a steady flow of business from the offices nearby," said Bulmer.

Bulmer believes that the hotel's prime location and inventory of "functional and good-sized rooms compared with other new hotels in Singapore" will win the favour of business



travellers.

The hotel's Deluxe, Executive and Carlton Club rooms all measure 32m², while the Carlton Suite offers 64m² of space. Besides presenting clear views of the harbour or the city through large windows, rooms also have three-metre high ceilings for enhanced spaciousness.

Complimentary Wi-Fi across the hotel is available

to all guests.

"I would like to see 75 per cent of the business coming from corporates. Although we will primarily target the offices around the central business district, Singapore is small so we will also reach out to offices elsewhere in the country," he said.

Other facilities at the hotel include a stylish Club Lounge on the 28th floor, two meeting rooms, an all-day dining restaurant with an area that can be partitioned off for private events, a rooftop bar, a lobby lounge and a patisserie.

Jacqueline Ho, director of sales and marketing with the hotel, told *TTGmice* that the hotel's rooftop bar had seen "much interest" from event planners who were seeking unique venues close to their offices for corporate gatherings.

ASIA-PACIFIC

ACTE goes for emerging Asian economies

Leveraging its network strength of Fortune 500 companies and multinational corporation members interested in expanding to emerging Asian economies, Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE) has moved into markets such as Mongolia, Pakistan and Kazakhstan.



Tang: leveraging connections

Benson Tang, regional director, Asia, ACTE, said the association had signed

up conglomerates in Mongolia and Pakistan as new members, and he would be participating in a global travel industry conference in Kazakhstan this month.

Tang said: "ACTE members such as Rio Tinto, Microsoft, Simons, for example, have organised education tours to Ulan Bator in Mongolia, while we are using our connections in India to move into Pakistan.

"There are a number of conglomerates in these emerging markets which do not understand why it is important to manage corporate travel yet, and ACTE will be organising events and seminars to educate them."

In Kazakhstan, Tang said he would be meeting a representative of Astana Airlines to introduce the national carrier to ACTE and the global corporate travel community. — **Caroline Boey**

Continued from page 7

STB throws in cruise tourism training too

of personalised programmes and exclusive offerings," he said.

Meanwhile, the NTO, in collaboration with the Asia Cruise Association, has also been conducting training sessions for travel consultants in Mumbai and New Delhi on how to market cruises effectively or be-

come Cruise Lines International Association-certified cruise counsellors.

Said Chee: "Given the recent rupee devaluation, Indians will find cruise vacations a great, cost-effective, all-inclusive vacation."

Faraway Places Mumbai managing director, Arvind

Tandon, said: "Cruise tourism has gained huge popularity over the last two to three years and although Singapore remains the prime hub for Indian outbound cruise enthusiasts, cruises in Europe and Alaska are also becoming popular. We have seen 20 per cent (year-on-year) growth in the segment."

COVER STORY

Longhaul prizes



For those who have achieved high targets, nothing less than an incentive in faraway lands will do. The good news is, many longhaul destinations are now wooing Asian MICE groups with a seriousness never seen before

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Bon journo, bon appetito page 16 • The running of the bulls page 17 • A sterling proposition page 20

COVER STORY

Uncle Sam wants you

Increased Brand USA presence in Asia, more marketing efforts and friendlier visa rules are a fillip for US players to look east for new sources, reports **Raini Hamdi**

Uncle Sam is saying 'I want you' to Asian leisure and MICE groups and is stepping up engagement in the region to ensure there is no *Lost in Translation* in communicating the desire.

Brand USA is beating the drums for the first time at ITB Asia this month and launching a consumer advertising campaign in Asian markets this quarter, on the heels of campaigns done in Canada, Japan and the UK last year, which increased intent to travel from those markets by 12 to 14 per cent, according to Brand USA Taiwan & Hong Kong managing director, Reene Ho-Phang.

The ensuing higher recall among Asian consumers and the travel trade is expected to have a rub-on effect on MICE as the higher interest to visit the US trickles down to Asian meeting planners. It is also empowering US destination providers, including big brand names such as Las Vegas Sands (LVS) and Trump Hotel Collection (THC), to invest more on cultivat-

ing Asian markets.

THC opened its first Asian representative office, in Shanghai, in March and, apart from China, is also keen on South-east Asian markets Singapore and Thailand. LVS' The Venetian & The Palazzo in Las Vegas is building a dedicated sales team for Asia and has just hired its director for Asia leisure sales, Elizabeth Hanson. Until now, Asian sales was handled by the overall sales team but the property believes that having an Asian who understands Asian markets' social and cultural nuances better, and who knows the product well, will enable it to "adjust the experience to match the expectations", said Robert Rippee, The Venetian & The Palazzo's SVP for marketing. Hanson, Chinese, continues to be based in Las Vegas, where she has been for almost seven years.

"Having a dedicated Asian sales team gives us a solidified strategy to deepen our relationship with wholesalers and the media in the Asian marketplace," said

The Palazzo, Las Vegas





"We think we will do quite well because we have a high-end product and a brand they (Asians) are familiar with."

Robert Rippee

Senior vice president marketing,
The Venetian & The Palazzo, Las Vegas

Rippee. "We also want the Asian meetings market. Las Vegas compares well with New York, Chicago and Miami in quality and availability of air services and, from that perspective, is a strong alternative as a MICE destination for the Asian markets."

Rippee has his eyes peeled on China, Japan and South Korea, saying much of this prioritisation was based on the markets' growth projections and a function of visa waiver and friendlier visa processing. Currently, the Asian market mix is "relatively small" for The Venetian & The Palazzo, with business being "overwhelmingly the US and Canada".

"Las Vegas has always been that way. The number of inbound Chinese to Las Vegas is a little over a million right now and the goal is to grow that by about 10 per cent a year. So we're looking at what our fair share of that is. We think we will do quite well because we have a high-end product and a brand they (Asians) are

familiar with (thanks to LVS' footprint in Macau and Singapore)," said Rippee.

In February 2012, president Barack Obama signed an Executive Order to increase visa-processing capacity in China and, since March 16 this year, the US Embassy and all six Consulates located in Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang and Wuhan have implemented a new system that makes it easier for applicants to schedule visa interview appointments, pay visa processing fees and

check on the status of their issued visas.

China is expected to yield a total of 3.4 million visitors through 2018 – a 299 per cent growth – the second largest number of additional visitors behind Canada.

Likewise, in Hong Kong, new, streamlined procedures to schedule appointments, pay visa application fees and deliver passports free to home or office have been implemented since March 16 this year.

Asian countries such as Taiwan and Singapore are included in a Visa Waiver Programme.

In Asia, Brand USA – a public-private partnership established in 2010 to spearhead global marketing efforts for the US – is now represented in Australia, New Zealand, China, India, Japan, South Korea and, most recently, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Along with the advertising campaign in Asian markets it is launching this quarter, Brand USA will also be holding *MegaFam* trips for the media and travel trade from markets where it has international offices, said Ho-Phang.

"The *MegaFam* trips will feature multiple itineraries to showcase parts of the USA that remain unexplored, including the West Coast/California, the Pacific Northwest, the West, the Upper Midwest, the Southeast/Texas, and the Northeast," she said.

"In addition, sales missions featuring US travel suppliers will be organised for the Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore markets."

Added Ho-Phang: "As part of Brand USA's marketing effort, we are the global sponsor for World Baseball Classic which gives us broadcast, social media, event and in-stadium marketing opportunities. The tournament features the world's best players representing 16 countries and territories during 39 games to be played in Japan, Taiwan, Puerto Rico and the US. Fifty per cent of the participating teams are from countries that are in our top-tier inbound markets, which give us great strategic outreach." ■

"MegaFam trips will feature multiple itineraries to showcase the (unexplored) USA."

Reene Ho-Phang

Managing director, Brand
USA Taiwan & Hong Kong

WHERE TO GO

Natural and manmade wonders

Brand USA Taiwan & Hong Kong managing director, Reene Ho-Phang, picks a few US destinations that are actively pursuing Asian markets. Here's her take:

Las Vegas, Nevada

Las Vegas hosts over 2,000 MICE groups every year. In 2012, this international renowned city welcomed a record of 39.7 million visitors and hosted 21,615 meetings, tradeshow and conventions, up 13.6 per cent from 2011. It also saw 4.9 million delegates attending a convention, tradeshow or meeting in 2012, a 1.6 per cent increase over 2011 and the highest convention attendance in four years.

The populous city in the US state of Nevada offers a multitude of leisure options. For Asians, the iconic city is the window to the Grand Canyon. The world famed Las Vegas Strip is home to some of the world's best hotels, resorts and Michelin-starred establishments.

Capitol Region: Washington DC, Virginia and Maryland

The city of Washington, in the District of Columbia, and the surrounding states of Virginia and Maryland are collectively known as the Capital Region. With over 25 museums, monuments, memorials and landmarks, the two-mile National Mall which includes the Lincoln Memorial and the White House is a quintessential place for Asians to learn about the history of America.

Visitors can journey beyond the capital city to discover natural escapes, distinctive cuisines, indulgent wineries, exciting shopping and culture-rich cities across Virginia and Maryland.

Michigan

For Asians seeking a getaway and to enjoy the beauty with nature, Michigan is the place to be. From the shores of the Great Lakes to the peaks of the Porcupine Mountains, the hum of the thriving Motor City to the bounty of pastoral farmland, the peninsula unveils a different side of the US. Travellers can also find nearly 800 public golf courses at this spring-summer vacation sanctuary.

Los Angeles, California

Universal Studios Hollywood is a favourite leisure and MICE destination among Asians. The key highlight is The Studio Tour where travellers can visit the 13 city blocks on four acres of historic studio lot in the largest set construction project in studio history, built with creative consultation from Steven Spielberg himself. The Studio Tour also includes the award-winning *King Kong* 360 3-D created by Peter Jackson and the Wisteria Lane from ABC's hit series *Desperate Housewives*.



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I don't like big hotels and I don't like theme hotels. And here I am in a hotel that is both.

First surprise: virtually no queue at reception. A friendly staff asks for my surname, leads me to an available receptionist and I'm barely there when the receptionist welcomes me with my *full* name. Second surprise: it is not tacky at all. I marvel how extremely detailed and loving the work is in recreating a Venice in Las Vegas. Third surprise, a staff delivers a basket full of Japanese crackers and other Asian snacks, a plate of fruits and chocolates, and a little kettle along with a selection of teas, just as I have finished unpacking and settling into my suite. Talk about good timing and a warm welcome with a touch of Asia.

Meeting facilities

At 209,032m² Sands Expo and Convention Center is not the largest exhibition and meeting space in Las Vegas – it is the largest privately-owned MICE space in the US. I asked for a site inspection of the facility and put on my jogging shoes, expecting this to be my full work-out for the day. Yet another surprise: hardly a sweat. The layout is delegate-friendly as the venue is equidistant from The Venetian and The Palazzo, the two hotels within the

Fact file

Maximum pax for meetings
10,000 to 12,000

Maximum pax for banquets
10,000 to 15,000

Recent events handled

- Consumer Electronics Show (CES)
- Shot Show
- Global Gaming Expo (G2E)

whole complex. Spread over a few floors, it is a logical and compact layout that is easy to navigate and it seems made for MICE of all sizes, be it for a meeting of just 50 pax, or 12,000 pax. The convention sales manager who is showing me around, Nicholas McCoy, says hardware aside, it is their well-trained people who make meetings at the property successful. Going by the service and friendliness I'm getting so far, I'm inclined to believe.

Rooms

So how do you choose between The Venetian and The Palazzo if there is no difference in product standard and rate? I think it comes

down to personal preference. If your delegates would prefer Renaissance art and architecture, go for The Venetian. I'm at The Palazzo as I prefer a more contemporary design. Both hotels offer only suites of average 65m², a size they claim is roughly twice that of a typical Las Vegas room. Indeed, I have enough space to throw a small party in my sunken living room, which has a fantastic view of the city, especially as it starts to turn dark and the strip starts twinkling with lights. At US\$189 a night, it is good value.

F&B

There are more than 30 restaurants, from casual to expensive, to choose from. My best find is Morels French Steakhouse & Bistro – classic service and flavourful French cooking. My worst is AquaKnox, where the service is offensively impersonal, and the fish is either old or frozen for a long time (and not even a lemon slice going with it).

For a fun and casual place, head straight to Tintoretto Restaurant, where you could watch the world go by while tucking into pasta. Here, the owner herself takes care that everything is going well – I feel like I'm in the bosom of mama.

Other facilities

Entertainment with a capital E! At the time of visit, in July, it's Carnevale, and each year this stretches till September. More than 300 events are rolled out during the festival which mimics celebrations of summer in Europe and the famed Carnevale in Venice. Events range from a cook-and-dine with Wolfgang Puck to free fashion shows at the Palazzo Waterfall.

There are also resident shows to watch, including *Human Nature – The Motown Show* and *Rock of Ages*, and Headliner Shows featuring stars like Tim Allen (check the calendar each month). There are three nightclubs and many more pubs/lounges. The shopping is great.

And of course there's the casino.



VERDICT

Changed my mind: large and themed hotels need not be impersonal and fake.

Raini Hamdi

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COVER STORY

Finland's direct intentions

With Asia at the centre of Finnair's growth strategy, Finland tourism authorities are rolling up their sleeves to see how the country can attract more Asian MICE groups, reports **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

Thanks to Finnair's Asia-centric strategy, the Northern lights are twinkling for Asian planners. The flag carrier has been aggressively pushing itself as "the most direct route" between Europe and Asia via Helsinki, helping to banish any notions Finland might be too far away for a meeting. Add to that a decent network: Finnair now connects Helsinki to 13 Asian destinations, the most recent additions being Xi'an, China and Hanoi, Vietnam, with the carrier set to expand further in the region in the years ahead.

All this is encouraging the country's tourism authorities, Visit Finland – as how the Finnish Tourist Board (FTB) is known outside Finland – and the Finland Convention Bureau (FCB) to court more Asian guests.

"We would surely like to see more meetings and incentives from Asian countries," said Jaana Koivistoinen, FCB's marketing manager of international association meetings. "Finnair has good connections from Asian markets to Finland, so that is one basic requirement to make it easy to come to Finland."

The bureau is conducting an Asian market research, according to Koivistoinen. It expects the strongest growth to come from China in the next two years. Both FTB and FCB are also participating at ITB Asia in Singapore this month, with FCB keen to meet MICE operators from the region, according to Koivistoinen.

"We try to make it easy (for operators) to contact us. We meet MICE buyers from China, Japan, India and other parts of Asia



During winter, glass igloos allow delegates to view the famed Northern Lights in comfort



How about this for a lesson on taking the plunge? Ice swimming in special drysuits, a highlight of a cruise aboard the *Sampo*

WHERE TO GO

Break the ice and enjoy the midnight sun

Lapland

Finland's northernmost region of Lapland is one of the best destinations to view the natural phenomenon of Aurora Borealis, which can be observed between late August and late April. In winter, delegates can stay in a traditional snow igloo or glass igloo – a perfect vantage point to lie back and look up to the Northern Lights. To complete the Polar experience, luxuriate in a sauna and enjoy meals of reindeer meat. The Igloo Village is also home to a snow chapel and ice bar, both built every winter, and open between December/January and (depending on the weather conditions) until end-April.

In summer, delegates can experience 24 hours of sunlight in Finland, providing ample opportunities to partake in outdoor activities such as river-rafting, sailing schooners or river boats, fishing, biking and barbecuing in the middle of the 'white night'. With good timing, they can enjoy the scores of outdoor events and festivals taking place across the country during this period, such as the Midnight Sun Film Festival in Lapland's Sodankylä. Lighting bonfires and bathing in saunas are two of the most typical traditions in Midsummer celebrations.

Kemi

Sampo (www.sampotours.com), the former icebreaker for the Finnish government, has been turned into cruiseship in the northern port town of Kemi since 1987. Delegates will be given a guided tour of the ship, complete



at IMEX and EIBTM in Europe and ITB Asia in Singapore.

"FTB representatives in Japan, Hong Kong (handling Hong Kong and South China), Beijing (handling Beijing and Chongqing), Shanghai (handling East China) and India are also working for FCB and are in touch with the travel trade, including incentive operators, in their respective regions. MICE operators are also invited to our trade events in these countries and regions," she said.

Papori Bharati, FTB's marketing representative for India, said most Indian MICE traffic to Finland comprised incentive travel. FCB had conducted training programmes and MICE workshops to convince Indian incentive houses to take their clients to Finland, she said.

"Lapland is the most sought-after destination because of snow and the winter activities. During summer, (the demand) is mostly for cruises and the Helsinki Region, including Turku, as well as the midnight sun," observed Bharati.

If only there were more flights and marketing dollars, there would be a lot more Indian incentive groups to Finland, she opined.

"India does not have the frequent flight connections to Finland as China and Japan have, hence a big chunk of (potential) travel and tourism is lost. Finnair flies only from Delhi, so it does not work out for the rest of the country," she said. "We also need a bigger marketing budget to spread the awareness (of Finland)."

Agreeing, Petri Vuori, Finnair's area vice president, global sales, commercial division, said: "Helsinki is well-known for conferences during summer but we would like to

increase the awareness of other areas in Finland too. Northern Finland has exotic destinations where we fly to and there is a lot to offer, especially to incentive groups from Asia.

"We are happy to co-operate with many Asian agents specialising in MICE travel, but also welcome more agents to explore the potential Finnair and Finland can offer."

As well, he pointed out: "Finnair is offering a European network of about 60 destinations to all MICE agents across Asia." ■

"We would surely like to see more meetings and incentives from Asian countries. Finnair has good connections (from Asia)..."

Jaana Koivistoinen

Marketing manager, international association meetings, Finland Convention Bureau



with visits to the engine room and the captain's bridge. They will also have the unique opportunity to witness the icebreaker in action as the majestic vessel calls through the thick coat of ice in the Gulf of Bothnia. For gutsy incentive winners, the ultimate experience is to gear up in a thermal floatation suit and take a dip in the icy waters.

Helsinki

Known as a congress destination, Helsinki (www.meethelsinki.fi) has ample high-quality hotels, meeting facilities and pre- and post-meeting activities for delegates.

One of the most established MICE venues in Helsinki is Finlandia Hall (www.finlandiatalo.fi). Centrally located amid park-like surroundings, Finlandia Hall is ideal for conferences and exhibitions, with a new 2,200m² Veranda space, 27 meeting rooms and a 650-seat

restaurant. A masterpiece by the great Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, Finlandia Hall is worth a visit in its own right.

Finland's largest MICE facility, the 130,000m² Helsinki Exhibition & Convention Centre (www.messukeskus.com) has seven exhibition halls, 40 meeting rooms and a 2,000-seat restaurant, all of which can be modified to suit events of different sizes.

The centre's makeover is being unveiled this autumn.

Helsinki Congress Passitorni (www.paasitorni.fi) is housed in a 100-year-old restored building by the sea. Passitorni has 30 conference rooms that can accommodate a maximum of 800 pax and four restaurants. In August 2012, the opening of three new conference rooms, a restaurant and the adjoining 170-room Scandic Paasi hotel expanded the centre's facilities.

COVER STORY

Bonjourno, bon appetito!

By **Shekhar Niyogi**

In an enviable position of having no fewer than 60 conference centres, each with a minimum capacity of 1,000 delegates; a string of large exhibition grounds in key cities; and a massive network of important industries including fashion, machinery, automobile and food, Italy is a natural magnet for MICE events, including incentive travel.

ENIT, the Italian state tourist board, has been taking these offerings to Asian planners through roadshows and various cultural, art, musical and gastronomic promotions in major Asian cities, and through fam trips to Italy.

Leading travel trade events such as BIT in Milan, TTI in Rimini and BTC, an exclusive MICE event in Florence, have their fair

share of Asian outbound tour operators and MICE event planners as hosted delegates. Regional events like Buy Tuscany, Buy Emilia Romagna and Via Veneto have also courted the Asian outbound travel professionals.

Said Salvatore Ianniello, head, ENIT India office: "MICE is an important segment. It has shown a constant growth in the last four years. We have conducted several initiatives (in India) and have seen a growth of 70-80 per cent yearly. We are confident that Italy will become a preferred destination for MICE (for Indians). MICE is definitely one of our major targets and will be part of our strategy."

Asians, according to Alice Pellegrino, incentive tour manager, Toscana Promozione, a regional NTO, love Asian food and wine, making it easy for a gourmet heaven like Tuscany to host a business event or an exclusive incentive tour.

In general, Tuscany and Emilia Romagna are preferred destinations for incentive travel for most Asians, while destinations such as Milan, Bologna and Turin are popular for meetings and high-end Asian incentives.

For congresses and conventions, the most popular destination cities are Rome, Florence and Venice.

Margherita Ruggiero, director of marketing, Rome-based Motivation MICE, said: "Major Asian companies have shown a distinct preference for historical venues for meetings while incentive tours have their focus on gastronomy, motor cars and art. So visits to Parma, Florence, Modena and Maranello are preferred by Asians."

Francesca Soffici, general manager, Moderatur, agreed, saying: "Asian MICE clients love the gourmet presentations of prosciutto, parmigiano-reggiano and lambrusco in Parma and Modena. They also love the Museo Casa Enzo Ferrari for events, as the setting is both historical and modern, in the home of Enzo Ferrari." ■



Welcome to Venice, Asian merchants

Hannah Koh



"We have conducted several initiatives (in India) and have seen a growth of 70-80 per cent yearly."

Salvatore Ianniello

Head,
ENIT India Office

WHERE TO GO

Fast cars and certainly not fast food

Imola

Perhaps the most popular activity that Asian MICE planners can consider is the Motor Valley incentive tour to the F1 race track in Imola where participants in small groups can drive Ferraris on the race track, supervised by expert drivers. This experience is usu-

ally followed by a visit to the museum at the Ferrari factory or to the production line at the Lamborghini factory.

Ambra Pezzoli of Societa Turismo Area Imolese (STAI) said, "Our promotion of various experiential tours using Ferrari 430 cars has become extremely popular with Asian incentive groups."

Tuscany

Another popular incentive itinerary is to the

Chianti region in Tuscany where farmhouse stays in the famous wineries are coupled with tasting of the region's best wines, truffles, balsamic vinegar and top quality olive oils while touring the production facilities of each.

Florence

Remodelled structures like Stazione Leopolda in Florence have emerged as popular venue for Asian conferences and meetings. It has even hosted a fashion show by an Asian designer.

Running of the bulls

By **Shekhar Niyogi**

Spain Tourism is conducting training seminars and destination/venue presentations for MICE planners in Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, India and Singapore in a bid to attract more Asian meetings and incentives.

It finds a willing audience among the Spain industry, as seen by the participation of some 20 DMCs, hotels and regional tourist boards in an Indian roadshow organised by Spain Tourism last month in Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore. This was followed by a trade fair for Indian travel



A spectacle worthy of being seen by Asian corporate warriors

consultants in September, and another this month, to Madrid, Ibiza and UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Spain, to familiarise them further with the product, according to Arturo Ortiz Arduán, tourism counsellor and director, Spain Tourism, in India.

Carlos de Garriz, commercial director-MICE, Viajes Iberoservice, said: "We attend all major trade events in Asia and partner with Spain Tourism to promote MICE destinations in Spain. We have seen an average 15 per cent growth year-on-year (from Asia) in the last 10 years."



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COVER STORY

Spain has long been a strong MICE destination. Barcelona, which hosts EIBTM each year, ranks as the second MICE city in the world, while Madrid is among the top five on ICCA's world ranking. The country has the infrastructure to cope with business events of any size, having over 50 airports, the largest high-speed railway network in Europe and more than 10,000 hotels and 50 conference venues in the main cities.

"Opportunities to shoot Bollywood movies (in Spain) add to the destination's popularity in India but direct flights – none exist now – will help (to grow)

incentive travel," said Ashwani Gupta, managing partner, Dove Travels.

It is not just in India that Spain Tourism is active. "Similar promotions are being done in the Asia-Pacific region. The results are encouraging," noted Mercedes Garcia, deputy director, Barcelona Convention Bureau.

Online campaigns have been done within the websites of the travel trade associations in Thailand, and the same will be done in the Philippines and in Indonesia soon. As well, brochures in Thai and Bahasa Indonesia have been printed and distributed. ■



"...direct flights – none exist now – will help (to grow) incentive travel (to Spain)."

Ashwani Gupta
Managing partner
Dove Travels India

WHERE TO GO

Real Madrid and beautifully gaudy

Madrid

"Hold an event in Santiago Bernabeu stadium, 85,454-seat home of the famous football club, Real Madrid. Do cocktails, then tour the club, peek at the players' dressing room and have dinner in a private section of the stadium. If planned ahead, (the group can also catch) a Real Madrid game." – Koushik Goswami, general manager-outbound, Travelcorp India

"A popular itinerary for Asian incentive groups is a tablao flamenco dinner at El Corral de la Morería, Madrid. Group members may participate in impromptu flamenco lessons." – Yvonne Otto, director, Unique Trex, Spain

Barcelona

"Our banking and insurance incentive groups love the Anton Gaudi tour in Barcelona at Park Guell and on Passeig de Gracia, followed by a tapas sampling tour on Las Ramblas." – Sushil Wadhwa, chairman, Platinum Incentives, India

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Meeting planners and DMCs looking for a cool, literally and figuratively speaking, all-weather venue in tropical Singapore will be thrilled that the Flower Dome, which houses the Flower Field Hall, is a perennially cool 23°C to 25°C and the humidity is a low 60 per cent to 80 per cent.

Flower Field Hall inside the Flower Dome overlooks the changing floral display on one side, and the stunning Marina Bay skyline on the other. The special ceiling LED globe lights are programmable and can create any kind of mood, while the on-site Asian and Western kitchen set-up can whip up all kinds of culinary treats.

Here 700 people can sit down to an exclusive gala dinner, and up to 1,100 people can attend special-themed and MICE events.



Waterview Room

Adjacent to Flower Field Hall is the equally delightful **Waterview Room**. It looks out to the Marina Bay waterfront and can double up for pre-event cocktails, and is suited to small events for between 200 and 500 people, depending on the event requirement and set-up.

There's More

Did you know that Bay South in Gardens by the Bay is a sprawling 54 hectares, so outdoor space is plentiful? **Silver Leaf**, which overlooks Dragonfly Lake, is another event option. Here the sweet scents all around, the Supertrees, Flower Dome, and unmistakable Marina Bay Sands provide the perfect backdrop for any exclusive, sunset private outdoor event like a sit-down dinner for 320 people or a cocktail for 500 people.



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A steam train passes above beach huts in Devon

A sterling proposition

By **Greg Lowe**

Business travel and events tourism have become a focus of the UK's three NTOs – VisitEngland, VisitScotland and Visit Wales – all of which are looking to the Asian market and are receiving collaborative support from VisitBritain.

VisitEngland is focusing on the Indian market for Asian MICE groups. The organisation now has a dedicated representative based in the country to help build relationships with leading corporates, agencies and MICE-focused media.

"Promoting England as a must-visit destination is key, that's why we attended IBTM India in Mumbai in September," said VisitEngland's spokesperson Natalie Ashworth.

"Asia-Pacific is also a key focus for us and we will be showcasing at AIME in February next year as we did earlier this year."

VisitScotland is also focused on India and China, to a lesser extent, and is working with partners to educate the Asian market about the destination.

James Cuttica, managing director,

Interopa Holidays, said attending May's Destination Britain Asia-Pacific, Middle East, Asia, which was hosted in Bangkok by VisitBritain, provided his company, which focuses on sports products such as the English Premier League, with its first foray into the Asian market.

Cracking the longhaul Asian market is not without its challenges for DMCs, however. Frances Wyatt, director of sales & marketing at SPECTRA, said the company had only fielded 42 enquiries from the region in the past few years, most of which were China-related.

Average groups sizes were 30-40 pax, though there had been requests for up to 650 guests.

"Of the above we have approximately five per cent conversion, which is dramatically down in comparison to the majority of the other markets we work with, although some of this may be due to the competitiveness of this market, the number of agencies which bid for the programme and the issues with visas which we understand are improving," she said. ■

WHERE TO GO

Whiskies and curries

Given its size, history and diversity of cultures, Britain has a lot to offer MICE planners.

While executive groups may look to take in a Premier League match at one of England's top clubs in London, Manchester or Liverpool fans of track-and-field events may look to incorporate a pre- or post-event visits to Scotland, which is hosting the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow next July and The Ryder Cup at Gleneagles next September, the first time the world's premier golfing event has been held in the country in four decades.

Heritage visits, whisky tours and a choice of more than 500 golf courses provide planners with plenty of other elements to add to

their itineraries, said Richard Knight, marketing manager for North America & Emerging Markets at VisitScotland.

"The Royal Yacht Britannia and historic castles are a firm favourite with overseas visitors into Scotland, along with many of the historic unique venues we have in the country," he said.

"There are also over 100 whisky distilleries that can be toured for a true taste of the national drink."

Fans of food, which includes Britain's favourite dish – curry – may want to visit the country's curry capital of Birmingham, which is also home to a wide range of other Asian restaurants, said VisitEngland's spokesperson Natalie Ashworth.

"Whether you're in the city centre or head-

ing out to the legendary Balti Triangle, there are plenty of places to spice up an evening," she said, adding that groups after a more chichi experience could opt for a fine dining experience in Europe's second tallest building.

"Just a couple of months ago Hutong opened at The Shard – the new restaurant sits at level 33 of the tallest building in Europe and specialises in the relatively unknown cuisine of Northern China and boasts panoramic views of London's skyline."

SPECTRA's director of sales and marketing, Frances Wyatt, recommends a night out in London's West End to take in a musical such as *Phantom of the Opera*, rounded off with a stay in one of the city's classic five-star hotels such as The Savoy, The Dorchester or Grosvenor House.

Fukuoka boasts strong MICE credentials, with major hotels, convention facilities and ample green spaces located in close proximity in its city centre'

Fumio Hashimoto



Building a city brand

Conditions are ripe for MICE business to bloom in Fukuoka but the city must strengthen its presence and marketing efforts on the international stage, reports **Hannah Koh**

Mention “MICE in Japan” and travellers are more likely to conjure up images of a neon-lit Tokyo or a shrine-dotted Kyoto instead of the harbour city of Fukuoka, but the city’s MICE stakeholders beg to differ.

“Fukuoka lacks only its name value,” opined Shinji Nakagawa, executive director, Fukuoka Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) on Fukuoka’s 97th placing on the 2012 ICCA international survey of top association meeting cities, trailing behind Tokyo (31st) and Kyoto (36th).

Fukuoka logged 221 international conferences last year, second only to Tokyo, according to criteria set by the Japanese government, Nakagawa noted. “It proves Fukuoka has the potential to (attract more) ICCA criteria conferences

by boosting motivation of local conference organisers,” he added.

While Japan does not record MICE arrivals, the CVB said 90,000 international delegates travelled to Fukuoka in 2012 for conferences such as the Societe Internationale d’Urology Annual Congress (3,500 pax) and Universal Design International Conference (14,000 pax).

For Congress Corporation, a PCO specialising in medical conferences, its Kyushu branch handled 28 MICE events last year and 14 to date in 2013. Makiko Nishimura, executive director and head of Congress Corporation’s Kyushu office, added: “(Fukuoka) is a right-sized city for MICE – the convenience of mobility, coexistence of modern and ancient culture, nature and technology...and the

LET'S GO JAPAN

The Land of Rising Sun is opening up to international MICE. Join planners from Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines as they explore Tokyo and Sapporo for ideas and share their impressions of Japan.



How about featuring your guest's photo on a box of Sapporo's famous Shirol Koibito cookies?



Tokyo Station is both a historical landmark and transportation hub.



A GOOD MIX

"We look for a country that is internationally recognised, with good accessibility, safe and stable, and most importantly, a country that welcomes and supports MICE groups. Japan fits the bill for us. Its ancient and living cultures, spectacular nature and Japanese cuisine are core ingredients for us to plan a MICE programme."

LEE CHOON LOONG
DiscoveryMICE
Malaysia



Above: Mount Fuji, a kaiseki dinner and ladies in kimonos.

"Japan has a lot to offer our groups, who are mainly from multinational organisations and are very well-travelled. For Tokyo, I would recommend a programme in the format of reality TV series 'The Amazing Race' by train. This would allow our guests to really get to know the city. When we send guests to Japan, we want to ensure that they explore, experience and are fully engaged."

KAREN SOO
Meeting & Exhibition Planners
Malaysia

FUN ACTIVITIES

"Sapporo is a great incentive destination. Many activities can be worked into an incentive or team-building programme, such as music box-making, sushi-making, Otaru's canal cruise or a visit to the Ishiya chocolate factory. The Ramen Alley in downtown Sapporo is also a potential stop for small groups."

FELICIA TENG
The Meeting Lab
Singapore



Going local at Ramen Alley, Sapporo

Learn.
make.
eat



Quality time with a sushi master

NATURE & FOOD

"We sent almost 500 guests to Japan last year, mainly to Tokyo/Osaka and Hokkaido/Sapporo. Hokkaido is something new that can still be offered, giving a glimpse of Japan but focusing more on nature. Tokyo/Osaka would be suitable for first-time visitors. I foresee a market for culinary trips, which we might explore and hopefully include as part of our itinerary soon."

JANICE GO
Travelxperts
The Philippines


 Amazing
VARIETY

GREAT SHOPPING

"A combination of Mount Fuji, flora and fauna, food, theme parks and shopping are pull factors for Malaysian visitors. Food is a major point of interest, especially shopping for quality local products."

ET QUAH

Feature Tour, Malaysia

INSPIRED STAY

"A big factor that would impress our clients would be The Capitol Hotel Tokyu in Tokyo with its inspired Japanese room style, modern amenities and high-tech toilet. The Tokyo Bay dinner cruise onboard the Symphony is something worth considering too for the first evening, so that they can relax and enjoy Japanese cuisine."

JEFFERSON CATALAN

BC Travel and Tours
The Philippines



The Capitol Hotel Tokyu

GROWING INTEREST

"Japan is a new, upcoming MICE destination and a lot of our clients are interested in its history and culture."

SU NAY LIN

Star Holiday Mart
Singapore



The Glass Pyramid


 MODERN
venues


Noah's Ark

FRESH FLAVOURS

"In Sapporo, Noah's Ark is a unique dining venue for groups. It serves excellent grilled seafood, which Hokkaido is famous for. At the Glass Pyramid at Moerenuma Park, the French restaurant L'Enfant qui Reve offers a classy set-up. The menu was excellent — fresh, flavourful ingredients and good presentation."

GINA LIM

Pacific World
Singapore

GOOD CONNECTIVITY

"Tokyo and Osaka have good connectivity to Singapore and these cities are also close to Kyoto, which is a stunning destination in itself."

DARREN TAN

World Express
Singapore

AT YOUR SERVICE

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Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)
E-mail: convention@jnto.go.jp
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MICE-ready

TOKYO

KABUKI-ZA THEATRE



Tokyo's famous Kabuki-za theatre reopened this year after 3 years of renovation and is unquestionably one of Japan's best places to see kabuki – a

400-year-old performing art with an all-male cast and elaborate costumes. There is also a museum and gallery for visitors not attending a performance. www.kabuki-bito.jp/eng/

TOKYO

TOYOTA MEGA WEB



This theme park allows visitors to 'see, ride and feel' a large collection of Toyota's latest models and learn about its various initiatives in automotive

production. The History Garage recreates a nostalgic environment for vintage cars from around the world. www.megaweb.gr.jp/About/en.html

SAPPORO

MITSUI OUTLET PARK



One of the largest and newest outlet malls in Hokkaido, Mitsui Outlet Park has 130 stores, a 65-seat food court and the must-visit food emporium for overseas visitors—

Hokkaido Local Farm Village. www.31top.com/english/#sapporo

SAPPORO

ISHIYA CHOCOLATE FACTORY



Ishiya is the manufacturer of one of Hokkaido's most famous souvenirs — the Shiroi Koibito cookie. Its factory is a theme park where groups can learn

about the history of chocolate, catch a glimpse of the production line or take a cookie-making class. MICE planners can arrange to have photos of their participants featured on selected products as souvenirs. www.shiroikoibitopark.jp/english/

unique Hakata food culture (such as roadside food stalls and ramen)."

In addition, Fukuoka's consumer price index is 10 per cent lower than Tokyo, while major hotels, the CBD and convention zones are located within 2.5km of each other, said Nakagawa. And the southern city's proximity to East Asian cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Seoul, Busan and Taipei than Tokyo translates to direct flights shorter than two hours – a boon for international academic societies seeking to expand their Asian memberships, he explained.

Japan's recent visa waiver for Malaysian and Thai nationals is likely to yield positive effects for Fukuoka's MICE business too. "(The number of) incentive travellers from Thailand has shown an obvious increase in these five years," noted Nakagawa. "We are sure that the no-visa (policy) will accelerate a further increase in Thai arrivals."

Meanwhile, Miyuki Matsuda of Fukuoka Directive Council, a multi-sectoral body comprising 86 private and public companies dedicated to promoting Fukuoka as a regional MICE and business destination, pointed out that the newly opened Agora Hilltop Hotel & Spa (see next page) and Hilton Fukuoka Sea Hawk Hotel, which had renovated its top floors specially for MICE users, have ramped up the city's inventory of event venues featuring resort-style settings.

Having recorded 23 events last year and 21 so far this year, the 1,053-key Hilton Fukuoka Sea Hawk Hotel will also host 3,000 of the 25,000-30,000 delegates when the 2016 Lions Club International Congress unfolds in Fukuoka.

Although MICE business is "increas-



Shinji Nakagawa

Executive director
Fukuoka Convention & Visitors Bureau

"Fukuoka lacks only its name value...It has the potential to (attract more) conferences."

ing", there is still room to grow, according to a Hilton Fukuoka spokesperson. Taiwan and South Korea are the hotel's largest source markets, making up five per cent of international MICE, although South-east Asia registered "zero" per cent, he added.

Fukuoka has since stepped up its efforts to net more MICE business. Nakagawa revealed that the CVB was planning to review Fukuoka's existing MICE organiser support system, including subsidies. To tap the existing network of academic institutions within the 49-member strong Conference of Asian University Presidents – which Kyushu University inaugurated – Fukuoka is in discussion with CVBs from member countries to found a new alliance.

Since the establishment of the Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization eight years ago, Fukuoka has cooperated with local governments to hold familiarisation trips. "Fukuoka city is organising fam trips for corporate incentives from Singapore, Thailand and Taiwan this autumn," said Nakagawa.

Furthermore, under Japan Tourism Agency's (JTA) Global MICE Strategic

Cities Project launched on June 28, Fukuoka was identified alongside Tokyo, Yokohama, Kyoto and Kobe as global MICE cities. These cities will receive JTA support in marketing research, strategy making, promotion efforts and seminars organised for local stakeholders. Gaining Edge, the project's appointed consulting company, also dispatches a Global MICE Advisor to each city.

Meanwhile, Fukuoka will also stand to benefit from the launch of JTA's nationwide MICE Ambassador Programme next year, which will leverage on key experts in each sector to lobby and bring new business events to the country.

But Fukuoka still needs to overcome its weaknesses. Asked what was lacking, Congress Corporation's Nishimura cited "Fukuoka's presence outside of Japan", strong competition from Shanghai, Singapore and Seoul, as well as the "pre-conceived notion of Japan being expensive compared with other Asian cities".

Nishimura also remarked that planners with no prior knowledge or contacts in Fukuoka would not find it easy to reach the city's sales office, documents needed for facility use or submit a request for proposal inquiry. "Conducting active marketing to MICE candidates in (key source countries) holds the key to success," she added.

To make Fukuoka better known as a MICE destination, both the public and private sectors should seek to raise the standards of English among staff, documents and websites; make direct sales calls by attending conferences or events of potential clients; and push for more direct flight links from Asian cities, industry stakeholders pointed out. ■

Ideas

Getting in touch with Mother Nature in Kyushu

Day 1

Following touchdown at Fukuoka Airport, head to the city of Dazaifu to visit the Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine, designated an Important Cultural Property of Japan. After admiring the 6,000 plum trees scattered around the temple, delegates may tuck into local cuisine and shop for souvenirs at the nearby Tenjin-sama Street.

Post-lunch, a one-hour drive leads to Fukuoka's Kurume area, where delegates can gather fruits at local orchards and visit the Kyoho Winery or Benitome Brewery for shochu tasting. Drive to Beppu City for dinner and overnight stay.

Day 2

After breakfast, set off for Beppu Jigoku Meguri, home to eight hot springs each named after a version of hell, including Chinoike Jigoku or 'lake of blood hell' hot spring.

At the health-themed theme park of Aso Farmland, delegates are free to challenge the obstacle courses and games, unwind with a magma clay spa treatment (ladies only) or tuck into a hearty lunch of organic produce.

Then head to the largest active volcano in Japan, Mount Aso, before settling into a ryokan with a good dinner.

Day 3

In the morning, visit Kumamoto Castle, built in the early 17th century with curved stone walls and wooden overhangs to fend off ninjas.

After lunch, a two-hour ride will take travellers back to Fukuoka City for shopping and sightseeing.

Day 4

Send your delegates off to Fukuoka Airport for their flight home.

Itinerary by Fukuoka Convention and Visitors Bureau

NEED TO KNOW



Scaling new heights in Fukuoka

Located in the Momochihama waterfront area, the 234m Fukuoka Tower is the tallest seaside tower in Japan with 8,000 half-mirrors at its triangular cross-section. A 70-second elevator ride will take visitors 123m above ground to the observation room, where 360-degree panoramic views of Hakata wharf, Mount Sefuri and Fukuoka city await. Admission is chargeable but group rates are available. Direct enquiries to (81-92) 823-0234.



A hilltop sanctuary in Fukuoka

Newly launched on September 1, the 48-room Agora Fukuoka Hilltop Hotel & Spa boasts an eye-catching, post-modernist design and a verdant hilltop location with panoramic views of the city.

Situated 30 minutes from Fukuoka airport, delegates can take a break from their busy schedules at the large natural hot-spring facility or the Hilltop Spa, where treatments can be

performed on an open-air sun deck. Other facilities include a library, gift shops, an open-air garden terrace and Japanese restaurant Koyomi.

Occupying the third to fifth floors, the Marcus Square Fukuoka features a bar, two wedding chapels and event spaces that are able to accommodate between 90 and 250 guests.

For reservations and inquiries, email info@agorafukuoka-hilltop.com.

A three-in-one MICE destination

Nestled by the waterfront in the city, Fukuoka Convention Center comprises three gargantuan meeting facilities: Fukuoka International Congress Center, Marine Messe Fukuoka and Fukuoka Kokusai Center. A new 5,000m² exhibition hall is slated to debut within the area in 2018.

Fukuoka International Congress Center offers a main hall that seats up to 3,000 pax and 1,875m² in additional conference spaces and meeting rooms. It is also connected via walkway to the adjacent 2,300-pax Fukuoka Sun Palace Hall. Marine Messe Fukuoka comes with over 9,000m² of floor space and a capacity of 15,000 pax, while the Fukuoka Kokusai Center offers 5,052m² in pillarless floor space and can hold up to 10,000 guests.

Visit www.marinemesse.or.jp for more details.

Swooping in on the MICE market

The 1,053-key Hilton Fukuoka Sea Hawk Hotel is the largest Hilton in Asia with some 6,000m² of meeting and event space. Accommodating up to 2,000 pax, the 2,559m² Argos convention hall can be divided into six areas and comes equipped with a simultaneous interpretation system supporting up to eight languages. Together with Nabi, located in front of Argos, the two venues can accommodate up to 3,500 delegates for a convention.

The adjacent Fukuoka Yahoo! Japan Dome – home stadium for the regional baseball team Fukuoka Softbank Hawks – is capable of holding up to 38,561 pax for concerts, exhibitions or mega conventions, and can be integrated with Hilton Fukuoka for events.

The hotel is currently offering a full-day meeting package, which includes room hire between 09.00 and 18.00, two coffee breaks, lunch and use of basic equipment meeting for groups of 30-100 pax.

Contact fukhi-salesadm@hilton.com for more information.



Luxury on rails in Kyushu

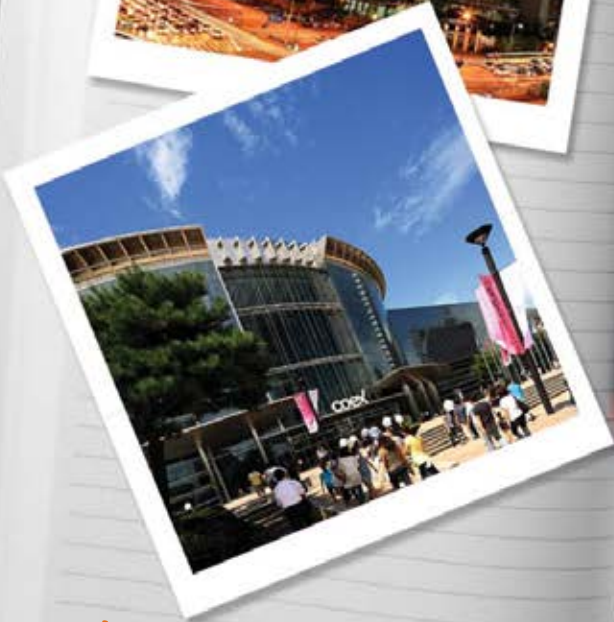
Come October 15, travellers can embark on a luxurious journey through the scenic landscapes of Kyushu on the *Seven Stars in Kyushu* train, which offers 12 suites and two deluxe suites for a maximum of 30 passengers per trip.

Clients can choose between a 4D3N or 2D1N itinerary, with the longer trip bundling a night's stay at some of the region's most exclusive ryokan and excursions to the Aso caldera or a traditional Kagoshima kiln.

Prices start at 155,000 yen (US\$1,556) per person for a 2D1N itinerary, based on a twin-sharing suite. Applications are now open for April-June 2014 departures. Charters can also be arranged but they must be booked one year in advance.

Email cruisetrain@jrkyushu.co.jp for more information.

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temple planned for tomorrow!)

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What's on @
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The Coex center, offers everything an event planner or
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Your Seoul Incentive

SEOUL is more than just an attractive meetings destination. It is an ancient city, filled with over 600 years of history, that offers a culture rich in both things past and things very much of the here and now.

It is a place of centuries-old royal palaces which, along with other lovingly-preserved monuments of the original capital, add to the color of a constantly changing modern metropolis and serve to remind locals and visitors alike that the Seoul story is a long one.

In recent years, Seoul has welcomed an unprecedented number of visitors from the Asia-Pacific region, all keen to explore the birthplace of their favorite Korean movie star, K-pop idol, or historical drama. Many of these may describe themselves as *hallyu* fans, the term describing the 'Korean Wave' spread of the local popular culture across the region and beyond. Even here,

Seoul's historical sites have a part to play, as many dramas are filmed on-site. Yet it may be Seoul's modern character which ultimately attracts visitors, with so many now following up the *Gangnam Style* legacy that the stylish district of the same name even opened its own tourism center in July. Equally on the rise are those Asia-Pacific visitors who combine their explorations of Seoul with business. More than ever before, Seoul is becoming a popular incentive destination.

And visitors are being extremely creative with how they make use of it. Recent years have seen major Asia-Pacific companies rewarding their top-performing staff, either with incentive trips, or extended stays in Seoul for post-event fun. Event organizers may be surprised and inspired by how these companies are pushing the envelope! As Seoul's MICE offerings continue to grow, which in part can be attributed to the new ways the city's international guests are

finding to create their own adventures. This, in the end, is the real meaning of the Seoul Convention Bureau slogan 'Your Complete Convention City', and it is exciting to see how each new visitor makes it a reality!

Seoul is continuing to respond to the growing influx of visitors in need of places to meet and of course places to stay. New hotels are opening in the last quarter of 2013, with more on the way over the next few years, as well as long-anticipated new unique venues that create brand-new possibilities for

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Seoul Convention Bureau

Seoul: Your Complete Convention City

high-quality events right in the heart of the city.

Seoul Tourism Organization activity overseas in the past 8 months has certainly given its staff reason to believe this continued growth will be put to good use by the international community. Extensive promotional activities in China back in April for example, along with more recent Seoul Convention Bureau activity at IMEX Frankfurt, all report steadily increasing interest by Asia-Pacific buyers and event planners in choosing Seoul to host their international event, and certainly incentive travel has become indelibly mixed with that desire. Attendee buzz at the most recent Korea MICE Expo, held in Seoul this past July, only further demonstrated this positive trend.

Support for the continued expansion of the city's meetings industry offerings goes all the way to the top, with Mayor Park Won-soon earlier this year describing "The MICE industry as being very important," further stating his ambition to raise Seoul's Asia-Pacific convention profile in the coming years. The government has even relaxed its visa rules for stopover tourism – those passing through Incheon International Airport now have the option of exploring Seoul for up to 72 hours visa-free if they opt for a transit tour package – something that can only help add to word-of-mouth discussion as to Seoul's

New hotels are opening in the last quarter of 2013, with more on the way over the next few years, as well as long-anticipated new unique venues that create brand-new possibilities for high quality events right in the heart of the city.

attractiveness as a backdrop for business events. China in particular has been the largest contributor to inbound tourism and business, which led the Seoul Convention Bureau in July to launch its SCB Social Media Supporters, Chinese Language Division program. This sees the first-ever dedicated team of net-savvy Mandarin speakers going digitally face-to-face with Weibo and Renrenwang users as they drum up further interest in Seoul's business events capabilities in a market that has more than shown it is paying attention to the Korean capital's invitation.

Naturally, Seoul will also be engaging buyers across the second half of 2013 at international expos CIBTM, IT&CMA, ITB Asia, EIBTM and the upcoming ICCA World Congress in Shanghai. In the meantime, read on to learn more about the city that just might be *your* incentive destination for business travel!



Taekwondo performance at Korea MICE Expo 2013



Banpo Bridge Moonlight Rainbow Fountain



Dine like royalty in Seoul



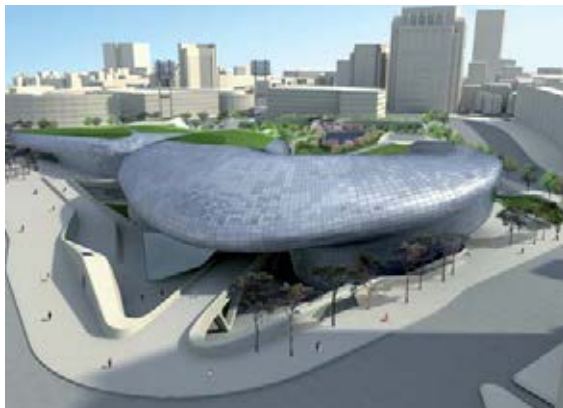
The 20th IAGG World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG 2013).

Growth Incentive

With interest in Seoul as a place to host international events and as an attractive incentive destination continuing to grow, the city is seeing new meeting and accommodation spaces appear annually. In 2012, Seoul welcomed its very first Conrad property. Now a distinguishing feature of the Yeouido skyline in the city's equally new International Finance Center, the **Conrad Seoul** is surrounded by a multipurpose

NEW EVENT SPACE

Next year sees the long-awaited arrival of the **Dongdaemun Design Plaza**, a multipurpose unique event space for the design industry, offering several exhibition and convention halls for a variety of functions. Designed by Zaha Hadid, it is set to become a major new landmark of downtown Seoul.



shopping, dining and residential area, which also includes an extensive mall. The five-star hotel itself offers 434 guest rooms and 14 meeting rooms, with a Grand Ballroom able to hold up to 1,200 persons for cocktail receptions.

A year earlier saw the arrival of the **Sheraton Seoul D Cube City Hotel** in Seoul's southwest. Part of a shopping/entertainment complex astride two subway lines, the five-star hotel became Seoul's 3rd Sheraton property and provides 239 guest rooms and 11 meeting spaces, the largest of which can comfortably seat 933 in theater mode.

Earlier this year, Frasers Hospitality made forays into the short-term accommodation market with the **Fraser Place Namdaemun Seoul**, which offers 252 fully-furnished modern style apartments and a meeting room with capacity for up to 80 persons. It is the third Frasers property for Seoul, after Fraser Suites and Fraser Place Central Seoul.

The year also saw the extensive refurbishment of **The Shilla Seoul**, which re-opened in August, while a newly-redesigned **Grand InterContinental Seoul Parnas** will be fully-reopened to the public in 2014.

Looking ahead to the final quarter of 2013, Seoul have its second JW Marriott property in the form of the **JW Marriott Seoul Dongdaemun Square**, which



Shilla Seoul Urban Island



JW Marriott Seoul Dongdaemun Square



Hyatt Place Seoul



Conrad Seoul

places it firmly in central Seoul's popular fashion district. The five-star hotel will provide 170 guest rooms and 920m² of meeting space for events.

January 2015, meanwhile, will see the arrival of the **Aloft Seoul Gangnam**, the first Aloft property for the city. It will give business visitors 184 rooms, meeting space, and easy access to the popular Gangnam district and the Coex convention center.

A year later, Seoul welcomes its third Hyatt property: the **Hyatt Place Seoul**, also located in Dongdaemun, giving the city a further 284 guest rooms, meeting facilities, and more of the quality associated with the Hyatt brand.

Want to learn more?

Download our free Meeting Planners Guide from
www.miceseoul.com!



SEOUL I'm lovin' it

From recreating one of your favorite TV shows live here in Seoul to playing in an all-star international sponsored 'world cup'-style soccer match and even participating in a citywide scavenger hunt through a royal palace, there's an incentive activity in Seoul to suit everyone. All of the above examples have in fact been carried out by international visitors to Seoul this year, either as post-event or concurrent-event incentives, and you could follow in their footsteps! Read on to discover two major examples from 2013 that were assisted in part by the Seoul Convention Bureau.

For their 2013 Restaurant Managers' Convention, McDonald's Singapore enjoyed a packed itinerary in Seoul, which included team-building events based on popular Korean culture. The annual convention, this year held from May 27-31, recognized and rewarded McDonald's Restaurant Managers and staff for their contribution to the company, and took place at the Hotel Ellui, which provided meeting and accommodation facilities for the 174 attendees.

The highlight of the trip was a special team-building game held at Lotte World, the world's largest indoor theme park according to the Guinness World Records, modelled after *Running Man*, a

popular Korean television program broadcast across Asia. As with the original, in which hosts and guests are pitted against each other in a race to embark on various missions, McDonald's Singapore restaurant managers, mid management and senior management cooperated in teams to complete tasks that took them all around the park.

A wide range of support for the trip was provided by the Seoul Convention Bureau, which also helped devise the team-building exercise. Said Training Manager William Ting, "We have been organising incentive trips like this one for many years, and a number of our staff have since told us that the Korea trip was the most enjoyable!"

A PLACE TO GET YOUR GANGNAM STYLE

IN RESPONSE to the rise in inbound tourists to Seoul's popular district, the city this year opened the new Gangnam Tourist Information Center, highly-recommended to newcomers looking to create their own 'Gangnam Style'. Operated by the Seoul Tourism Organization, the center gives visitors access to a wealth of information on Gangnam, such as its high-tech industries, medical tourism, and K-Pop culture.

There are two floors: the 1st floor features a general tourism information desk offering services in English, Chinese and Japanese, medical tourism information center, travel agency, currency exchange, and facilities for making reservations, ticketing, luggage storage, and purchasing transportation cards. The 2nd floor, or 'K-Wave Experience Zone', provides hallyu fans with various interactive stations to enjoy their favorite Korean celebrities.

Address: 428 Apgujeong-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul.
For more information, visit www.visitseoul.net.





Crossing Borders, Bridging Cultures

With a week-long program of events, the triennial International Korean Adoptee Association (IKAA) Gathering had plenty to offer its 720 attendees – including Korean adoptees and their family members – for their 2013 event at the Lotte Hotel Seoul. Running from July 29-August 4th, IKAA participants were given many opportunities to get in touch with the culture of their ancestors, and of course the chance to meet other Korean adoptees.

The week's highlights covered many fields, including sport, cuisine, and local culture. There was an Adoptee World Cup soccer match sponsored by Yonsei University on August 1st, which ended in a 2-all draw. The following day saw the

citywide scavenger hunt, 'The Amazing Race: Adoptees Loose in Seoul', broadly based on the popular US variety show. Contestants were given 7 missions to complete, which ranged from visiting Namdaemun Market to eat pig's head to singing impromptu Korean folk songs at Deoksugung royal palace, and convincing random strangers in Gangnam to do PSY's signature dance. Attendees then gathered at the Lotte's Sapphire Ballroom for the 'Great Korean Cook-off', an *Iron Chef*-style battle between two teams of IKAA participants selected via an online competition to help two master chefs put their own spin on *tteok galbi*, a popular traditional Korean grilled beef dish. Sponsored and organized by the Korean

Food Foundation, the event was given television coverage by local press agency Yonhap, as well as attracting much online Korean press, such as at popular internet portals Naver and Daum. IKAA 2013 overall received financial support from the Seoul Convention Bureau and also promotion of the event at Incheon International Airport, for which feedback from attendees was positive.

And Beyond

Do you have a team of hard-working staff you're looking to reward with a trip to Seoul? Are you coming to Seoul for an event anyway and considering post-meeting entertainment? Get in touch with us at the **Seoul Convention Bureau** to see what we can do for your Seoul-based meeting or incentive!



IKAA Gathering Adoptee World Cup 2013

SEOUL CONVENTION BUREAU

Your Total Support Network

When you're planning a business event or an incentive trip in Seoul, the Seoul Convention Bureau is here to make your visit productive, successful, and fun. Since being established in 2008, the SCB, a division of the Seoul Tourism Organization, has been the official government-sponsored agency in charge of promoting Seoul worldwide as a high-quality meetings destination. We offer a wide range of support services for meeting planners who hold their international event right here in Korea's capital.

OUR SERVICES INCLUDE:

- **Financial Support** for meetings or events held in Seoul. Contact us directly to find out more.
- **Bidding Support:** assistance in the preparation of proposals, a one-on-one presentation workshop and consultation on a successful bidding strategy.
- **Bid Support Declarations:** the SCB will arrange for you to receive a letter and video message from the mayor of Seoul and also the CEO of the Seoul Tourism Organization pledging support for your bid.
- **Venue Search and Site Inspections:** we'll help you find the perfect venue and accommodation for your event, provide you with a city tour, and bring you up to speed on local attractions and infrastructure.
- **Promotional Materials & Seoul Welcome Kit:** we will provide meeting planners and event delegates with promotional videos and images, as well as digital copies of our comprehensive Meeting Planners Guide, Seoul MICE Alliance brochure, and the Seoul Welcome Kit, which includes our Business Travelers Guide, postcards, a coupon book and an LED screen cleaning cloth.
- **Airport Multicube Welcome Message:** Have your event promoted on the large digital display screens at the baggage carousel hall of Incheon International Airport.
- **Airport Meeting and Pickup Services.**





My Seoul Incentive

Are you a corporate team executive considering an incentive trip to Seoul for your staff? Contact us for ideas on venues and attractions ideal for your visit. Looking for a fun idea to build around the ultimate team exercise? Chat with us for suggestions. For even more ideas, turn to Page 4 to see how others have realized their dream incentive right here in Seoul!

INTRODUCING THE SEOUL CONVENTION SUPPORTERS

Get highly trained expert manpower to help with operations during your international event in Seoul through the Seoul Convention Supporters. Over 2,000 members belong to this special SCB-run program, and come from a dedicated pool of students taking business events courses at local universities. Students are trained by the SCB to provide a wide variety of on-site operational support, are multilingual, and maintain close ties with SCB staff to ensure the highest quality of service

The Seoul MICE Alliance – Your One-Stop Network

The Seoul MICE Alliance is a partnership between government agencies and the city's major private sector organizations both directly and indirectly connected with business events. Alliance members include local convention centers, hotels, unique venues, PCOs, transportation companies, travel agencies, entertainment companies that can be hired for corporate events, MICE Service Providers, and duty-free stores.

Currently, 113 members make up the SMA, with plans to expand the alliance further in the future. Formed in 2010 to enhance the city's global meetings industry competitiveness, the SMA is operated by Seoul City and the Seoul Tourism Organization, with the joint aim of better promoting Seoul's meetings infrastructure and advantages to buyers around the world. Event planners and organizers who utilize SMA member companies receive additional benefits if they obtain public assistance in attracting, holding, and promoting events. For more information and a full directory of all Seoul MICE Alliance members, please download our free Seoul MICE Alliance brochure from www.miceseoul.com.

SCB Online – Stay Up To Date With Seoul



For more information about the Seoul Convention Bureau and the many services and support available, point your browser to www.miceseoul.com. You'll also find plenty of useful resources there, such as an interactive Venue Finder, bid proposal request form, and more. Plus, stay in touch with all the latest news and developments on Seoul's meetings industry by subscribing to our monthly webzine. You can also find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/miceseoul and Twitter at www.twitter.com/miceseoul.

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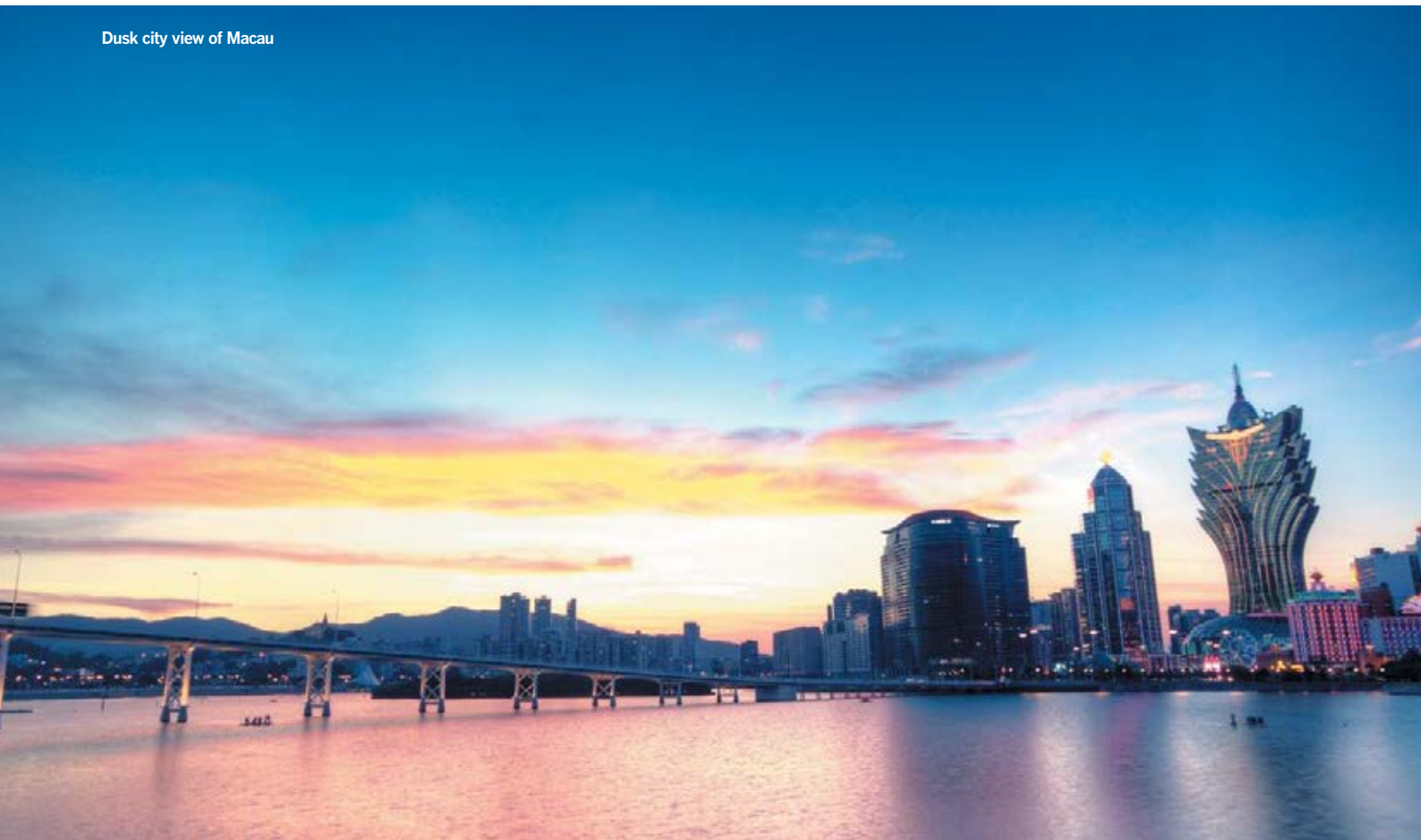
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Dusk city view of Macau



Supportive stance

Macau's support schemes for business event planners have paid off, with a stronger attendance seen at events in the second quarter. By **Prudence Lui**

Business events held in Macau in 2Q2013 enjoyed a much stronger attendance, according to data published by the Government of Macao Special Administrative Region Statistics and Census Service.

While there were fewer meetings held in the second quarter this year (220) compared with the same time last year (226), these events witnessed a 40 per cent increase in attendance in 2013.

Macau hosted the same number of exhibitions in 2Q2013 and 2Q2012 – just eight shows – but attendance at the events this year surged 72 per cent, drawing

194,000 delegates.

Some trade players in Macau believe that the government's support programmes for event organisers and groups have a part to play in the rise in event attendance.

The *Convention and Exhibition Stimulation Program*, launched in 2012 by the Macau Economic Services Bureau and enhanced in 2013, offers a variety of support including complimentary tourist information kits and welcome gifts, free admission to selected attractions and financial subsidies. Incentive organisers, on the other hand, are supported by the Macau Government Tourist Office's (MGTO)

Incentive Travel Stimulation Program, which dishes out a maximum support of MOP\$300 (US\$38) in spending money per non-local incentive delegate, as well as other perks.

Cotai Strip Resorts Macao, executive director, MICE Marketing, Natasha Tomé said the government's support schemes were "invaluable to an event's bottom line, especially at a time when budget constraints are felt by many."

The *Convention and Exhibition Stimulation Program* has so far seen 81 applications for support. Macau Economic Services Bureau director, Sou Tim Peng, expects the number of applications to

grow “in tandem with the moderate climb in the number of events organised in Macau”.

He revealed that additional initiatives to support inbound conventions and exhibitions were being developed, and these would be discussed with industry players prior to implementation.

The *Incentive Travel Stimulation Program* has received 40 applications this year. Of these, 26 events involving some 13,000 participants have been granted support. This compares with 28 applications qualified by MGTO in the whole of 2012, events which brought with them 23,114 attendees.

An MGTO spokesman told *TTGmice*: “Although the number of applicants is fewer this year, we are happy to have picked up some cases from new source markets such as Vietnam and Israel.”

In addition, MGTO is also fielding other enquiries and support requests from 18 incentive groups with more than 1,800 pax.

In 2012, MGTO Singapore alone supported two groups with 690 pax under the *Incentive Travel Stimulation Program*, as well as some 600 delegates attending events that were not qualified for the programme but were nonetheless given information kits and souvenirs. In the first half of this year, the Singapore office supported 401 meeting and incentive delegates.

Singapore is regarded as an important source market for meetings and incentives,

according to MGTO Singapore’s marketing manager, Grace Tong.

Explaining the importance of the Singapore market, Tong said: “The key reason is that Singapore is home to more than 14,000 multinational companies, a huge source we can tap on for meeting and incentives. Singapore groups also prefer five-star integrated resorts and hotels in Macau, as they offer the newest business and leisure facilities.”

The optimistic MICE performance captured by official data is mirrored in reports shared by some of Macau’s top hotels.

The Venetian Macao Resort Hotel, armed with extensive meetings and exhibition facilities that are supported by more than 3,000 spacious suites, received 139 business events in the first seven months of 2013. Conrad Macao, Cotai Central, which offers 636 rooms and suites and 53 separate conference and meeting spaces and boardrooms, welcomed 70 events during the same period.

Tomé said: “We are seeing a consistent increase in the number of events held at the Cotai Strip and 2013 is turning out to be a very successful year, with many new international congresses being held in Macau. A great deal of repeat clients are also bringing their events back to Macau.”

Galaxy Macau, an integrated resort which comprises Galaxy Hotel, Hotel Okura Macau and Banyan Tree Macau, hosted

“a rough estimation of 10 to 20 groups per month” over the first seven months of this year.

Assistant vice president for hotel and event sales, Samson Woo, said: “Our MICE revenue (so far) has grown 15 to 20 per cent over last year’s, due to a greater spend on activities and entertainment.”

Although MICE business is looking up for Macau, smallWorld Experience, executive director, Bruno Simões, warned that the destination’s greatest challenge was its limited passenger handling capacity at the ferry terminals and border checkpoints with China. Due to the huge inflow of travellers, these immigration gateways are often congested.

“These issues aside, Macau offers great opportunities for event planners to use unique and historical venues such as Mount Fortress, museums, heritage houses and Nam Van Lake,” said Simões.

Macau’s portfolio of unique event spaces was recently expanded with the addition of Casa Garden in Macau Peninsula. Built in 1770, this European architecture was once the home of a Portuguese merchant. Today it is the Macau headquarters of the Orient Foundation and was named one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of the Historic Centre of Macau in 2005. Casa Garden is open for private events, subject to approval from the Orient Foundation. ■
– Additional reporting by Karen Yue

Ideas

Immerse in Macau’s rich heritage in a day



St. Lawrence's Church

Morning

Kick off the incentive programme with a hearty breakfast at the hotel before embarking on an insightful tour of Macau’s historical centre.

Begin the journey at A-Ma Temple on the south-western tip of the Macau Peninsula, a interesting place where deities from different Chinese beliefs are worshipped harmoniously under one roof. Stroll on

to the Moorish Barracks which was built in 1874, and then to Lilau Square and the Mandarin’s House where ancient architectural styles are conserved.

Next stop, St. Lawrence’s Church, regarded as one of the many beautiful churches in the destination. Close by is a cluster of more heritage landmarks such as St. Joseph’s Seminary and Church, St. Augustine’s Square, Sir Robert Ho Tung Library, Leal Senado and Sam Kai Vui Kun Temple.

Afternoon

When tummies begin to rumble, take your group to lunch at A Lorchia (289A Rua do Almirante Sergio), a popular restaurant specialising in Portuguese cuisine. Reservations are a must.

Spend the afternoon exploring the iconic Ruins of St. Paul’s and Na Tcha Temple and the bustling shops that span

out around the area.

Evening

Have an early dinner at Platão (3 Travessa de Sao Domingos), where Portuguese and Macanese delights are served in a cosy setting.

Leave your group to explore Macau at their own pace for the rest of the night.



Moorish Barracks

GRAND EVENTS

Grand Hyatt Macau is an ideal venue for events, whether for an elegant lunch, a sensational themed evening, a grand party or an opulent ball. The Grand Ballroom accommodates up to 2,000 guests in theatre style, whilst the unique Salão do Teatro features natural daylight and is the only ballroom in Macau that showcases an interactive open kitchen concept. A team of professional event experts is committed to excellence to ensure the personalisation and success of your event.

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City of Dreams, Estrada do Istmo,
Cotai, Macau



Celebration of Living Luxuriously

an Advertorial

Are you looking for an exciting, luxurious, entertaining and unforgettable incentive to reward your top achievers?

Early November will prove to be an excellent time to visit the attractive MICE destination of Macao. Building on the theme of a "Grand Gathering in Macao" three major exhibitions will be taking place from the 1st to the 3rd of November at the Venetian Macao's Grand Cotai Expo Hall: The 3rd China (Macao) International Yacht Import and Export Fair, The 2nd Business Aviation Exhibition and the "Main Event", The 3rd Grand 2013 China (Macao) International Automobile Show. These three exhibitions are a showcase of China's transportation manufacturing abilities and also provide the ability to compare these vehicles against the best that the rest of the world has to offer.



The exhibitions will take place at the Grand Cotai Expo Hall, which is located at the magnificent Venetian Macao Resort/Hotel; which is the largest integrated resort in Asia as well as the flagship project on the lavish Cotai Strip. With over 75,000 square meters of exhibition space and over 25,000 square meters of flexible meeting and ballroom space they can easily handle these exhibitions and host simultaneous meetings as well. The resort features 35 restaurants with cuisines from around the world that you can schedule your special meal or banquet at and with over 300 international brand stores to choose from, the possibilities for shopping and incentives are plentiful.

The Venetian Macao Resort/Hotel and the Cotai Strip is conveniently located within a five to ten minute complimentary shuttle bus ride from your arrival at the Macao International Airport. If your travel plans require that you fly to Hong Kong International Airport or China's Shenzhen Baoan International Airport, it is easy to take a

short ferry ride to the Taipa Ferry Terminal which is located adjacent to the airport and receives shuttle bus access as well.

Why Macao?

Macao is a glamorous international city that has the prestige of being a world-renowned capital of tourism and relaxation, it has also been an important window for China's foreign economic and trade relations for over 400 years. Although its location provides Macao with great advantages within the Pearl River Delta, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia; it is Macao's history that has helped establish intimate relations with not only Portuguese-speaking countries but with the European Union as well.

As a tourism destination, Macao shines during the day with many historical sites, gardens, parks and outdoor spaces which include: Taipa Village, Flower City Garden, Seac Pai Van Park (which includes the Macao Giant Panda Pavilion, zoo and walk-in aviary), Sun Yat Sen Park, Mount Fortress and the iconic Ruin's of Saint Paul's Church. But the evening is what attracts the majority of Macao's visitors when the many resorts transform the evenings into Macao's shining and sparkling jewel.

The glamour of Macao's resorts makes it a perfect location to host the Auto, Yacht and Aviation Expositions as it provides a unique backdrop and the essence of the luxurious lifestyle that is associated with the best that life has to offer.

Government Assistance

Macao's location and situation of being a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China also allows it to create the perfect atmosphere for China to interact, compare and showcase its abilities in relation to the rest of the world. With this in mind, there is much cooperation and support from Macao's government for these types of Exhibitions and Conventions.

The Assistant President of Nam Kwong (Group) Company Limited, Mr. Song Xia Dong (宋曉冬) tells us that "Macao Economic Services of the SAR Government have introduced a series of exhibition encouragement measures, providing part of the exhibition subsidies and giving support to advertising and promotion; Macao's local constructors and exhibition service providers are making joint efforts in pursuit of common development with the exhibitions; all parties are working together to overcome difficulties and meet challenges." The goal is that Macao becomes a preferred destination for exhibitors both from the mainland and internationally. "In Macao, the exhibitors will experience local customs completely different from the mainland, and will be treated with considerate and courteous reception in every aspect by the SAR government and the organizers. There is a deep commitment from the government that "their stay in Macao will leave them with a deep impression and a beautiful memory".



"The Macao SAR government attaches great importance and gives strong support to holding large professional exhibitions in Macao", this is accomplished through some financial support incentives, active problem solving assistance, advertising and promotion assistance and other support from the SAR government during expo preparation.

The expositions have the support of China National Machinery Industry Foundation, Macao Convention & Exhibition Association, Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, State-Owned Assets Supervision and



Administration Commission under the State Council, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, Macao SAR Government and Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR



The organizers are Nam Kwong Exhibition Co., Ltd., China National Automotive Industry International Cooperation, Prime Marketing & Commercial Services Co., Ltd., Nam Kwong (Group) International Convention and Exhibition Centre, China Ocean Aviation Group Incorporation, Fujian Wang-zi Yacht Clique Investment and Development Co., Ltd., China Automobile Convention and Exhibition (Fujian) Co., Ltd., China National Automotive Industry Corporation (CNAICO) and Macao Expo Group Ltd.

Attendees

Auto, Yacht and Aviation enthusiasts will be drawn to the expositions along with experts, scholars and other professionals in the industry; most people will attend two or all three events during their visit. The general public will enjoy the expositions and help create excitement and create social media publicity. The events are designed to create a festive atmosphere and attract the influential people within their respective industries both internationally and within the region to provide a productive atmosphere to network and conduct business. There is also great expectation to draw many corporate representatives, buyers and other people of means including noted public figures and celebrities from China, Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore and other nearby regions.

Automobile Exposition

Building on the success of the last two years, The 3rd China (Macao) Automobile Exposition is the headline event of the expositions. In 2012 the Auto Expo set a record for Macao expositions with over 150,000 attendees in three days. As in years past, luxury cars and classic automobiles are still the highlight of the Expo and are anticipated to have the largest buzz and crowds. This year's event will provide increased vehicle exhibition and quality as compared to the previous years - new for 2013 will be displays of Modified Cars, Bubble Cars, Racing Cars and Concept Cars. There will also be fantastic forums, performances, culture creativity and other activities related to the Auto Expo.

The overall technical focus of the Expo is the advanced scientific and technical achievements of the automotive industry innovation and development with an emphasis on the new trends in energy savings and environmental protection, however the most engrossing and

popular attractions deal with the essence of Auto Life as it relates to Luxury Autos and their relation to mansions, yachts and other luxurious goods and life styles.

The Import Pavillion in Hall A will exhibit vehicles from 22 brands including BMW/Mini, Mercedes Benz, Audi, Nissan, VW, Honda, Subaru/Kia and Lexus/Toyota. The China Pavillion in Hall D will exhibit vehicles from 17 brands including Yutong, Man, JAC and Foton. The Luxury Pavillion in Hall E will exhibit vehicles from 19 brands including McLaren, Lamborghini, Bentley, Bugatti and Rolls Royce. Light Motorbikes, Battery and Sports Bikes will be featured along with Commercial Vehicles.

There are many events planned during the Expo which include: ICBC Macao Cup Photo Contest, Bank of Communications Cup Children's Painting Competition, Car Model Show, Wine Tasting and Daily Lucky Draws.

Yacht Exposition

Macao has always had a connection to the sea and the Yacht Expo celebrates that heritage. There will be over 40 booths in the 15,000 square meters of Exhibition Hall D on the 3rd floor of the Cotai Expo Hall displaying yachts, sailing boats, power boats, boat engines, marine accessories and related businesses like watersports, tourism and maintenance. Some renowned yacht brands from Italy, USA, UK, Netherlands and Germany are expected to premiere their newest models at the show.

The real fun will be at the Macao Yacht Club featuring yachts on display in 20 berths; the Yacht Club has a 63 year history of leisure and recreation.

Activities include: Bikini Show, Top 10 Yacht Selection, Beach Volleyball Shows, VIP Cruise Experience, Conferences and Wine Tasting.

Aviation Exposition

The Parking Apron of the Business Jet Base at the Macao International Airport will host the festivities of the Aviation Exposition. With over 12,000 square meters of space there will be 15 aircraft on static display and many industry exhibitors. Although the focus is on business and commercial aviation, there are many interesting things to see and experience which tie into the luxury lifestyle.

2014

With the expected success of this year's Expos and the strength of their performance and growth in the past two years, planning to exceed expectations in 2014 will soon be underway. Come and enjoy the Expositions this year and reward a deserving employee by having them join you. Then start making your plans to host your Meetings in Macao and have them coincide with these Expositions next year!

GOOD THINGS COME IN THREES!
Scan the QR codes to go directly to the expo websites



<http://www.macao-gwj.com>
2013 Macao Business Aviation Exposition
Business Jet Base Parking Ramp of the Macao International Airport



<http://www.mcboatshow.com>
2013 China (Macao) International Yacht Import & Export Fair
3rd Floor - Exhibition Hall D - Cotai Expo Hall
In-Water Exhibits at the Macao Yacht Club
Events: Bikini Show / Top 10 Yachts / Beach Volleyball / VIP Cruises / Conferences / Wine Tasting



<http://www.macao-autoshow-nk.com.mo>
2013 China (Macao) International Automobile Exposition
Imported Autos Hall A
Auto Decorations Hall B
China-Made Autos Hall D
Luxury Cars Hall E
Events: ICBC Macao Cup Photo Contest / Children's Painting Competition / Car Model Show / Wine Tasting / Daily Lucky Draws

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The Venetian Macao Hotel and Resort
<http://www.venetianmacau.com>



The Macao MICE Portal
<http://www.mice.gov.mo>



NEED TO KNOW

It's cool at the top

For an easy way to see some of the best sights of Macau, hop on the Macau Open Top Bus operated by Goldspark Macau Tours.

Departing every 45 minutes, the service takes passengers on a 75-minute tour of the destination, covering 10 famous attractions such as the Macau Science Center, Kun Lam Statue and The Red Market.

An audio commentary, available in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Italian, French, German, Japanese, Russian and Spanish, offers an insight into Macau's history and culture. There are 10 departures per day, from 09.30 to 16.15.

The tour costs HK\$150 (US\$19) per adult.

**Underwater showcase**

Indulge in *The World of Water Aurora* at MGM Macau, where American visual artist Stephen Stefanou presents his latest foray into the world of interactive conservation entertainment from May until December 2013.

Shadows and lights are played out in an eight-metre tall cylindrical aquarium, which offers audiences an unobstructed view of the underwater performance. The 'cast' includes Blacktip Reef Sharks, Emperor Red Snapper, Golden Trevally and Roundface Batfish.

Visit www.mgmmacau.com/mgm-aurora for more information.

**Revive 50s' Shanghai**

Founded in 1987 in Shanghai, Shanghai Min made its debut in Macau's City of Dreams this summer. This nostalgic Shanghaiese culinary concept takes diners back in time to 1950s Shanghai. Designed with glittering chandeliers and floor-to-ceiling windows, the restaurant offers 372 seats and five private dining rooms over two levels.

It is open from 11.00 to 15.00 and 18.00 to 22.30 on weekdays, and from 10.00 to 16.00 and 18.00 to 22.30 on weekends.

For reservations, email xcd@xiaonan-guo.com or call (853) 8868-6661.

Artistic weekends

The Creative Industries Promotion Association of St Lazarus Church organises the *Sun Never Left – Public Art Performance* every weekend. Held at the St Lazarus Church of Rua de Sao Roque from 15:00 to 18:00, the street art performance provides live music as well as an art fair where stalls sell products such as paintings and handicrafts.

Contact (853) 2834-6626 for more information on how you can include this into your pre- or post-meeting programme.

Connections on the go

Event delegates and business travellers in Macau can enjoy complimentary Wi-Fi access at several locations including museums and tourist information centres. A complete list of WifiGO hotspots can be found at www.wifi.gov.mo/en/Find.php.

The Tasting Room bags a star

French restaurant The Tasting Room has made it into the *Michelin Guide Hong Kong/Macau 2013* for the first time with one star. Led by chef Guillaume Galliot, the restaurant specialises in regional and classic European cuisine. Signature dishes include the slow cooked Brittany lobster with *sumac nage* and chocolate banana *mille feuille*.

Corporate gatherings can be hosted in the restaurant's private dining room. Contact (853) 8868-6681 for reservations.

**Be a kid again**

Give your meeting and incentive delegates a good laugh by planning for them a hearty breakfast with famous characters from DreamWorks animated movies at Holiday Inn Macao Cotai Central.

The *Shrekfast Character Breakfast with the DreamWorks Gang* is offered to guests who book a *DreamWorks Experience Package* at either Holiday Inn Macao Cotai Central or Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central. Guests of Sheraton Macao Hotel on a breakfast inclusive room package can also upgrade their breakfast to *Shrekfast* for HK\$100 per person.

Scheduled *Shrekfast* sessions are available at 08.00 and 10.00 from Saturday to Monday, and at 09.00 from Tuesday to Friday.

The fun dining experience can also be booked exclusively for groups at non-scheduled *Shrekfast* times. Rates vary according to group sizes.

Contact (853) 8118-3388 for more details.



MAKE IT MACAU

A melting pot of East-meets-West culture and a thriving entertainment hub, Macau is quickly capturing the attention of meetings and events professionals worldwide. As Asia's newest and fastest-developing MICE hotspot, Macau's cutting edge, newly-built conference and events facilities offer unparalleled flexibility and choice for anything from the largest conventions to exclusive VIP events. Located in the heart of Asia, Macau is a one-hour ferry trip from Hong Kong, has its own international airport and shares multiple border gates with mainland China, so delegates from across the region will enjoy easy access.

The Jewel of Cotai

At the heart of the glitzy Cotai Strip is Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central, Macau's newest and biggest convention hotel, featuring 3,896 guest rooms and suites and access to more than 19,000 square metres of event space.

The hotel's vast number of flexible venues offers a wealth of possibilities for your event, whatever the size and format. The pillar-less Kashgar Grand Ballroom is ideal for banquet-style events of up to 4,000 guests. Nine junior ballrooms within the hotel and Sands Cotai Central complex, and 166 total meeting rooms can accommodate as many as 5,000 guests to as few as 12. Plus, for unique alfresco gatherings, the

hotel's three poolside recreation decks offer around 12,000 square metres of picturesque event space.

A Creative Approach

Bespoke occasions, like Hennessy Paradis Impérial's spectacular "Majestic Journey of Time" event, are a specialty of the Sheraton Macao Hotel events team. Held poolside at Tiki, the event began with 19 church bell rings, transporting 100 VIP guests back in time to 1818, the golden age of Imperial Russia. Food and décor true to the era, along with an aerial ballet performance epitomizing the elegance of Russia's Imperial Court fully immersed guests in the brand's heritage.



Plus, a host of signature themes are on offer. For example, the "Silver Light" event theme entails a magical atmosphere created with iridescent stilt walkers, saxophonists and other entertainers, and is fully customizable to events large and small, inside or poolside. The "Heritage Soul of Macau" offers a Portuguese feast with traditional food and entertainment, held off-site in one of Macau's most picturesque heritage buildings.

Meet for Free

Now there's another reason to host your event at Sheraton Macao Hotel. Book by 31 December, 2013 to enjoy up to two free full-day meetings (a minimum of 50 group rooms for two consecutive nights is required). Your group will enjoy a host of free benefits:

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- Morning and afternoon coffee breaks
- Complimentary buffet lunch
- Use of basic AV equipment

“I can't thank the team enough for the last minute support, requests, “impossibilities” that became possible and the extra attention to details spent on this group to make every experience a rewarding one.”

– Tam Xu, Manager

Operations, Launch Group
(HP Consumer Summit, 2013)



For more information, please visit:

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Advertorial

Rock climbing activities can be planned on Railay Beach



Australia

Time for an adventure

Blessed with natural land formations and water features, Thailand's Krabi has the potential to draw adventure-seeking incentive groups, discovers **Greg Lowe**

Thailand's convention bureau is ramping up efforts to promote Krabi as a MICE destination, honing in on the Andaman province's natural strengths to position it as a hub for adventure-based incentives.

Much of Krabi's allure comes from a unique coastline punctuated with staggering limestone karsts, protected

mangrove forests and a plethora of tiny beaches, coves and islands. Furthermore, Krabi enjoys longstanding status as Thailand's leading rock climbing destination. It is also a popular spot for sea kayaking, scuba and snorkelling, as well as being a jumping off point for Koh Lanta and Kho Phi Phi, making it an ideal destination where tropical getaway experiences can be effortlessly

combined with soft adventure activities.

Local infrastructure and connectivity, however, lag far behind Phuket to the north. But they have notably improved in recent years, with Krabi's meetings facilities now capable of handling groups of up to 500 delegates.

While travel specialists welcome moves to bolster Krabi's position as an incentives

destination, they say it is still early days for the area's MICE industry. Requests for pre- and post-meeting programmes currently come in a trickle rather than a steady flow, while clients specifically asking for adventure itineraries are thin on the ground.

Pornthip Hirunkate, managing director of Destination Asia (Thailand), said: "It is very rare to receive a purely

adventure/activity based incentive at Krabi, as this is a very niche requirement. This is not just for Krabi, though, but for Thailand as a whole since the country is yet to be perceived as an adventure- or activity-based destination."

Organising adventure itineraries brings additional challenges to DMCs, such as the make up, interests and attitude of each incentive group.

"Most incentive programmes still require ample time for relaxation and (delegates do not want) too hectic or active an itinerary," explained June Biden, business development manager MICE at Tour East Thailand, who said there was very little interest in adventure-based incentives in Thailand.

"I would only suggest one active programme per group per stay," she said. "Adventure-based activities are still mainly suitable for individuals instead of big groups."

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) acknowledges these issues and agrees that first efforts must focus on education and awareness raising. This is why the bureau this year focused its annual Connections Plus corporate and media familiarisation event, which drew more than 70 delegates from 16 countries, on Krabi as part of the wider Andaman Cluster, which includes Phang Nga and Phuket to the north.

Parichart Svetasreni, director of TCEB's marketing and corporate image department, said: "We saw the global trend in adventure MICE. Krabi is very famous for trekking, hiking and climbing, so we decided to target younger business people for these activities. It's also a great destination for teambuilding activities.

"We're encouraging smaller-sized groups. The venues (in Krabi) are not really appropriate for large groups, so we wanted to show how they

(event planners) can use outdoor spaces for meetings and activities."

Hotel and meetings facilities have improved in recent years with the arrival of international chains such as Sheraton, Sofitel and Ritz-Carlton, along with local brands including Centara, Amari and Beyond. Enhanced connectivity means Krabi International Airport is now serviced by a number of airlines from Suvarnabhumi, Don Mueang and Koh Samui airports and receives direct flights from Singapore and Malaysia.

Most international clients wanting to bypass transfers in Bangkok, however, face a two- to three-hour drive from Phuket airport, which Dave Belcher, managing director of Making Teams, said is a significant barrier hampering the development of Krabi's MICE industry.

Despite these challenges, some DMCs believe Krabi's adventure offering is slowly growing stronger.

Richard Smith, director of events at AsiaWorld Destination Management, explained: "There is a slow but steady growth in interest in adventure- and activity-based incentives (among) MICE groups. Krabi's terrain offers great opportunities from climbing and zip-lining to kayaking and scuba diving. The Red Bull Cliff Diving event happening end of this year also heightens the area's attraction for adventure-seeking groups and individuals."

DMCs that do incorporate adventure elements into corporate itineraries typically include a morning's rock climbing on Railay Beach or a couple of hours kayaking either around Koh Hong or through local mangrove-clad coves. However, one of the greatest challenges remains finding reliable local suppliers with high safety standards who offer affordable products, according to Mingwan Met-



Koh Lanta offers soft adventure opportunities

mowlee, managing director of Images d'Asie.

Some hotels in Krabi are developing their own products for the incentive market.

Robin Deb, general manager of Sofitel Phokeetra Krabi Golf & Spa Resort, said his team had launched two packages along the Survivor reality series theme.

"The *Pirates of the Andaman* is a treasure hunt where teams of two, three or four compete in their assigned

kayak to collect treasures in and around Koh Hong," said Deb. "They are followed by a camera team (who will provide) direct updates on Facebook. For more sophistication, we can add geolocation, online obstacles and 3G tablets."

"The *Krabi Job* is a similar treasure hunt but it's all on land and uses tuk tuks, motorbikes and bicycles. Teams have to find gold, like in the movie *The Italian Job* and finish within a given timeframe." ■

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Phuket ups its pleasure factor

By Greg Lowe

Hoteliers and operators in Phuket are responding to the “bleasure” trend – a mix of business events with pleasure activities – by integrating more leisure elements into the meetings and incentives they organise for clients.

According to Andre Gomez, general manager of Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa (pictured right), travel is no longer seen as an incentive itself and properties must enhance their facilities and services to be more leisure-friendly in order to compete effectively on a regional basis.

He said: “Predominantly the longer haul markets such as Australia and the UK will allow delegates to bring along their partners or families, while clients from South-east Asia give the option for staff to extend their stay for the week-end, either pre- or post-event.”

Gomez said the property recently upgraded its MICE facilities in part to attract more “bleasure” clients. Beyond offering a full gamut of options on site, from large-scale marquee events on the lawn and cultural shows to teambuilding activities, such as raft building on the lake, to poolside meetings and executive



Take your events to the poolside

brunches, the 665-room property has also enhanced its meetings venues with state-of-the-art audiovisual technology.

The hotel’s 857m² grand ballroom is said to be the largest facility on the island.

Groups can be hosted across the property or in separate wings, allowing the hotel to dedicate an area to a given client and create a specific environment and atmosphere for them.

Jaroen Meijer, the property’s director of business development, said: “It’s all about versatility and differentiation, being able to put the different spaces

and venues around the property to good use. We’re also seeing a change in the nature of the events. They are moving away from all-day conferences to shorter timings which are often more discussion-focused and quite casual.

“Some clients, especially those within the pharmaceutical, fashion and IT industries, are wanting to do away with traditional set-ups for meetings and are asking for sofas to make the environment more informal so that they can be more creative.”

Local DMCs have also started to develop more products in response to increased requests to incorporate more leisure activities into business events.

“It’s really about providing a more personalised and customised service which can include a number of elements from culture and adventure to shopping and relaxation,” said James Drysdale, group director of Inspired Events Travel Asia. “This is more important now that we’re seeing more partner programmes, where we have to make sure wives and children are being properly engaged during the day.” ■

A new place to meet and play

By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

Phothalai Leisure Park (PLP) in Bangkok, renowned for its extensive spa facilities, will officially open its Phothalai Meeting & Event (PME) event facility and Phothalai Golf Park (PGP) on December 16 this year.

PME, which has started to receive some events prior to the grand opening celebrations at the year-end, offers 10 function rooms that are surrounded by pools, fountains and waterfalls. The facility can support indoor and outdoors functions with 12 to 2,000 pax.

At present, events hosted at PLP are mostly weddings. Small, niche meetings for 10-50 pax follow at a close second. These corporate functions range from top executive meetings to trainings/strategic meetings that require a more elaborate set-up within an exclusive venue.



Wee: more corporate events on the horizon

Alvin Wee, business development director of PLP, believes that the new facility will help PLP to bring about a “sharp spike in MICE bookings from our targeted market segments, which are primarily corporate meetings and celebrative events from regional MNCs and associations”.

So far, PME has drawn much interest from event organisers. It has hosted product launches for Volvo and Chervolet vehicles, meetings conducted by Tesco Lotus and True Corporation, and a press conference led by the Thailand Golf Association.

“Current bookings are very encouraging considering that PME has not officially started selling yet. I think our meeting rooms, which offer close proximity to scenic water features and nature, have made PME attractive to those who got to know about the venue by word of mouth,” Wee said.

“We need to drive more meeting and incentive business, from both domestic and regional markets,” he added.

Wee’s confidence in PME’s business potential is not only driven by strong RFPs, but also by the continued political and social stability of Thailand and the region.

“It is possible to believe that MICE will register stronger growth rate in Asia. Bangkok, being ranked the world’s top destination by Mastercard Worldwide’s

third annual Global Destination Cities Index, should be able to power through the stiff competition and lead the Asian pack for MICE business growth," he said.

Meanwhile, PGP promises to offer plenty of leisure options with a 229m driving range, 90 tee boxes, a golf academy, a golf mega store, a state-of-the-art fitness club and various dining establishments.

However, the new golf park's most exciting products, according to Wee, will be the Short Game Arena and a permanent F1 racing simulator centre.

"The one-of-a-kind Short Game Arena is an ideal place for (event delegates) to practise their golf moves, hang out and relax. At this 12,000m² facility, there are greens for putting, pitching, chipping and bunker shots. There will also be a Mediterranean restaurant and an outdoor event lawn that can accommodate up to 300 pax, all surrounded by waterfalls, streams and bridges inspired by world-renowned courses," said Wee.

PGP's F1 racing simulator centre is said



Phothalai Leisure Park expands with a dedicated events centre and golf park that comes packed with leisure options for event planners

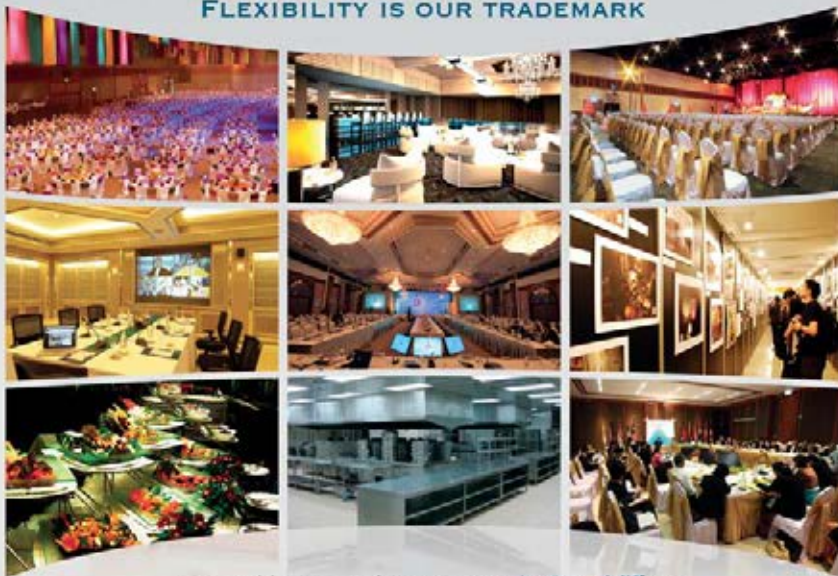
to be the first such facility in Thailand. It will offer four motion simulators that are designed with the exact controls of a real F1 car and mounted on mechanical gimbals that give users the feeling of being in a real race.

"It will make a fun add-on to groups hosting their events at PLP, and the centre

can be booked for private functions," opined Wee.

Adding to PLP's event facilities is the Eagles' Nest, a circular indoor meeting room that oversees the golf facility on the third floor of the PGP building. This new venue is able to host meetings and conferences with up to 300 attendees. ■

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NEED TO KNOW

**Centara brings new beds to Pattaya**

With a soft-launch this month, Centara Grand Phratamnak Resort Pattaya adds 165 rooms and suites to Pattaya's accommodation offering. The hotel features upscale contemporary design and interiors, and facilities include a club lounge, six bars and restaurants and Spa Cenvaree.

There are two meeting rooms with maximum capacities of 30 and 24 pax, plus a delegates' bar, making the property suitable for executive-level meetings or smaller teambuilding groups.

The hotel is located a short drive from Pattaya Exhibition and Convention Hall.

Contact cgpx@chr.co.th for reservations.

Race against time

Making Teams has devised an adventure-based activity which combines teambuilding and problem solving in a race against the clock. Each team is given a passport containing a map, a list of transportation modes and key checkpoints. Armed with little more than this they must make their way to the final destination. Points are awarded for the shortest times, but also for participants' creativity and types of transportation used. The more difficult the mode of transport – ranging from tuk tuks to elephants – the more points are awarded.

This immersive experience provides a unique way for teams to solve problems while interacting with Thai culture at the ground level. Contact (66) 7627-8037 or sales@makingteams.com for more information on the activity.

**Go with the flow**

For informal meetings, fun-focused teambuilding activities, parties and product launches, Flow House Bangkok provides a unique experience in the heart of the city for groups of various sizes.

It boasts one of the few artificial surf machines in South-east Asia on which small groups of five or six to larger teams can surf and body board.

Groups can surf by the hour, half- or full-day, and venue buyouts are possible. Flow House Bangkok also features two function rooms of 65m² and 30m² which can be used for meetings and break-outs. Other facilities include a restaurant, a fully licensed bar. Free Wi-Fi and an in-house sound system is provided.

Email info@flowhousebangkok.com for more information, or visit www.flowhousebangkok.com.

Host an event among fancy cars

The Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Bangkok Boutique, the luxury carmaker's first showroom in a luxury shopping mall, may welcome planners of bespoke events and incentives with open arms.

Paul Harris, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Asia-Pacific regional director, said the showroom could "work with luxury affinity partners for events, such as champagne brunches, auctions, jewellery displays and fashion shows".

Proposals for events will, however, be carefully considered. "If there is publicity from the event or if we get exposure to that organisation in a different way, then will we consider (the proposal)," explained Harris.

The automaker already allows its larger showrooms in Singapore and Taipei, both of which include first-class lounge-style facilities, to be hired for bespoke executive meetings. The presentation rooms at these two showrooms can host events with 10 guests.

"For certain bespoke events we do cater a Rolls-Royce pick-up and drop-off service," added Harris.

**Get sporty**

ONYX Hospitality Group, in collaboration with Buriram United Football Club, has opened Amari Buriram United, Thailand's first football themed hotel. The stadium-design structure features 44 superior rooms, 14 deluxe rooms and two suites ranging from 34m² to 114m², plus a mini football field, swimming pool and gym. There's even bench-style seating at the hotel's restaurant.

For planners who want to inject some culture into the itinerary, the town of Buriram provides an excellent base for exploring the 143 temples and historic ruins spread across the province.

Contact (66) 2255-3767 for more information.



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Beijing's meetings business is not advancing as fast as the speed at which new tourism infrastructure is emerging

Tough road ahead

Several factors, including intensifying competition from sister cities, have hurt Beijing's popularity as a MICE destination. By **Prudence Lui**

Beijing is becoming more accessible than ever. Passenger traffic through Beijing Capital International Airport (BCIA) hit a record high of 81.9 million in 2012, making it the second busiest airport in the world.

Air China has expanded its international network this year, launching four-weekly Houston-Beijing flights on B777-300ER aircraft on July 11 and four-weekly Beijing-Geneva flights on A330-200 aircraft on May 7. Meanwhile, several Chinese carriers have registered their interest with the Civil Aviation Administration of China to operate new routes. For example, Hainan Airlines has sought approval to start daily Beijing-Boston flights in April 2014 and thrice-weekly Beijing-Bali services during the 2013 winter schedule; Air China has also applied to start daily flights from Beijing to Siem Reap and Phnom Penh from November 2013 and February 2014 respectively.

The hotel scene in the Chinese capital is also busy with new openings. Jones Lang LaSalle's senior associate, Tina Jin, said Beijing's hotel room inventory is expected to grow by approximately 21.3 per cent to 38,327 rooms between 2012 and end of 2015.

Unfortunately, Beijing's tourism performance is not moving in tandem with the infrastructure growth.

The city's foreign arrivals slipped during the first seven months of 2013, registering a 13.9 per cent decline to 2.51 million overnight foreign visitors. According to Beijing Municipal Commission of Tourism Development, arrivals from the capital's top five overseas source markets – the US (431,441), South Korea (215,002), Hong Kong (197,353), Taiwan (140,000) and Japan (135,914) – all declined, with Japan recording the sharpest plunge at 53.7 per cent amid political rows.

Tourism receipts from January to July this year also fell 14.3 per cent to US\$2.2

billion.

On the business events front, Beijing, which took the 10th spot for hosting 111 qualified meetings in ICCA's ranking of top 10 congress cities in 2011, lost its footing on the recent list released in May 2013. It now ranks 13th for hosting 109 qualified meetings in 2012.

China Travel Service Head Office (Beijing), American & Pacific Department, general manager, Mark Wang, said the downward trend in tourism performance had plagued Beijing's inbound players for years now.

He said: "Inbound business has been slow for the past few years, and this year is no exception. Many factors are at play here – the global economic slowdown, the appreciation of Renminbi, rising costs, pollution in the city, food safety woes, etc."

Adding to Beijing's bag of obstacles is the rising appeal of other cities in China as event destinations.

HRG China assistant deputy general



“We (Beijing) don’t lack infrastructure, money or international brands but we can’t produce quality conferences to impress clients from the US and Europe. I hope BCVB (Beijing Convention & Visitors Bureau) would learn from other countries by doing exchange programmes and research.”

David Ong

General manager for China,
Off-site Connections Event Solutions

manager, Sara Liu, said clients had increasingly opted for second-tier cities over the past three years, with a significant surge in such requests last year.

Liu said: “A good example is the peak period for annual corporate dinners from November to January – most of our clients are now exploring options in Dongguan, Guangzhou and Chengdu. The rising

popularity of second-tier cities is also reflected in the high demand for flights from first-tier cities, such as from Shanghai to Sanya. Wuhan, Xiamen and Chengdu are fast emerging as business travel destinations in China.”

Said Wessel Krauss, general manager of Hotel Éclat Beijing, which opened its doors in March this year: “Many of our guests visit Beijing for indi-

vidual business meetings or (leisure). In comparison with cities such as Chengdu, Beijing is not as aggressive in marketing itself.”

Despite the fall in arrivals and waning interest in Beijing among event organisers, the city’s hotel rates have risen, largely due to Beijing being a business hub.

Pacific World Beijing’s director of operations for MICE,



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Y Y Yan, who labels Beijing an “expensive destination”, said: “A deluxe five-star hotel here may cost US\$400 (a night) now, double the price seen seven or eight years ago.

“Our source markets are Europe and North America, and given their economic situation, their budget hardly covers the whole package. It was a very bad year in 2012 for us (and other DMCS), and the situation will be even worse in 2013.”

Diaoyutai MGM Hospitality regional director of sales and marketing, May Chow, agrees that hotel rates are high, even more

so during the peak season, but argued that Beijing hotels were “not as expensive as those in London, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Seoul and Taipei because the city’s mass population provides reasonable labour cost, and room supply is more than demand. (Comparatively), Beijing is affordable”.

Another challenge that Beijing’s MICE players must contend with is the Chinese government’s recent move to tighten spending on domestic and international functions and meetings. Industry players

109

The number of ICCA-qualified meetings hosted in Beijing last year, earning it the 13th spot on ICCA’s latest ranking of top congress cities. It took the 10th spot in 2012 for hosting 111 events in 2011



The new 72-hour visa-free policy encourages foreign business travellers passing through Beijing Capital International Airport (above) to explore the Chinese capital city

told *TTGmice* that MICE demand was expected to be stagnant at best.

Yet, this austerity policy has softened the Average Daily Rate (ADR) this year. According to Horwath HTL, Beijing’s market-wide ADR in 1Q2013 declined 1.9 per cent year-on-year. Unsurprisingly, hotels in west Beijing, which rely more heavily on government demand, recorded a bigger ADR drop of 3.5 per cent compared with east Beijing.

The government’s enforcement of a 72-hour visa-free policy for foreigners from 45 countries, such as France, Germany and Australia, has also lifted hopes among the city’s MICE professionals. Implemented on January 1, the policy applies to passengers transiting through BCIA. Visitors are not permitted to leave Beijing for other Chinese destinations during their stay and have to depart from Beijing.

Based on an announcement on the official website of the Beijing government, the policy is aimed at making Beijing more accessible to the world and is expected to benefit transit passengers and business travellers the most, as they will be encouraged to extend their stay for some sightseeing. ■

Beijing restructures for higher-quality meetings

Beijing’s high-end tourism and meetings industry is headed for restructuring and upgrading to raise the standards of service and product delivery.

Six areas of industry focus were identified at the 2013 Summer Summit of Beijing High-end Tourism and Meetings Industry Alliance (BHTMIA) held in July by the Beijing Municipal Commission of Tourism Development. They include buyers, attractions, meeting companies, meeting spaces, media awards, as well as research and education.

The Summit also saw the launch of a

set of five high-end tourism promotional manuals, specifically pertaining to meeting spaces, exhibition services, themed spaces, souvenirs and special cuisine. Produced by BHTMIA with guidance from the Municipal Commission, these manuals are available in Mandarin, with plans for an English version in the near future.

BHTMIA hopes that the manuals will help to draw more international meetings to Beijing and further the development of high-end tourism in the destination.

Meanwhile, for the promotion and development of themed attractions, the Municipal Commission has launched a pilot set of guidelines for the industry, covering key areas such as operations, quality enhancement and promotions.

It is also looking at producing a manual to raise international awareness for Beijing’s major tourism and meeting industry events, such as the BHTMIA Summit and China Incentives, Business travel and Meetings Expo (CIBTM). – **Josephine Lee**

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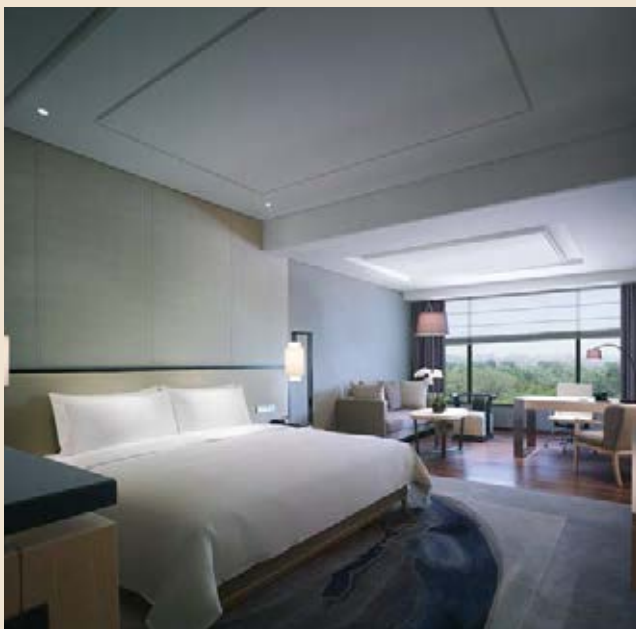
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Scheduled to open this month, the five-star New World Beijing Hotel will feature 309 rooms and suites, with room sizes ranging between 47m² for superior rooms and 400m² for the exclusive presidential suite.

It will also offer 1,542m² of meeting and banquet spaces, four dining outlets, including an open-air rooftop bar, an all-day café, a lobby lounge and a 200-seat Chinese restaurant, as well as a health club and spa equipped with a gym, an indoor pool, a sauna and steam rooms.

Business guests will appreciate the hotel's proximity to key attractions such as The Temple of Heaven and the Forbidden City.

Visit www.beijing.newworldhotels.com for more information.

Navigate with personal guides

The 521-room Renaissance Beijing Capital Hotel has launched the *R Navigators* programme, in which selected employees act as personal guides to guests by offering insiders' tips on places to dine, shop or visit in Beijing.

Examples of off-the-radar experiences offered by these navigators include a Houhai Hutong tricycle tour led by a guide sharing ghost stories of the historic houses, a cooking class at Black Sesame Kitchen followed by lunch and a Sanlitun bar tour, and the Amazing Race-style *Navigator Game* highlighting local areas such as Today Art Museum, Panjiayuan Antique Market and Pearl Market.

Call (86-10) 5863-8888 for more information.

Discoveries in the capital

The luxurious 520-room Kempinski Hotel Beijing Lufthansa Center in the Chinese capital has rolled out local discovery experiences for Global Hotel Alliance (GHA) members.

Available till the end of this year, the *Backstage at the Peking Opera* programme takes guests to the Li Garden Theatre, offering backstage access for guests to observe the making of the traditional opera, from the makeup process to the end of the show. The three-hour package includes transfers by a BMW limousine and VIP seats during the performance.

Non-GHA members have to pay a price to join the tour.

Contact (86-10) 6465-3388 or visit www.kempinski.com for more information.

Spicy treats

From its beginning at the Gongti *hutongs* to its relocation to Sanlitun Village North in 2011, Transit Restaurant and Lounge remains one of Beijing's best spots for authentic Sichuan cuisine.

The 70-seat outlet offers must-try cold starters such as spicy cold chicken and vinaigrette bamboo tips, braised eggplants in litsea oil, honey ginger baked pork knuckle and stir-fried spicy chicken with pomelo vinaigrette – usually only available in the mountains of Sichuan.

There is also a six-metre bar, which doubles as a spot for executive lunches and pre- or post-dinner cocktails.

Contact (86-10) 6417-9090 for information.

Eat a bowl of something nice

A design-driven restaurant in Beijing's Sanlitun Village in Chaoyang District, Big Bowl Small Plate makes an ideal spot to bond with colleagues over a great meal.

Stylishly furnished in white, purple and light wood finishings, the quirky restaurant offers booth seats shaped to resemble giant bowls.

The simple menu impresses with an array of noodle and rice dishes, which are "neither big nor small" to tantalise taste buds to crave for larger portions.

Signature dishes include beef brisket noodle and fried pork fillet drizzled with chef's special sauce. Light desserts such as jasmine and pomelo cake are also served, with beverage choices ranging from home-made cane juice to fresh soya milk.

Contact (86-10) 6416-0880 for reservations.



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Hotel updates



Parkroyal on Beach Road, Singapore



Royal Wing Suites & Spa, Pattaya, Thailand



Grand Hyatt Hong Kong

Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan, India

Marriott International has launched Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan in the automobile and manufacturing hub of Chakan, making it the Indian city's maiden international business hotel. It features 175 rooms including 12 residential suites, and 1,089m² of indoor and outdoor meeting space. All-day dining restaurant, Momo Café, offers international, Indian and local specialties.

www.marriott.com

Grand Hyatt Hong Kong

Guestrooms on levels 24 to 26 at Grand Hyatt Hong Kong have been renovated and now take on a new design that blends traditional and modern notes in an elegant, residential style. Natural finishes and neutral tones of stone and timber, augmented with rich colours and materials, are used for the rooms and corridor. A generously sized solid timber table transforms easily from an in-room dining table to a spacious and effective work zone. Spectacular views of the Victoria Harbour and the city skyline are also maximised throughout the new rooms.

www.hongkong.grand.hyatt.com

InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong

After the recent completion of a refurbishment project costing over HK\$200 million (US\$25.8 million), the InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong now offers 389 refreshed Premier rooms and suites. Room layouts have been altered to enhance the rooms' spaciousness and offer clear views of Victoria Harbour. The rooms also sport a new interior design and modern conveniences including a Nespresso coffee machine (suites only) and a multimedia LCD television.

www.hongkong.intercontinental.com

Novotel Danang Premier Han River, Vietnam

Located on the western bank of the Han River in Danang's central business district and offering 360° views of its surroundings, the new Novotel Danang Premier Han River is a 10-minute drive from Danang International Airport and one kilometre away from Danang Railway Station. It offers 323 guestrooms and suites, each with either a balcony or terrace, as well as more than 800m² of flexible meeting space that can accommodate up to 830 guests. F&B options include The Square, serving local and international food either buffet or à la carte; Splash Pool Bar for wine; and Pier 36 Lobby Lounge.

www.novotel-danang-premier.com

Parkroyal on Beach Road, Singapore

The Ballrooms at Parkroyal on Beach Road, a new stand-alone event facility that is connected to the hotel via a skywalk, has opened. Set over 576m², The Ballrooms comprises a spacious reception area, two pillarless ballrooms – the Grand Ballroom and the Sky Ballroom – and a private boardroom. Both ballrooms can be divided into six smaller rooms. Altogether, the spaces can accommodate events with up to 860 guests.

www.parkroyalhotels.com

Raffles Hainan, China

Located on Clearwater Bay, the 299-room Raffles Hainan offers event planners a 790m² ballroom, seven meeting rooms and a beachfront pavilion ideal for product launches. Other facilities include seven restaurants and bars, and a spa.

www.affles.com/hainan

Royal Wing Suites & Spa, Pattaya, Thailand

The Royal Cliff Hotels Group's Roy-

al Wing Suites & Spa has completed its renovations. It now has a new, exclusive entrance that boasts a waterfall, richer colours and surrounding greenery. The Presidential suites have been redesigned into a three-bedroom Presidential Heritage Suite and a two-bedroom Presidential Platinum Suite. The accompanying Presidential Salas offers luxurious Thai-style beachside relaxation. Other facilities that have been revamped include the Royal Wing pool and the Royal Wing Cliff Spa and Terrace @ Caprice.

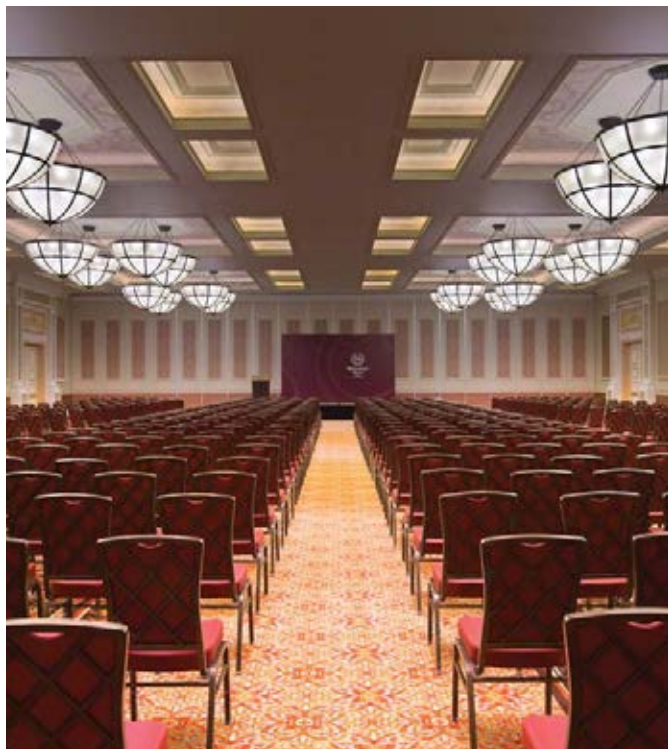
www.royalwingsuites.com

Sheraton Qinhuaingdao Beidaihe Hotel, China

The new 243-key Sheraton Qinhuaingdao Beidaihe Hotel is a 15-minute drive from the Qinhuaingdao Economic & Technology Development Zone, 10 minutes from the Qinhuaingdao Beidaihe Train Station and 45 minutes from the Qinhuaingdao Shanhaiguan Airport. Besides 1,800m² of event space, the hotel also features a business centre, a variety of F&B outlets, spa, gym and heated indoor pool.

www.starwoodhotels.com

Packages



MACAU

Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central is offering up to two full days of free meeting services for bookings of at least 50 rooms for two nights' stay.

The benefit is part of Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central's *Meet for Free* programme, which aims to incentivise meeting planners to hold their events at the property.

Priced from HK\$1,300⁺⁺ per room per night, the offer includes full-day use of a plenary room (maximum two free days), welcome coffee/tea each morning, morning and afternoon coffee breaks, complimentary buffet lunch and use of basic audiovisual equipment. Terms apply.

Email sales.macao@sheraton.com

SINGAPORE

Parkroyal on Beach Road has rolled out a residential meeting package for its new stand-alone events facility, The Ballrooms.

Priced from S\$90⁺⁺ (US\$70.60⁺⁺) per person per day, the package includes free flow of coffee and tea, coffee breaks with snacks in the morning and afternoon, buffet lunch at Plaza Brasserie, a welcome cocktail at Club 5 and two complimentary room upgrades to the next room category.

A one-hour cocktail reception at the poolside, with free flow of soft drinks and canapés, can be added to the programme for S\$25⁺⁺ per person.

A dinner and dance package is also available from S\$68 per person for an international buffet dinner and S\$680 per table of 10 for a Chinese set dinner. Terms and conditions apply to these packages.

Email banquet.prsin@parkroyalhotels.com

CHINA

The Portman Ritz-Carlton, Shanghai has reintroduced its Shikumen meeting package, which combines business events with an insight to the city's architectural heritage. Available for half-day and full-day meetings with rates starting from RMB910 (US\$149) per guest, the package includes use of a meeting room with standard audiovisual equipment and amenities, a specialty Shikumen themed coffee break, lunch, and a Shikumen day tour including transportation and guide, among others.

Email rc.shar.z.catering@ritzcarlton.com

CHINA

Park Hotel Group is offering complimentary use of a meeting room with a minimum booking of 20 room nights at its properties in China – Grand Park Kunming, Grand Park Wuxi and Grand Park Xian. In addition, a 10 per cent discount on the hotel's gourmet menu is available. Bookings must be made before October 31 and the event must be held by December 31. Other terms apply.

Email Grand Park Kunming – bqt.gpkm@parkhotelgroup.com / Grand Park Wuxi – bqt.gpwx@parkhotelgroup.com / Grand Park Xian – bqt.gpxa@parkhotelgroup.com



THAILAND

Kirimaya Golf Resort Spa and Muthi Maya Forest Pool Villa Resort, luxury properties close to a UNESCO World Heritage national park and mountain ranges in Khao Yai, are offering a weekday corporate retreat offer, valid from September 1, 2013 to February 28, 2014.

The offer is priced from 18,800 baht (US\$616) for a Kirimaya Plantation View Single room and 31,000 baht for a Muthi Maya Forest Pool Villa single room. The package includes two nights' accommodation, daily buffet breakfast, two buffet dinners with soft drinks, a full-day meeting with two coffee breaks and lunch over two days, one set of standard audiovisual equipment and complimentary Wi-Fi access.

A minimum booking of 10 rooms is required to access the offer. Other terms apply.

Contact reservation@kirimaya.com and reservation@muthimaya.com

Have a red hot deal on hand to offer event planners? Send details to ttgnewsdesk@ttgasia.com and we may just share it on Packages.

Case studies

Women Deliver 2013

Executing numerous quality dining events on time is a challenge for Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, but the venue rises to the occasion, discovers **S Puvaneswary**



Women Deliver 2013, hailed as the decade's largest meeting focused on women's health and empowerment, boasted a gathering of more than 3,500 attendees when it took place at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre in Malaysia.

The event utilised the entire Centre, featuring more than 100 sessions led by some of the world's leading voices on girls' and women's issues such as Melinda Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Chelsea Clinton, board member of the Clinton Foundation; Babatunde Oso-timehin, executive director of the United Nations Population Foundation; and Cecile Richards, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Malaysian prime minister, Mohd Najib Abdul Razak, led the opening ceremony.

Due to the high-profile attendees, security was tight and only delegates were allowed entry into the venue.

Besides the security issue, the biggest challenge the Centre faced during the conference was the need to cater for numerous dining events on time.

Describing the complexity of operations, executive chef Richmond Lim, said: "On the first day, we had to cater breakfast for the partner's programme. It involved five different menus at five locations over two floors. In the evening, we had to cater 15 cocktails, all happening at the same time over two floors."

As the same meeting venues were being used for back-to-back cocktail functions, the Centre's staff had less than 30

Event
Women Deliver 2013
No. of delegates
Over 3,500 pax
Venue
Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre
Date
May 28-30, 2013
Objectives
The global conference is one of the world's largest gatherings of policy-makers, advocates and researchers, focusing exclusively on women's health and empowerment to date
Challenges
The Centre's kitchens are put to the test with 41 breakfast sessions, 28 cocktail receptions, one networking dinner and several standing buffet lunches
Quick turnaround is also needed to clear the halls that are being used for a variety of back-to-back functions

minutes to transform layouts.

Lim said: "On the second day, we had to cater 16 breakfasts and come evening, we did seven cocktails and a street fair for dinner. We offered a variety of local dishes, including satay, for 3,500 delegates. It was a challenge to serve up 18,400 sticks of grilled satay and keep them hot while retaining moisture during the course of the dinner.

"Our kitchens were kept busy preparing 1,700 lunch boxes of different menus daily, each comprising a main course, salad and dessert as well as muesli bars and apples on the go. These were for delegates who attended lunch seminars. At the same time, in two exhibition halls, we had to deliver standing buffets for 1,800 delegates every day," said Lim.

To cope with the F&B requirements, 51 full-time chefs worked almost round the clock and a pool of casual labour was utilised to help out in the kitchens, move food items to various venues and set up venues for meetings and breaks.

According to Lim, months of planning went into F&B logistics. He said: "We had to ensure that the food was always delivered on time and at the right temperature. We also had to be sensitive to the dietary requirements of delegates from 149 countries. Understanding that everyone has their own preference, we opted for a combination approach, offering a variety of local and international fare as well as vegetarian and gluten-free options."

Deputy general manager Alan Pryor added that the Centre took an innovative approach to lunch service.

A standing lunch was provided for 1,800 delegates across four exhibition halls, allowing delegates the opportunity to network and continue browsing the exhibition booths.

Jill Sheffield, president of Women Deliver, commented: "It was the perfect venue for our meeting (and we achieved) wonderful outcomes." ■

Perfect China Leadership Seminar 2013

Private, public sectors in Sydney join hands to deliver a unique incentive experience for more than 3,000 top achievers from Perfect China, writes **S Puvaneswary**

BridgeClimb Sydney operated on 'super capacity mode' over four days in July this year to enable 2,100 top achievers from Perfect China to successfully scale the Sydney Harbour Bridge. That dedication from BridgeClimb Sydney resulted in a proud moment for both Perfect China and the Australian city – Perfect China became the largest corporate group to ever scale the iconic attraction.

BridgeClimb Sydney was just one of many local suppliers in Sydney that went out of their way to make the dreams of these incentive winners come true, said Lyn Lewis-Smith, CEO of Business Events Sydney.

For these Chinese top achievers, their programme in Australia included exclusive sight-seeing tours that were out of reach for the average tourist. For example, Tobruk Sheep Station in Maroota, New South Wales was hired exclusively for the group to experience rural Australia.

Just as how the delegation was split into smaller numbers for the Sydney Harbour Bridge adventure, participants were also divided into manageable group sizes for the programme at Tobruk Sheep Station. That ensured a smooth-running activity that was not plagued with long queues. As such, all delegates received personalised attention.

Some 500 delegates travelled to the station daily, where they were welcomed by stockmen on horseback who led them from the gate to the homestead. They got to witness and participate in a variety of activities such as sheep rearing, damper and billy tea cooking, bush dancing and sheep mustering. Participants were also divided into smaller groups for up-close encounters with koalas and an array of farm animals.

Another unique activity was created at Darling Harbour where a large public space was cordoned off to allow the 3,000-strong incentive group to welcome Perfect China chairman, Koo Yuen Kim, and other top officials who had arrived by boat. A high-speed water display complete with jet boats, speedboats, fireworks and acrobatics completed the memorable experience.



Event

Perfect China Leadership Seminar 2013

No. of delegates

More than 3,000

Destination

New South Wales, Australia

Date

July 11-17, 2013

Objectives

To motivate and reward staff through unique experiences

Challenges

Personalised attention for every delegate and a smooth programme without long queues must be ensured; unique tours that are not available to the average tourist must be created

Lewis-Smith said: "The Perfect China Leadership Seminar gave Sydney the chance to showcase the strong connections across government and industry suppliers and how the city works in unison to add value to visiting events.

"Understanding the economic and cul-

tural benefits of hosting such a prestigious event, Business Events Sydney and Destination New South Wales worked closely with Perfect China to ensure that the client felt supported and appreciated, as well as excited about visiting the harbour city.

"As a result, Perfect China saw a 20 per cent growth in performance and a 20 per cent increase in qualifiers for the trip after it announced that the 2013 incentive would be held in Sydney. These statistics are testament to Sydney's iconic status as one of the world's most desirable destinations, and its ability to deliver real returns to corporate clients."

An impressed Koo said: "All visa applications were approved in a short time, and none were rejected. Business Events Sydney and Destination New South Wales also provided us with promotional activities, collaterals and media coverage which enhanced our corporate image in Australia.

"(We chose) Australia as an incentive destination because of its (experienced) MICE facilities and track record of successful large-scale incentive tours. Selecting Australia gave our distributors a holiday of a different kind, with plenty of fun experiences." ■

Over coffee with...

“ This is a generation that is far more comfortable doing business, making sales and conducting important conversations through virtual means. ”

Kelly Kuhn

Generation Y – people born between 1982 and 2000 – is the fastest growing segment of the modern workforce. Carlson Wagonlit Travel’s Asia-Pacific president, Kelly Kuhn, tells **Karen Yue** what that means to the consumption of business travel and corporate meetings



How are Generation Y travellers impacting the meetings business? What comes to mind immediately?

The rapid rise in the use of video conferencing. The technology is fast improving and it is inexpensive to use. Young people – Generation Y – are more comfortable with using that technology to have effective meetings, than to have traditional meetings where one gets on a plane and travels to customers, shakes their hands and closes a deal face-to-face.

That’s just as well, as companies are always under pressure to look for ways to be more effective in their spending. Virtual meetings will play a very important part in how businesses conduct their meetings.

Clients are now looking at how to incorporate virtual meetings into their corporate policy and working out how their travel partners can help manage that.

If virtual meetings are the future with this generation, what will happen to corporate travel suppliers like airlines?

You know, every flight I’ve been on recently was full, especially in Asia-Pacific. Hotels and airlines here have become really good at managing their yield, and are able to make sure their capacity perfectly matches demand. That’s why prices are projected to rise in major business cities in this region.

Business travel takes up time too. Here at CWT (Carlson Wagonlit Travel), our executive team sits in all continents and we cannot possibly meet as often as we need to. So we have bi-weekly

or monthly calls instead of flying everyone to meet all the time.

The way I see it, virtual meetings will help to fill the gap in capacity and allow more connections between people. You can now have more conversations with people, which may not have been possible in the past because the flight was full or because your company was trying to control cost. You can now have better attendance at meetings and events in a more cost-efficient way.

But when this generation of people does travel for business, what do they look for in a product? And are they brand loyal?

They are not brand loyal and I know this is true for many different (product) sectors. They look for features and functionality above the brand. They want hotels that offer really fast Wi-Fi and really convenient locations, for instance. They want airlines that offer the best selection of flight times, and they are used to flying with low-cost carriers.

I’ve also noticed that social media content is a big factor in Generation Y’s travel decisions. They will find out where their friends have stayed in a destination, and that information can influence where they choose to be accommodated for leisure and business. I find that very interesting. I work hard to keep my leisure side of life separate from my business movements, but this generation of people melds both together.

So what we have done is to create a tool called CWT Hotel Intel (launched November 2012), which incorporates a hotel review

function into a controlled corporate environment. It allows the client to promote preferred properties in the programme while enabling travellers to share with colleagues reviews on hotels they have stayed at. It is very cool, as it allows Generation Y travellers to do what they like – i.e. to share product reviews – while driving policy compliance.

L'Oreal in France is one of the companies piloting it right now. It believes that if it doesn't do this, it will lose its Generation Y travellers to outside the policy. L'Oreal wanted good information and to give good feedback to its preferred hotel partners, and CWT Hotel Intel is a really good way to gather that precious feedback.

Will CWT be developing more tools for smart devices, seeing how addicted this generation is to apps?

I remember a recent GBTA survey saying that China will surpass the US in business travel spend in the next couple of years, and none of that travel is being booked on a computer today. Bookings will leapfrog computers and laptops and go right to tablets and phones.

The need to get really good information on a tablet or phone, and to be able to make a booking on smart devices, is the future.

Across the world, we have deployed a new app called CWT To Go. It is very cool. I use it for all my trips. It is especially useful when there is a flight delay, as I will be the first to be informed of it, before the announcement is even made at the airport. I can research alternative flights right away, as well as look for hotels and ground transport, although I cannot make a booking. Yet. We are working on that now.

The check-in alert is also a delight. I'll get this alert 24 hours before my flight, and when I click on it, I will be taken straight to the airlines' website. All my information is captured on the website and I can just pick my seat and check right in. It is powered by Worldmate, a publicly available app that is also owned by CWT.

Last September, we launched CWT Online, an online booking tool just for China-based business travellers. It is available in both English and Mandarin, and users can book with this app. We are the first to do this, although I imagine someone else will do something similar eventually. For now, it is fun to be first-mover.

So, technology is king when it comes to pleasing the Generation Y traveller then.

Exactly. Technology will help companies accommodate Generation Y travellers. If travel information is easily available and (booking tools) appear to be customised for them, rather than something basic, these travellers will be even more interested in using it and keeping to policy.

Generation Y individuals are generally known to prefer breaking with tradition and to want greater control of their lives. Even with such cool booking technology, do you suppose they will still demand freedom in travel booking and therefore prefer unmanaged travel?

We asked that question in our recent travel industry forecast and found that they were not any more inclined to book outside of policy than any of the other age groups. (The tendency to book

outside of policy) was a less than two-per-cent variance between (the age groups of) 35-45 and 45-55.

I think one of the common misunderstandings of this generation is that its people do not want to follow rules. I think the real rebels who will push the boundaries of communication and change the way people meet are those of the next generation, those who will join the workforce in 10 years' time.

I think Generation Y travellers just want things at their convenience. If all the information is easily available to them, and if the company makes it fun for them to comply, they will book within policy like everyone else.

How do you make complying with travel policy fun?

We are just rolling out the idea of gamification – creating a gaming environment to encourage travel policy compliance – in the

US and will eventually bring it to Asia. Travellers who book according to policy can earn points, compete against colleagues who also travel, and win something that is determined by the company. This appeals to the nature of Generation Y people who are used to gaming.

A programme like this also makes policy education fun. Nobody is interested in reading 150 pages of compliance rules,

but make it a game and people are more likely to remember who their preferred suppliers are.

It takes the young to understand the young. Is CWT bringing in new blood to find ways to reach out effectively to Generation Y travellers?

Our customers are getting younger and, indeed, our employees must reflect the age of our customer base. Our head of social media for the region, for instance, is in her mid-20s. She's fantastic and incredibly creative.

Here in Singapore, we have great programmes with the local universities and the Ministry of Manpower that provide internship and on-the-job training opportunities.

Generation Y is our future. These people will be the ones who will talk to our next generation of clients, the travel managers, who are from the same generation. They will be the ones speaking the language of the new workforce.

Oh, guess what? Nobody says 'cool' anymore.

Oh dear. I say 'cool' all the time!

(Laughs) Me too! We really are so uncool.

We have only just started this exciting new programme to bring Generation Y into our company, whether they are still in university or have graduated, through active internships. We aim to get them interested in the travel industry, specifically in sales and programme management.

How have such internship programmes helped CWT?

Our head of innovation here, who is part of our global innovation team, had two interns recently for two months. One of them was a boy from UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles), who worked on finding out what sort of technologies and applications would be important to the next generation of travellers (during his stint with us). He conducted surveys and talked to our clients.

CWT To Go and CWT Hotel Intel are some of the tools that came out of our innovation team. We are now testing an idea that allows one to book door-to-door. ■

Appointments



Patrick Martinez



David Traynor



Peter Katusak-Huzsvar



Jürgen Dörr



Gilbert Chai



Frederick de Marcy Chelin



Kamal Silva



Bertrand Margerie



Nattakorn Jaikew



Stephan Fässler

AUSTRALIA

Senior AEG Ogden executive, **Geoff Donaghy**, has been elected **AIPC** president. Based in Sydney, he succeeds Edgar Hirt from Hamburg, Germany.

CHINA

Morgan Lin is now resident manager of **Pullman Sanya Yalong Bay Resort & Spa**. He was hotel manager at Amanfayun, Hangzhou.

Patrick Martinez now leads **Grand Kempinski Hotel Shanghai**, while **David Traynor** joins the team as director of sales & marketing. Traynor previously held the same title at Shangri-La Hotel and Traders Hotel in Macau.

W Guangzhou has made **Peter Katusak-Huzsvar** general manager. He joins from W St Petersburg.

INDONESIA

The Sanchaya has

appointed **Jasper Kok** and **Peter Marx** director of F&B and executive chef respectively. Kok was F&B manager at the Soneva Fushi on the Kunfundhoo Island in the Maldives. Marx joins the soon-to-open resort on Bintan island from Mia Resorts in Vietnam.

Shangri-La Hotel, Jakarta has named **Jürgen Dörr** its new general manager. Dörr has 20 years of hospitality experience. He was general manager of Shangri-La's Mactan Resort and Spa in Cebu, the Philippines.

MALAYSIA

Dorsett Grand Subang has appointed **Gilbert Chai** director of sales & marketing. Chai has worked with numerous international hotel groups such as Pan Pacific Hotels & Resorts, Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts and Nikko Hotels International.

MALDIVES

Thanos Lionsatos has joined **Dusit Thani Maldives** as director of sales & marketing, bringing with him more than 20 years of hospitality experience. He has worked for hotel groups such as Oakwood and Hilton Hotels & Resorts.

MAURITIUS

Frederick de Marcy Chelin has been appointed director of sales & marketing for **Outrigger Mauritius Resort and Spa**, which will open in December. He has eight years of hospitality experience and joins from Starwood Hotels & Resorts where he was director of corporate and group sales over the last four years.

SINGAPORE

Andreas Kohn is now director of sales & marketing for the **Mandarin Oriental, Singapore**. He was last regional director of sales

& marketing for the Viceroy Hotel Group.

Kamal Silva has joined **Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort & Spa, Singapore** as executive chef. He has 22 years of culinary experience and was last executive chef at The Fairmont Empress Hotel, Canada, where he managed over 80 chefs.

Pan Pacific Singapore has appointed **Kurt Macher** resident manager. He joins from The Peninsula Hong Kong where he was executive assistant manager.

THAILAND

Mövenpick Resort & Spa Karon Beach Phuket has appointed **Bertrand Margerie** resident manager. With 26 years of hospitality experience, Margerie has worked for international hotel companies across Europe, Africa and the Middle East. He was resident manager

for InterContinental Aqaba Resort, Jordan.

Nattakorn Jaikew has been promoted to group director of sales – south region of **Mer-cure** and **Ibis Erawan Thailand**, where he will manage the sales strategy for Ibis hotels in south Thailand. Nattakorn was group assistant director of sales – leisure at Ibis & Mercure Erawan Thailand.

Ramada Khao Lak, has appointed **Stephan Fässler** general manager. He has held executive positions with Amari, Sofitel and Dara Samui, and was last F&B manager at the Hilton Maldives Iruvushi Resort & Spa.

UAE

Julia Alvaro is now director of sales & marketing at **Dusit Thani Dubai**. She was last with Radisson Blu Media City in the same role.



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