

# TTGmice

Asia-Pacific's leading meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions resource

### COVER STORY

#### Their best bet

Be it an investment in social media, new hires, market diversification or office expansion, Asian inbound MICE players have not kept still. They tell TTGmice where they put their biggest dollars and whether it's paid off

**SOCIAL MEDIA**  
 "We've seen a significant increase in social media usage among our clients, particularly in the areas of LinkedIn and Facebook. We've seen a lot of clients using these platforms to connect with us and to promote their own businesses. We've also seen a lot of clients using social media to recruit new talent. We've seen a lot of clients using social media to promote their own businesses. We've also seen a lot of clients using social media to recruit new talent." - **John Doe**, CEO, ABC Company

**NEW HIRING**  
 "We've seen a significant increase in new hiring among our clients, particularly in the areas of sales and marketing. We've seen a lot of clients hiring new talent to help them grow their businesses. We've also seen a lot of clients hiring new talent to help them grow their businesses. We've also seen a lot of clients hiring new talent to help them grow their businesses." - **John Doe**, CEO, ABC Company

**MARKET DIVERSIFICATION**  
 "We've seen a significant increase in market diversification among our clients, particularly in the areas of Asia and Europe. We've seen a lot of clients diversifying their markets to help them grow their businesses. We've also seen a lot of clients diversifying their markets to help them grow their businesses. We've also seen a lot of clients diversifying their markets to help them grow their businesses." - **John Doe**, CEO, ABC Company

**OFFICE EXPANSION**  
 "We've seen a significant increase in office expansion among our clients, particularly in the areas of Asia and Europe. We've seen a lot of clients expanding their offices to help them grow their businesses. We've also seen a lot of clients expanding their offices to help them grow their businesses. We've also seen a lot of clients expanding their offices to help them grow their businesses." - **John Doe**, CEO, ABC Company

### COVER STORY

#### A great wish...

The new year brings with it a host of wishes and dreams. We ask industry leaders what they wish for in 2014

**1. Mandy Goh**  
 Chief Executive, Singapore

**2. Anand Gopinath**  
 Chairman, Singapore

**3. Ene Kijana**  
 Chairman, Singapore

**4. Lee Chuan**  
 Chairman, Singapore

**5. Lim Joo Keng**  
 Chairman, Singapore

**6. Lim Joo Keng**  
 Chairman, Singapore

**7. Lim Joo Keng**  
 Chairman, Singapore

**8. Lim Joo Keng**  
 Chairman, Singapore

**9. Lim Joo Keng**  
 Chairman, Singapore

**10. Lim Joo Keng**  
 Chairman, Singapore

### COVER STORY

#### The best fam trip

How to do a fam trip that has buyers swooning and securing the products of the next day? International buyers spill the beans on which fam trip worked them this year

**1. Anand Gopinath**  
 Chairman, Singapore

**2. Ene Kijana**  
 Chairman, Singapore

**3. Lee Chuan**  
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 Chairman, Singapore

### COVER STORY

#### All the best intentions

It's never too late to have a new resolution in the new year days upon us. Here's a peek into the minds of mace leaders in the region on what they 'shall' and what they 'dare' do in 2014

**1. SHALL** in 2014 more business and growth to bring the MICE International Conference 2014 to life. Get a new office near my home, as I can get to the office faster every day.

**2. SHALL** focus on new technologies and digital marketing to help us grow our business.

**3. SHALL** focus on new technologies and digital marketing to help us grow our business.

**4. SHALL** focus on new technologies and digital marketing to help us grow our business.

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### COVER STORY

#### Reporters' notebook

TTGmice journalists share their best and worst MICE events, encounters or interviewees this year

**1. Best Event**  
 The 2013 MICE International Conference was a great success. The speakers were top-notch, and the networking opportunities were excellent. It was a great experience for everyone involved.

**2. Worst Event**  
 The 2013 MICE International Conference was a great success. The speakers were top-notch, and the networking opportunities were excellent. It was a great experience for everyone involved.

**3. Best Encounter**  
 Meeting with John Doe, CEO of ABC Company, was a highlight of the year. We had a great conversation about the future of the industry and the challenges we face.

**4. Worst Encounter**  
 Meeting with John Doe, CEO of ABC Company, was a highlight of the year. We had a great conversation about the future of the industry and the challenges we face.

**5. Best Interviewee**  
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## The best bets of 2013 Fam trips that produce results

## The 'it' products of the year

## Our reporters' dream and nightmare encounters in 2013

## 2014 resolutions of MICE chiefs



# MEETINGS AT MERITUS

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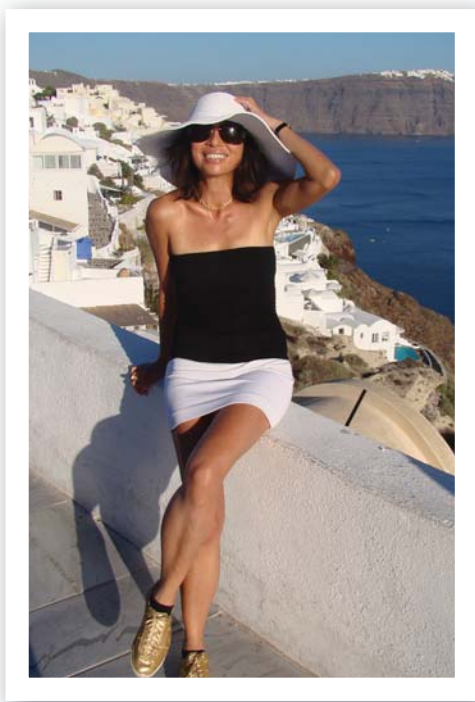
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MANDARIN  
SINGAPORE  
BY MERITUS

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# To our readers

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## Money well spent



**Raini Hamdi**  
Senior editor

**“Many DMCs throughout Asia have used the year wisely, ploughing back profit into the field in a bid to yield greener shoots.”**

Each year at this time of the year we all ask the same question: Where on earth did our year go?

Then, the dreaded question: Did we spend it wisely?

One of our sections in this year-end issue looks at how inbound MICE players spent the year, specifically, what they did for business this year that they considered their best investment. Their response was uplifting. Many DMCs throughout Asia have used the year wisely, ploughing back profit into the field in a bid to yield greener shoots.

It is especially heartening to see that the biggest area of investment evidently is technology, be it harnessing social media networks as a means to net new clients, or installing a new booking engine, a new administration system or a new software, all with one intention – making transactions seamless for clients, transparent for partners and raising company productivity and efficiency.

Another key area of investment appears to be – big hurrah – staff. Finally! The need to attract and retain talent for the MICE industry is being felt as DMCs start to show willingness to invest in the right hires and bring in new blood, who they can not just train, but learn from. It is telling that, in another section where MICE chiefs were asked to share their 2014 resolutions, one of them said: *“I shall try to listen*

*to what the younger generation is trying to say. They may have different opinions which I can learn to accept.”* One ‘like’ from me for Indra Sukirno, executive director, Jakarta Convention & Exhibition Bureau, who said that. It made me smile.

Yet another big area where dollars were spent was cultivating new markets and business segments.

These kinds of investments are needed, especially when various reports are already showing that the outlook for meetings and events next year is basically flat. American Express Meetings & Events even expects Asia-Pacific to record the largest decline (-3.6 percent) among all regions in overall meetings spend per organisation as companies in the region shift towards having greater spend control, stricter guidelines for meetings and demanding more ROI and accountability from meetings and events.

Well, that’s another story – do look out for the full Outlook 2014 in the next issue. I cannot believe we are already talking about the first issue of 2014 and, before we know it, 2014 too will whizz by. So make sure you think of how to spend it wisely before it’s over again.

From all of us at *TTGmice*, here’s wishing you some good downtime this year-end in which to reflect – and a good uptick in business and pleasure in the year ahead. ■

**TTG**mice  
DEC 2013/JAN 2014



## COVER STORY

# 2013 round-up

**10** From the best business investment made by MICE trade players this year to *TTGmice* reporters' most notable on-the-job encounters, we round up 2013 with a compilation of memories and thoughts for the year ahead

## COUNTRY REPORTS

### 25 Asian markets roar ahead

Despite recent event bid losses, Thailand's MICE sector soars on rising regional arrivals. By **Greg Lowe**

### 31 In nature's embrace

More business event planners are clamouring for Taiwan's scenic leisure farms, but housing large overnight groups is a challenge, writes **Lee Pei Qi**

### 36 A strong proposition

A flurry of MICE incentives and initiatives have given Malaysia a slew of business events in 2013, and it is doing even more in the new year, writes **S Puvaneswary**

### 42 Sichuan in fiery pursuit

Multiple challenges have only fuelled the Chinese province's determination to advance its tourism business, discovers **Prudence Lui**

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# TTGmice

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We can make GREEN MICE  
**SONGDO,  
INCHEON**



# Songdo, Incheon The Worldwide Green MICE Destination

**T**he sustainable green MICE city, Songdo has eco-friendly international workplaces, with green spaces occupying 40% of the entire site.

The city is highly accessible, with a subway and buses from Incheon International Airport. And like every eco-friendly city, it has worked toward minimum carbon emissions by building bike lanes within the city and electric vehicle charging stations. Additionally, the city operates as a true green city by controlling carbon dioxide emissions at the city's central waste collection system and by preventing pollution at the cogeneration plant using natural gas.

Songdo is a “green place” with recycling resources such as rainwater utilization, 75% recycling of construction supplies, and eco-friendly construction materials, all contributing to building an eco-friendly city.

As MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition) has soared to become one of the world's major industries driving new growth, MICE business events have been held throughout the world. However, after these exhibitions, fairs, and international meetings, waste and disposable exhibits are left behind, going against the very purpose of creating new added value.



**Incheon Convention Visitors' Bureau** has instituted eco-friendly agendas, including carbon emission reduction through minimized travel, a waste conservation system, recycling, and the donation of leftovers.



## Let MICE be SUSTAINABLE in Songdo, Incheon



### 20 minutes from Incheon International Airport, a distance that minimizes carbon emissions.

The distance between Incheon International Airport and Songdo ConvensiA is 29.27km (18 miles). A MICE participant traveling back and forth from the airport to the center five times discharges only 1.14kg of carbon, as little as 1/90th of the carbon produced traveling to other convention centers in Korea.



### Songdo ConvensiA, Asia's first LEED Certified convention center

Songdo ConvensiA has been certified in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), the first convention center in Asia to do so. 250 buildings in Songdo International city will be developed in line with LEED requirements, equivalent to over 80% of the whole area.



### Part of the "INCHEON MICE Alliance Green Agreement Ceremony" to become an Eco-Friendly MICE City

Since the green agreement ceremony of Incheon MICE Alliance (2012.12.21), Incheon Metropolitan city has made a number of efforts to build an eco-friendly MICE city.

#### Convention Center

- Separate collection and recycling of materials
- Use LED lamps
- Electric vehicles charging station

#### PCOs

- Replace posters and guide signs with LCD monitors
- Recycle name tags and banners
- Make brochures with recycled paper and soybin oil ink

#### Hotels

- No blanket and towel washing system suggestions for stays longer than 2days
- Rate discounts for environment related conventions

#### Foods&Beverage

- Use local food and fair trade agriculture products
- Donate leftovers to local food banks
- Reduce using disposable packages

### Want to learn more?

Download our free **Meeting Planners' Guide** from [www.incheoncvb.co.kr](http://www.incheoncvb.co.kr)

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# Talk of the Trade

THAILAND

## Bangkok takes a hit

By TTGmice reporters

Many Asian MICE groups due to travel to Bangkok during this season have stuck to their bookings, although demand for next year is proving to be weak.

Malaysia-based Rakyat Travel's general manager, Adam Kamal, said he is handling four incentive groups to Bangkok this month and at press time, there are no cancellations.

"The protests are away from tourist areas, it has not affected flights and the Thai government has taken a softer approach this time, so incentive groups are not worried," he explained. However, his company has not received any new bookings to Bangkok for next year.

Over in Singapore, Alicia Seah, marketing communications director, Dynasty Travel, said: "It is logistically more challenging for groups to cancel their plans there because they

have already pre-booked meeting and accommodation venues in large quantities." The agency currently has three corporate groups in Bangkok.

There has also been little impact on Indonesian outbound. Panorama Tours Indonesia managing director, corporate incentive management, Vidya Hermanto, said: "I had a group in December that actually wanted to move to another destination, but if it did, the hotels in Bangkok would charge cancellation fee."

Meanwhile, Thai operators are concerned about forward bookings.

Michael Lynden-Bell, general manager Thailand at Exotissimo Travel, said: "Our MICE performance for January and February is looking a bit iffy...We've just had a cancellation for 150 pax from France and we're waiting to hear if they're willing to relocate."



Marina Chinanurakchart, director of Meeting and Convention Planner Thailand, said the agency had received one cancellation, adding that the biggest impact would be on newcomers to Thailand and groups still in the bidding process.

She said: "It's not looking promising...we're working on a number of groups now and we're not sure that they will still consider Thailand."

"If everything ends (in early December) then we're looking at some impact for the next three months. If the demonstrations continue, it could be six months or more." – Greg Lowe, Lee Pei Qi, Mimi Hudoyo and S Puvanewary

## TALKING NUMBERS

**4** Projected percentage decline in Asia-Pacific planners' meetings spend for 2014, according to the latest American Express Meetings & Events 2014 Global Meetings Forecast.

**2** The predicted percentage drop in the number of attendees per meeting for next year.

SINGAPORE

## Suntec Singapore bags 88 events

Five months after emerging from a major renovation this year, Suntec Singapore Convention Exhibition Centre has released a sterling line-up of key events for 2014.

The company has announced 88 key events, including 16 major medical events, 16 tradeshows, 19 consumer events and 37 international conferences and special events.

The events range widely from medical and technology to lifestyle and financial in-

dustries, including first timers such as Blueprint 2014, Asia's Fashion Gateway, Prudential Eye Awards, Singapore Art Fair, AAMA-TEX, UROFAIR and Trans Asia 2014.

CEO Arun Madhok said: "I fully expect 2014 to be a very successful and busy year. Having said that, we are not just looking to fill the Centre for the sake of it. We are looking to foster long-term collaboration with events and clients who can use the full potential

of our Centre for our collective success."

In the five months since re-opening in June 2013, the centre ran 196 events with a total of 780,000 visitors. This included 56 exhibitions and 124 conferences and meetings, including first-time events to Singapore such as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, which brought in 3,890 international and local delegates from 122 countries.

## JAPAN

# Japan pushes industrial heavyweights

By Hannah Koh

Japan is banking on its world-class manufacturing and agricultural sectors to draw more tourists under a new industrial tourism programme. Backed by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), it will target travel agencies and foreign companies interested in how Japanese businesses work.

Under the *Industrial Tourism: Come See What Makes Japan Tick* programme launched alongside its website ([www.jetro.go.jp/en/ind\\_tourism](http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/ind_tourism)) on November 20, a range of industrial tourism options are available across 24 destinations in Japan.

This includes trips to factories of household names such as Asahi and Kirin Beer in Hokkaido, Kikkoman Corporation in Chiba and Nissan Motor in Yokohama as well as museums like Kawasaki Good Times World in

Kobe where automobile enthusiasts can get up close to Kawasaki vehicles or Noritake Gardens in Nagoya which allows visitors to paint on their own china.

In an interview with *TTGmice*, Osamu Hisaki, creative industries planning division, creative industries promotion department of JETRO, said it is the first time JETRO is venturing into tourism.

“(In June), tourism was designated as a major field to work on for the Japanese economy. Based on this trend, JETRO prepared an action plan together with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport; and Tourism and Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO),” he explained.

Asked how JETRO intends to



Pay a visit to Kirin Beer Park Chitose

promote its newly launched offerings, Hisaki said: “With JNTO, we are considering participating in travel fairs abroad. In the meantime, we are working to increase the number of partner companies we have.”

Acknowledging that China, South Korea and Taiwan are “important customers” and major sources of visitors for Japan, he said that apart from those markets, JETRO is trying to reach countries with more than 10,000 arrivals a year.

## SINGAPORE

# STB spells out green meeting guidelines

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has launched a set of guidelines to encourage local players to meet global sustainability requirements.

STB executive director for business tourism development, Chew Tiong Heng, said: “With corporate clients and delegates becoming increasingly concerned about the environment, business event organisers and meeting planners are turning to destinations and venues with strong sustainability policies in place.

The guidelines cover seven industry categories from across the business events ecosystem, namely hotels, venues, event organisers, meeting planners, transportation, F&B and audio-

# 7

Business event categories covered under the guidelines

visual set-up. This includes advice on waste management and the efficient use of water and energy.

East West Planners chief executive and SACEOS president, Janet Tan-Collis, said CSR programmes are becoming “ever more important as a competitive factor for the Singapore MICE industry”.

Tour East Group senior vice president for sales and

marketing, Judy Lum, added: “Many just talk about sustainability but they do not practise it because they are not sure where to start. Now they do not have an excuse.”

Asian Detours deputy director for marketing, Florence Cheong, pointed out that corporates’ understanding of green practices is very basic, such as saving paper and reusing materials, hence this official reference guide will be a useful tool.

According to STB, the guidelines are referenced from international standards such as ISO 20121 and APEX/ASTM Environmentally Sustainable Meeting Standards. Adoption is voluntary. – **Lee Pei Qi**

## IN BRIEF

### Gyeongnam sharpens MICE claws

The MICE bureau of Gyeongnam, South Korea, will debut a new campaign, *Discover the Undiscovered*, in 2014 to showcase the province’s coastal attractions and heritage sites through farm trips and trade-show participation. This comes on top of the slew of new venues that have opened in Gyeongnam recently, such as the 136m Changwon Solar Tower which features a 300-pax conference room. According to Kim Daehwan, marketing director of Gyeongnam Convention & Visitors Bureau, efforts will be focused on South-east Asian markets.

### UFI gets new chief

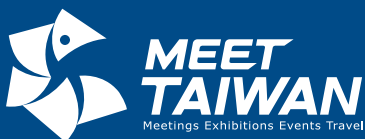
UFI has appointed Renaud Hamaide, CEO of Comexposium in Paris, France, as president for the 2013/2014 season. Hamaide succeeds Chen Xianjin, chairman of the Organising Committee of China Association for Exhibition Centers. Chen is now immediate past-president.



# MEET TAIWAN


LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

With world-class industry clusters, renowned exhibitions, diverse cultures, and a breath-taking natural environment, Taiwan lets you see the world's trends.



 **Taiwan's MICE Industry Pilot Program**  
Organized by the Bureau of Foreign Trade (BOFT), Ministry of Economic Affairs, R.O.C.  
[www.meettaiwan.com](http://www.meettaiwan.com)



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## TAIWAN

# TAITRA zooms in on congresses, incentives

By Karen Yue

Taiwan External Trade Development Council's (TAITRA) Meet Taiwan project will continue to invest in marketing communications with industry players to grow the destination's MICE business in the new year, with international association congresses and corporate incentives being the key segments of focus.

Speaking to *TTGmice* in an interview, Walter Yeh, TAITRA executive vice president, said Meet Taiwan's efforts will centre on building an extensive database of rotating congresses for industry players and providing assistance to incentive buyers.

"Data on rotating congresses is crucial for bidding success and we have been analysing ICCA's database for market intelligence. This information will be shared with PCOs to help them identify events they can bid for and boost their bidding success rate," said Yeh.

To grow Taiwan's incentive business,

Meet Taiwan will continue to provide support such as the provision of official invites to facilitate travel visa approvals and destination marketing assistance to local city governments.

"Although China is today a big market for Taiwan's incentive segment, contributing 90 per cent of the 100 incentive groups we welcomed this year, we will continue to court South-east Asian and other North Asian markets such as Malaysia and Japan. We will conduct several familiarisation trips for event houses and end-user clients in these markets," he added.

According to Yeh, the 100 incentive groups to Taiwan involved almost 40,000 delegates. He aims to attract 150 incentive groups in 2014.

"Taiwan can offer plenty of creative activities and ideas for corporate events, such as surfing and mountain climbing to bond teams," he said.

## 2013 Calendar

January 16-23

ATF  
Sarawak, Malaysia

February 18-19

AIME  
Melbourne, Australia

## GLOBAL

# Kuoni partners Crescentrating to woo Muslim MICE groups

Kuoni Group Travel Experts and Crescentrating, which promotes Muslim travel through its rating system, have announced a global partnership in which the former will market halal-friendly group travel arrangements and packages for Muslim families, leisure and MICE groups.

Kuoni and Crescentrating will launch their first brochure in Asia next month, and will co-develop new group travel products and enhanced travel booking and management services for the market.

Indonesia, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh have the largest Muslim populations, according to the Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project.

Reto Kaufmann, Kuoni Group Travel Experts head of MICE sales Asia, said: "Last year, we saw room nights booked by group travellers from these four countries rise, particularly Indonesia and India which enjoyed double-digit increases, while Bangladesh quadrupled.

"More and more of Asia's businesses...have large numbers of Muslim delegates with specific halal or religious requirements."

## THAILAND

# Royal Wing Pattaya refreshes luxury suites



The Royal Wing Suites and Spa in Pattaya officially reopened late November. As part of a massive makeover that saw the hotel transform its entrance, lobby, pool and suites as well as install high-tech touches throughout the property, the Presidential Platinum Suite (above) now features two bedrooms, generous living spaces, a new Jacuzzi in the main bathroom, a bar in the living room and a home office space. Both this and the three-bedroom Presidential Heritage Suite come with their own Thai-style Presidential Salas, which boast brand-new Jacuzzis.

# COVER STORY

# 2013

By Raini Hamdi, Xinyi Liang-Polsena, Lee Pei Qi, Mimi Hudoyo, S. Puvaneswary, Prudence Lui, Rosa Ocampo, Marianne Carandang, Shekhar Niyogi, Rohit Kaul, Feizal Samath, David Andrews and Greg Lowe

## Their best bet

Where MICE players put their biggest dollars in 2013 and did it pay off  
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## Just the product we need

The product that caught the eye of corporates in 2013  
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## The best fam trip

International buyers spill the beans on which fam trip wowed them this year  
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## All the best intentions

A peek into the minds of TTGMICE leaders in the region on what they 'shall' and 'shall not' do in 2014  
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## Reporters' notebook

Our best and worst MICE editorial encounter of the year  
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**COVER STORY**

### Their best bet

Be it an investment in social media, new hires, market diversification or office expansion, Asian inbound MICE players have not kept still. They tell TTGMice where they put their biggest dollars and whether it's paid off

**INDONESIA** The Indonesian market is expected to grow by 10% in 2013, says Raini Hamdi, MICE Director at PT Garuda Indonesia. She says the country's tourism sector is growing rapidly, and the MICE market is expected to be a significant contributor to this growth. She adds that the Indonesian government is investing heavily in infrastructure, which will further boost the MICE market.

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### Hey, that's interesting

Corporates tell TTGMice what product or service caught their eye this year and why

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TTGMice journalists share their best and worst MICE event encounters of the year

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## Their best bet

Be it an investment in social media, new hires, market diversification or office expansion, Asian inbound MICE players have not kept still. They tell *TTGmice* where they put their biggest dollars and whether it's paid off

### SOCIAL MEDIA

"Since last year, we've become more active on social media networks. Potential clients always look online for information, plus we can upload photos of our activities and portfolio on these sites. In fact, an Australian company recently contacted us via LinkedIn to organise an event for a MICE group, even though we have not met before. Our revenue grew 60 per cent from last year. We are surprised at the good performance (through this strategy)." – **Bobby Kim, chief marketing officer, Jane Tour & DMC, South Korea**

### RIGHT HIRE

"MICE2CHINA was a set up in early 2012 as a new division of Century Holiday International Travel Service. We started hiring regional talent to cultivate a global image for the company and show that China is not just a producer of cheap goods but a great MICE destination. We have been successful with India, Singapore and Malaysia. We will soon broaden our marketing efforts to Australia and Eastern Europe, especially Poland." – **Burt Sim, sales director, MICE2CHINA, China**

### MORE SYNERGY

"We strengthened our office in Kota Kinabalu, known as Synergy Borneo,

by increasing staff strength from two to six people as Borneo is growing for the European inbound market for leisure and MICE, partly due to its nature, culture and heritage. Sabah and Sarawak also have good five star properties to attract meeting and incentive delegates." – **Fabio Delisi, group CEO, Synergy Tours Malaysia**

### ASEAN MARKET

"We've been focusing on the European market, which is stable, but have started to grow MICE business from the ASEAN market. We are getting more enquiries from Indonesia, and from Asian MICE groups interested in half-day tours after their conferences in South Korea. Previously we were looking at only the Australian market." – **Mi Nong Lee, operation director, Holiday Planners, South Korea**

### CHASING MICE

"We expanded our Guangzhou office this year, which was previously just a call centre. Having launched in March 2012 a new corporate travel department, we also started the FIT and MICE departments in January 2013. We are expecting a good outlook for MICE business to China in the coming year." – **Lisa Chau, assistant general manager, tour department, Guangzhou Anlu Travel Service (a subsidiary of Lotus Tours Hong Kong)**

### DIVERSIFICATION

"We diversified our focus from Japanese travellers to include the global market now. Therefore this year we participated in more MICE tradeshows, such as IT&CM China and IT&CMA, to build up our branding. This year's IT&CMA also marked the first time JTB (Macau) Travel took a separate booth from the JTB brand." – **Barry Muk, manager-purchasing & hotel reservations, JTB (Macau) Travel**

### STAYING RESILIENT

"2013 has certainly been a challenging year. Visitor numbers to Hong Kong are well up, but not from our markets. More emphasis needs to be placed on attracting visitors from anywhere other than mainland China. Anyone listening?

Adding to the problem is the greed of landlords here. Ours put the rent up 100 per cent, which means a move in April to



Barry Muk



Bobby Kim



Burt Sim



Fabio Delisi



James Reed



João Santos



Cary Chiu



Marisa Nallana



Megumi Minabe



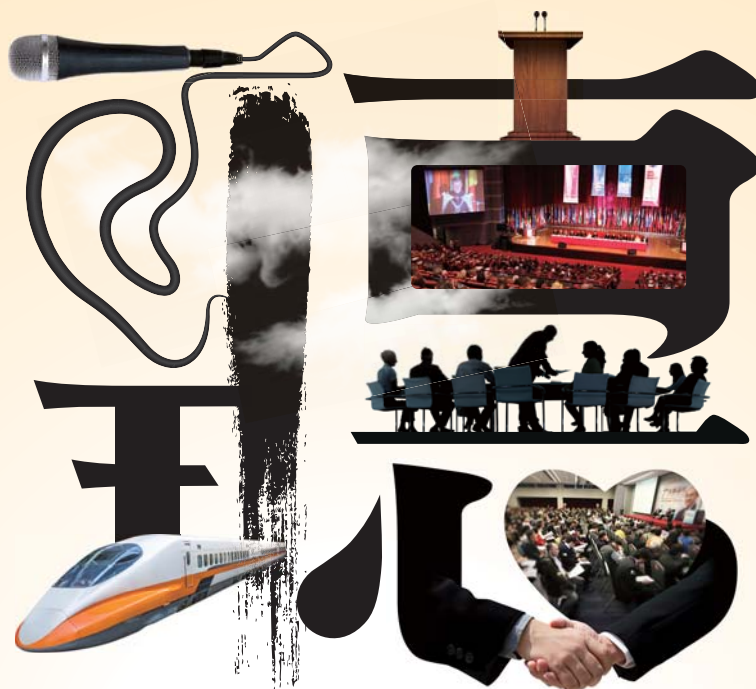
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Michael L P Lee



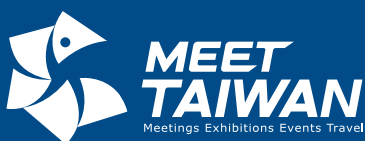
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# MEET INSPIRATION


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 Ad. by Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA

# COVER STORY

smaller and far less expensive premises.

We cut back on tradeshows but attended the new Meetings Show in London in July, which produced excellent results. We also spent the quieter time sourcing and developing new local tours which have proven popular with our clients.

Things seem to be on the up and up though, with quite a few new enquiries coming in for next year. So roll on 2014!" – **Jenny May, managing director, The Destination Management Company Hong Kong**

## NEW PARTNER

"Since representing and partnering Pacific World in South Korea from November 2012, we've seen a 15 per cent increase in MICE business to-date (October), most of it being incentives from pharmaceutical and IT companies from Europe and South America. In 2014 and 2015, we're expecting even better results." – **Mina Oh, deputy general manager, Europe & American team, Kim's Travel, South Korea**

## SNOW INCENTIVES

"We started new snow-shovelling activities as part of our corporate social responsibility efforts, which are popular with corporates. This is a happy activity because delegates get the chance to mingle closely with the local residents in the neighbourhood as they help to shovel the snow in their driveways. Not only do they get a chance to do something for the community, they also have fun at the same time." – **Megumi Minabe, meeting planner, DMC Sapporo, Japan**

## NEW TEAMBUILDING OFFER

"SmallWORLD Experience, our sister company, launched a new teambuilding programme, Wine Making Academy, which was developed with a wine partner in Spain but adapted for Macau. This activity requires small groups to work together to blend a new wine from five mono grapes, create a label and develop a presentation, followed by blind tasting and scoring by judges. Since launching this programme in May 2013, it has been steadily gaining popularity among clients and we have seen more requests over the last two months." – **João Santos, events assistant, DOC DMC Macau**

## RATE FINDER

"We introduced a new third-party software tool, RateFinding.com, in all our Asia-Pacific offices. This hotel procurement portal has enabled us to access and check room

rates on the database quickly, paving for easier communication and rate negotiation with the hotels. Previously, we used to do it manually via an Excel file, but now we just need to log on to the website. The simplified process has helped us to save time and improve efficiency." – **Mervyn Tan, assistant manager - purchasing, Robert Bosch (Malaysia)**

## BOOKING ENGINE

"We invested in a B2B and B2C Internet booking engine which we launched in October 2013. Through this system, the general public and our partners can buy inbound tours to Brunei and hotel rooms in Brunei and other destinations. The booking engine has made operations more efficient as it operates 24/7, and allows instant confirmation of bookings upon successful online transactions. We hope this system will attract more business and leisure travellers from Australia and London who already have a culture of booking online." – **Michael L P Lee, managing director, Freme Travel Services, Brunei**

## IMEX AMERICAS, BUT...

"We exhibited in IMEX Americas in Las Vegas in October. It's our first time as we would like to test the water since the US market, especially incentives, has been so quiet. I also leveraged on this trip by joining a Hong Kong-based hotel chain to explore more business opportunities. I ended up spending three weeks in the US.

But we won't spend more on this market given its sluggishness. Overall, the MICE market has been very quiet in Hong Kong and overseas this year." – **Cary Chiu, general manager, PC Tours and Travel, Hong Kong**

## NEW DESTINATION

The biggest investment Global Conference Management Group made this year was marketing a new destination, Hong Kong, to corporates in Chennai, using an innovative tourism quiz based on a new wine.

We tied up with Meetings & Exhibitions Hong Kong and Air India. Some 120 teams – the who's who of corporates in Chennai – participated in the quiz. We hope to build the event up as a pan-India event from next year. The event evoked interest in Hong Kong as a new destination among corporates." – **M. K. Ajit Kumar, president and CEO, Global Conference Management Group, Chennai, India**

## FESTIVAL MARKETING

"An area we significantly invested in was

festival marketing. Philippine Exhibit and Themeparks Corp is the only company that supports and promotes our local governments in the national marketing of their festivals. Through this effort, local governments become known, their culture appreciated, while national advertisers recognise that festival marketing is major tool for brand campaigns." – **Marisa Nalana, president, Philippine Exhibit and Themeparks Corp**

## eDA

"A key investment for Destination Asia in 2013 was eDA, an online booking engine. A single PNR enables the user to input a login code and gain access to all of Destination Asia's products and services across the countries we operate in. The system submits one currency for all booked destinations with the transaction processed through one bank account." – **James Reed, CEO/group managing director, Destination Asia, Thailand**

## TECHNOLOGY

"The most significant investment we made this year was technology. We installed a new MICE administration system, which streamlines areas such as registration and payment, making them more transparent and accountable.

Apart from the government events, we handle many association meetings and conferences. We usually share profits with the associations. This new system will allow both Pacto Convex internally and our association clients to access the process and see, for example, the amount of the total profit.

The system is on trial now and we expect to officially launch it in early 2014." – **Susilowani Daud, president director, Pacto Convex, Indonesia**

## PEOPLE

"Our major investment this year has been in staff. There is a constant need for fresh blood to keep new ideas flowing and we can always learn a lot from the younger generation. We find the best people, train them and learn from them.

As a business we also need to become more connected and ensure we have a strategy for using new communication tools and media. Bringing in new, highly engaged staff who are willing to learn but can also share their knowledge and skills for these newer technologies is key to this." – **Chariya Sudasna, director of Creative Destination Management Thailand**





Clockwise from top left: Key stakeholders admire the visual landscape of The Penang Waterfront Convention Centre project; TCEB Connect booth at this year's IT&CMA; Matakang Island Sabah; a trumpeting welcome at Sampran Riverside Bangkok

# Just the product we need

Corporates tell *TTGmice* what product or service caught their eye this year and why

Leemon (left) is keen on Sampran Riverside while Sabah does it for Tan



➔ **Arpita Bhose**  
*Account manager, Kenes Asia, Singapore*

I currently have my eye on the **Penang Waterfront Convention Centre**, which is going to open in 2017. We often rotate our annual congresses around Asia and try to keep up with the different convention centres so we can give everyone a new experience. When we look at Malaysia, it's usually just Kuala Lumpur. This new centre looks grand and promising and we are really excited about it.

➔ **Karen Leemon**  
*Campus administration officer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Health, Deakin University Australia*

The **Sampran Riverside** in Thailand caught my eye. At IT&CMA this year, it made its booth look authentically Thai. The property is involved in promoting organic farming to local farmers. It caught

my eye as we have a group of students going to Thailand for two weeks next year and we might be able to work out a programme for the students where they can volunteer their time and get involved with the local community.

➔ **Jane Tan**  
*Director, Enterprise Promotion Centres, Singapore*

I was surprised to find out how interesting **Sabah** is as an incentive destination. Besides being close to Singapore, it offers plenty of natural attractions and post-trip options, plus many golf resorts that could be ideal venues for business travellers. With a stronger understanding of what Sabah has to offer, I'll definitely consider it as an incentive destination in future.

➔ **Stephani McKay**  
*Travel team leader administration, Corrs*

# COVER STORY



Chambers Westgarth, Brisbane, Australia

At IT&CMA this year, what caught my eye was **TCEB Connect**. It had an incentive connected with its promotion. It gave delegates a chance to win luggage, cosmetic bags and an iPad. Its booth was also bright and eye-catching.

## ➔ Mandar Gokhale

Group manager - Corporate Travel, Mumbai, India

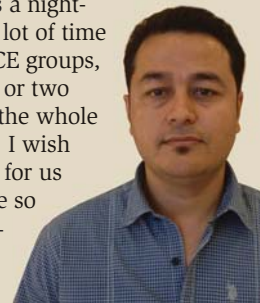
**Renaissance Kuala Lumpur Hotel** sticks out favourably. I was impressed with the representative. She did her homework by studying our company background before our meeting. She was aware of what I was seeking; she explained the property in great detail. When we bring future business to Kuala Lumpur, I will definitely work with her.

## A great wish...

### ➔ Abhimanya Chettri

Manager, Robert Bosch Engineering and Business Solutions, India

The visa application process is always a nightmare for Indians especially because a lot of time is spent on waiting. For corporate MICE groups, we travel in huge numbers and if one or two do not get their visa in time it means the whole group has to change their destination. I wish there can be a special process created for us – perhaps a corporate visa programme so we do not have to apply for each individual. This should speed things up.



# The best fam trip

How to do a fam trip that has buyers swooning and featuring the product the next day? International buyers spill the beans on which fam trip wowed them this year



### ➔ Ayodele Oluwole Oyenyin

CEO and MD of Trade Global Marketing Tours, Pretoria, South Africa

It was to Laos early this year where I experienced first-hand the destination which is so rich in culture and heritage. The weather and terrain is so different from South Africa.

As a result of the fam trip, I was able to promote Laos to travellers from my country and the first group departure to Laos was in November 2013.



### ➔ Eva Klejmova

Director, J&T Concierge, Prague, Czech Republic

The best fam trip I had this year was to Thailand,

Laos and Cambodia. I organised it myself in early 2013 and got the hotels to host my stay. This was the first time I went to these destinations and my intention was to see the products first-hand so I could tailor luxury tours for clients and design incentive programmes in these destinations. It was a successful trip as I made many new contacts and can now tell my clients of my own experience in these destinations. This will make it easier to sell these destinations.



Laos (above Tat Luang) made an impression



### ➔ Lisa Chau

Assistant general manager - tour department, Guangzhou Anlu Travel Service, a subsidiary of Lotus Tours Hong Kong

I went to Spain and participated in the tomato festival. We painted the town red because everyone was throwing tomatoes at each other as part of the celebration. This something not possible in any other country in the world. Asians will definitely like it as it is so fun, so I will consider bringing groups there next year.



### ➔ Gerrit Chng-Luechau

Director of sales, Orange Three, Singapore

It was to Phuket to visit The Surin after its renovations were completed. The fam trip was well-planned and executed. We were shown not just the rooms but also activities that could be done there such as cooking classes and off-site dining venues nearby. Phuket as

  
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# COVER STORY

a destination always sells. Recently we have had a number of enquiries from corporate clients to do incentives and conferences in Phuket.



**Ravi Luthra**  
 Director, Landmark Tours & Travels (India)

I was brought to the Khao Sok National Park in Surat Thani province in Thailand. It transported me to Mother Nature. We stayed in treehouses and were surrounded by wildlife. This will make a peaceful new location to host my clients.



**Mauro Lazzari**  
 Business development manager, HTMS International (Czech Republic)

I explored India's Golden Triangle route recently and I especially like Jaipur the pink city. India is going to be my new destination for MICE. It is getting too normal to always visit Europe. The contrasting cultural experiences between Czech Republicans and Indians are going to be exciting.



The famous Jaigarh fort in Jaipur and the surrounding vista



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# All the best intentions

It's never too late to have a new resolution as the new year dawns upon us. Here's a peek into the minds of MICE leaders in the region on what they 'shall' and 'shall not' do in 2014

**"I SHALL** in 2014 move heaven and earth to bring the SITE International Conference 2015 to India. Get a new office near my home, so I can get to the office before lunch, and save myself the trauma of sitting in traffic for three hours every day.

**"I SHALL** not in 2014, unlike Uncle Sam, allow the SITE India Chapter to fall off the fiscal cliff."

– **Anup Nair**, president, SITE India Chapter and managing director, Incentive Destinations, Delhi NCR

**"I SHALL** focus on niches hitherto untapped in the incentive segment."

– **Vipula Wanigasekera**, General manager, Sri Lanka Conventions Bureau

**"I SHALL NOT** stop serving the society even after my term ends in February 2014. **I SHALL** strive to make the 61st Les Clefs D'or UICH International Congress, to be held in Kuala Lumpur in January 2014, a memorable event which will be the talk of all delegates."

– **Ragu Kumarasamy**, president, Society of the Golden Keys Malaysia



**"I SHALL** endeavour to promote tourism without endangering the environment."

– **Rumy Jauffer**, managing director, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Authority

**"I SHALL NOT** be judgmental of anyone who cannot book events.

**"I SHALL** not lie about my age when asked.

**"I SHALL** optimise my client contacts and make my work work for the nation.

**"I SHALL** strive to inject more fun in events we plan, organise and host.

**"I SHALL** share my visions and tricks of the trade with my fellow organisers."

– **Chicoy Enerio**, COO, Tourism Promotions Board, Philippines

**"I SHALL** ensure we make full use of more web-based tools, like our new website and social media, to create greater awareness and reach more clients.

**"I SHALL** not let Taiwan lose out to other countries in Asia because we are one of the most hospitable cities that can do well in hosting any traveller in the world."

– **Lily Su**, manager, Taiwan External Trade Development Council

# COVER STORY

“In 2014 **I SHALL** not spread myself thin.

“**I SHALL** try to listen to what the younger generation is trying to say. They may have different opinions which I can learn to accept.

– **Indra Sukirno**, executive director, Jakarta Convention & Exhibition Bureau

“**I SHALL** choose the road less travelled and make a difference.

“**I SHALL NOT** live without passion – life’s too short.”

– **Arun Madhok**, CEO, Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre

“In 2014, **I SHALL** work smartly and closely with MICE stakeholders to strengthen Indonesia’s position as a MICE destination.

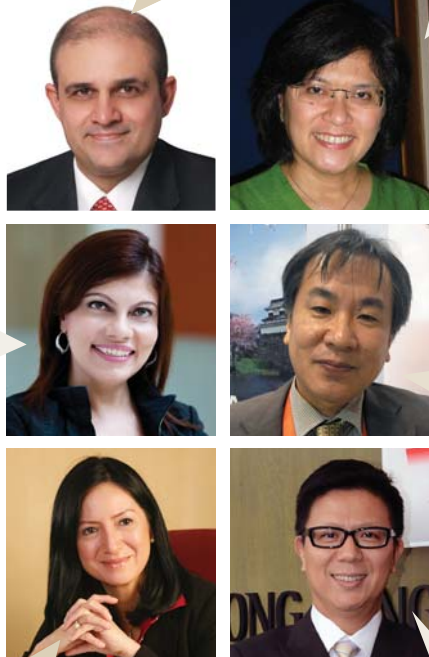
“**I SHALL NOT** surrender to challenges and obstacles in every step I make to reach my goals.”

– **Rizki Handayani**, director of MICE and Special Interest Tourism Marketing, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia

“**WE SHALL** continue to collaborate closely with our industry partners and stakeholders to offer unique and value-added experiences that cater well to the evolving needs of event organisers and delegates.

“**WE SHALL NOT** be complacent with our achievements. Instead, we will move towards quality tourism by understanding consumer needs better and strengthening industry capabilities.”

– **Neeta Lachmandas**, assistant chief executive, Singapore Tourism Board



“**I SHALL** bring in more business opportunities from quality buyers by making our presence seen and heard better in tradeshow.

“**I SHALL NOT** put too much hope on the China market because right now the political situation is still quite unstable. But I will continue to attract them and improve our relationships with all countries.”

– **Ryoji Maeshima**, senior deputy director, Fukuoka Convention & Visitors Bureau

“**I SHALL NOT** be complacent with what we have achieved and address only what is obvious.

“**I SHALL** not stop learning new skills or being genuinely interested in other people and what goes around me.

“**I SHALL** not be afraid to ask the hard questions or make the changes necessary to help my company and the Philippine MICE industry become more competitive.

“**I SHALL** create a better customer experience by listening to the client and walking in his shoes.

“**I SHALL** execute events with excellence and consistently strive for higher levels of productivity without sacrificing quality or content.

“**I SHALL** foster and reward innovative thinking, and be socially responsible.”

– **Maria Montserrat Iturralde Hamlin**, president, Teamasia, and president, Philippine Association of Convention/Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers

“**I SHALL** work closely with all meeting planners and event organisers to bring in MICE events by ensuring their delegates have a highly memorable experience of Hong Kong.

“**I SHALL NOT** forget how lucky I am to have the opportunity to promote one of the greatest MICE destinations in the world!”

– **Kenneth Wong**, general manager-MICE and Cruise, Hong Kong Tourism Board



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## Reporters' notebook

*TTGmice* journalists share their best and worst MICE event, encounter or interview this year

### ➔ Raini Hamdi

Senior editor

**BEST** My best MICE interview this year was with Pansy Ho, managing director, Shun Tak Holdings, a company which has stakes in all corners in Macau – TurboJet, Macau International Airport, Air Macau, Macau Tower, OneCentral (mixed-used residential, serviced apartments and the Mandarin Oriental Macau), the Cotai Strip, to name some. I love it that she was powerful yet accessible. Delegates were swimming to exchange cards with her after her panel during the PATA Annual Summit in Bangkok and she patiently talked to each of them. When my turn came, I asked if I could interview her in private at the Centara lounge; she said okay but she had only half an

hour as she's flying back to Hong Kong. I made her promise to be there – she was there five minutes before me, and she gave a frank interview that reflected her passion for building Macau up as an attractive destination in its own right and gateway to greater China.

### **WORST**

Media briefings at IMEX. I still don't understand why some CVBs or MICE companies (you know who you are) book a media briefing room if they have nothing new to brief. One (let's just say

a popular South-east Asian MICE destination) even teased a new initiative in the invite but there must have been some miscommunication as, when I asked about it, the CVB representative who was giving the briefing looked puzzled. No wonder most of the time, the attendance at these media briefings was poor.

Briefings for buyers are already being held at the stands to update them on the destination, product, etc. Why not invite media members to join in these briefings if they are keen to learn more? Save the press conference/media briefing for when you really have something to announce and I promise you'll have a roomful of journalists.

### ➔ Karen Yue

Group editor

**BEST** Event planners should know that the choice of event entertainment could make or break the whole experience and influence guests' impression of the organiser, yet I've been made to sit through some very bland ones. Fortunately, I have only great things to say about the welcome lunch for delegates at AIME 2013. The main act that came on mid-way through lunch rocked almost everyone like a hurricane. A quartet of two ladies and two men, dressed most formally, emerged with a stunning performance of the famous aria, *Nessun Dorma*. Suddenly, the elegant act gave way to a medley of rock hits such as Guns N' Roses' *Sweet child of mine* and Queen's *We will rock you* and *Bohemian Rhapsody*, which the quartet performed with equal flair. When the City of Melbourne Highland Pipe band marched into the ballroom at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition

Centre with a haunting accompaniment to John Farnham's *You're The Voice*, I knew right away that this experience would make it to my Best experience in this year-end issue. And yes, I am more convinced than ever that Melbourne is one hot, exciting destination. If you want to know, the stellar entertainment was produced by Australian company, Peter Jones Special Events.

**WORST** I attended a tradeshow and post-show fam for business event buyers in a North Asian country, but hosted journalists were given less than three hours for interviews and research at the tradeshow before being whisked off on a city tour. Fam tours are fun but not as essential as hitting the show floor to talk to trade buyers and sellers for news and market trends, and I hope CVBs will bear this in mind when planning programmes for trade media.

### ➔ Gracia Chiang

Deputy group editor

**BEST** I thought this year's TravelRave Leaders Gala was a well-executed effort by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB). Held at Gardens by the Bay, it not only offered a platform to mingle with the region's who's who, but showcased the country's event capabilities amid a verdant setting. I liked that the night's F&B was orchestrated by pop-up restaurant Gastrogig, which rounded up an unconventional culinary collective, from a gourmet food truck-cum-social enterprise to edible gardens. This wasn't all. On the way out, I met a helpful STB representative at the taxi stand, who told me she was in charge of booking cabs for delegates as transport out of the park was anticipated to be a problem. Good service is

From left, Raini Hamdi, Gracia Chiang and Karen Yue







Top, Xinyi Liang-Polsena  
Below, Lee Pei Qi

From top: S. Puvanewary, Marianne  
Carandang, Feizal Samath and Mimi  
Hudoyo

always a winner.

**WORST** During a media/trade preview of an attraction in Singapore, the experience was interrupted midway by a technical glitch. It was a good 10-15 minutes of us buckled up in our seats and listening to safety announcements ad nauseam before anyone came to offer an explanation. Thankfully, we managed to return to the faulty ride much later, although part of it was cordoned off. I felt embarrassed for the organisers. Plus, the last I heard the ride might be pulled in less than two months.

### ✦ Xinyi Liang-Polsena *Assistant editor*

**BEST** I attended ITB Berlin for the first time this year, and I was quite amazed to see the world's travel industry converge at a single albeit sprawling venue. The show floor was buzzing, the weather was pretty good (well, that was before the snowstorm hit a few days later in March) and working with my colleagues with a glass of wine (this being Europe, anyway) kept my spirits up throughout the three-day event.

**WORST** The said snowstorm wrecked havoc on my return flight to Bangkok, as my connecting flight to Frankfurt was cancelled and I was rerouted

via Copenhagen instead. However, a technical glitch in my connecting Bangkok-bound flight forced me to make a last-minute layover in the Danish capital. Interestingly, six other travel industry members on their way home post-ITB were also stranded, so we exchanged namecards and commiserated over our predicament, and the bad feelings quickly turned into a sense of solidarity among us.

### ✦ Mimi Hudoyo *Senior editor-Indonesia*

**BEST** The most interesting MICE event I went to this year was MG Holiday's mega table top. The Indonesian major hotel wholesaler organised its table top event outdoors at Jakarta's famous theme park, Ancol Dreamland. Sellers, comprising hotels from all over Indonesia, were scattered at different locations in the theme park – under a tree, near a pool, on a rock formation with the roller-coaster in the background – so travel consultants must walk or even cycle to meet them. I thought this was unique and fun.

**WORST** When I was invited to attend the opening of a travel fair. The invitation was for a press conference by the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy at 09.00, followed

by the opening of the fair. The minister did not come, there was no press conference and the opening ceremony did not start until 10.30. Such a waste of time.

### ✦ S. Puvanewary *Editor-Malaysia*

**BEST** *TTGmice*, October issue, on Women Deliver 2013: I loved the speed at which Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) had accommodated my request for an interview with KLCC deputy general manager, Alan Pryor, and executive chef, Richard Lim. They are both busy people, so I am grateful they had time to spare for this interview. I also have to thank the PR team at the centre for preparing notes in advance as this helped me write the case study.

**WORST** An interview with a five-star international hotel brand to write about its recent refurbishments and MICE business. I was taken on a hotel inspection by the hotel GM and PR manager. Suddenly, the PR manager informed the GM that the media representative for his next appointment had arrived, and ended the current session so he could proceed with the next interview.

I thought it was a rather abrupt and rude ending. Clearly this hotel needed to improve on its soft skills.

### ✦ Lee Pei Qi *Assistant editor-Singapore*

**BEST** The impressive hospitality from the Taiwanese during a familiarisation trip there. And I am not just talking about the locals in the hosted facilities, but basically every one there from the taxi driver to the guy selling street snacks. They literally welcomed me with open arms, making me feel right at home.

**WORST** A hotel dinner function which pre-determined beef for the delegates – and there was little room for flex-

ibility for those who did not want it.

### ✦ Greg Lowe *correspondent-Thailand*

**BEST** I loved chatting with Phoenix Voyages' Jean Michel Romon about his calamitous experiences as the official ground agent for the World Economic Forum in Naypyitaw, Myanmar.

It was the first major event to be hosted in the country, which has scant infrastructure for such events. For some 2,500-plus delegates, the 220-strong team arranged 5,000 roomnights across 22 hotels, more than 800 transfers and 14 charter flights. To ensure attendees could get from A to B in the city, 146 cars and buses had to be transported from Yangon and Mandalay as Naypyitaw has a mere 11 private taxis. Talk about herding cats. But as Romon said: "It was hard but worth it. Everyone was proud to play a part, especially the Burmese."

**WORST** Conversations, networking and meeting sources are the lifeblood of journalism. They are especially important when reporting on trade events, where I previously assumed organisers deploy a simple formula for generating as much coverage as possible: A (delegates) + B (media) = C (coverage).

Some other logic was clearly in play during September's Global Tourism Economy Forum in Macau where organisers went out of their way to separate journalists from delegates, save for pre-arranged interviews in the media centre. We were accommodated separately, dined separately, corralled to and from meals and events by the PR team (who were actually very nice people) and only had an hour-long after-event gathering to rub shoulders with the travel trade's great and good, by which time most people seemed more concerned with hooking up

# COVER STORY

an intravenous supply of wine than being interviewed. And who could blame them?

## David Andrews

*Correspondent-Indochina*

**WORST** For me Laos is a place I always feel relaxed in and at peace, that was until I embarked on a two-day fam cruise along the Mekong a few months ago. Setting off from Huay Xai we cruised upriver to Pakbeng, staying in a traditional wooden lodge. I know observing the wildlife is part of the experience, but when the wildlife is staying in your room at night, I get a little edgy. To me it sounded like a bat roosting on top of our cabin, and for some reason I was convinced it was going to try and land on me. It didn't help that previous guests told of a story of a snake. As I lay there, sheet pulled up under my chin, I began to nod off. With a yelp I bolted upright with what felt like a claw attached to my face. A giant locust about four inches long had landed directly on my face.

## Prudence Lui

*Correspondent-Hong Kong*

**BEST** The first MICE cruise seminar in town hosted by Lotus Tours on *Marina of the Seas* opened up a new perspective on what corporate/event planners can do at sea.

### WORST

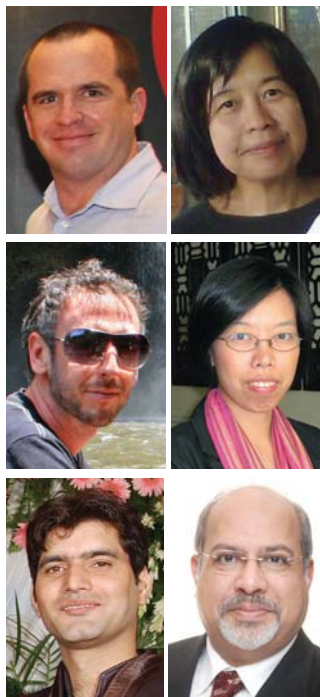
The first media visit to Kai Tak Cruise Terminal, as it was not fully completed with water leakage problems due to a strong typhoon.

## Shekhar Niyogi

*Senior correspondent-India*

**BEST** The Arabian Travel Market in Dubai, which I was covering for both *TTGmice* and *TTG Asia*. The media conferences and briefings were spaced well with plenty of prior information handed out at the media centre that was located in the hub of activity – not tucked away in a corner as in many other events. There

was no room to complain about sparse seating in the media centre as there was no time to sit! My interview with the CEO of Qatar Airways was arranged efficiently. The exhibitor booths were buzzing with activity and were well manned so one got the opportunity to speak to at least one person during any unscheduled visit. The Dubai and



From top left, Greg Lowe, Rosa Ocampo, David Andrews, Prudence Lui, Rohit Kaul and Shekhar Niyogi

Abu Dhabi NTOs were helpful in disseminating detailed information for my Middle East destination reports.

**WORST** The maiden venture of IBTM India was a success with its one-on-one meeting format. As Hosted Media I was offered two nights' accommodation for a three-day event and no airport-hotel transfers. On the final day, one had to check out in the middle of the day's proceedings and leave before all the sessions were over to catch my flight. One expects an international event to make it convenient for hosted delegates. I hope it will next year. I would want to

work through the entire IBTM India event as it was buzzing!

## Rohit Kaul

*Correspondent-India*

**BEST** The best conference I attended this year was the Global Spa & Wellness Summit in Gurgaon from October 5-7. It was well-organised with 30-plus high-profile keynote addresses. The speakers ranged from diplomats to medical professionals, each presenting a different view on wellness. However, the best talk was by spiritual leader and Nobel Prize winner, the Dalai Lama, who spoke extensively on how inner peace can lead to true well being.

I wish I had got some news leads too, which unfortunately I didn't.

**WORST** My worst interview this year was with the Joint Secretary of Tourism, Anand Kumar. The exclusive interview in the beginning of the year turned out to be a damp squib. Even though I waited for three hours at the ministry's office for the interview, the senior diplomat was not keen to answer my questions, only divulging information which I already had.

## Rosa Ocampo

*Correspondent-Philippines*

### BEST

Last October when we wanted to find out the impact of the 7.2-magnitude earthquake on MICE in Cebu and Bohol, tourism secretary Ramon Jimenez, Jr. replied fast and quick to all our SMS.

**WORST** We have the email addresses and mobile phone number of the Department of Tourism office in Cebu. But unlike the tourism secretary, the Cebu office never replied to our emails, SMS and phone calls before and after the earthquake.

## Marianne Carandang

*Correspondent-Philippines*

**BEST** Attending the Clark Aviation Conference in February. The focus was on the twin airport concept for Ninoy Aquino

International Airport and Clark International Airport, with the discussions attempting to visualise and quantify the benefits of this vision. I see this as a major step in addressing connectivity to Manila and the rest of the country. I hope it is finally decided and the money committed for a real airport solution.

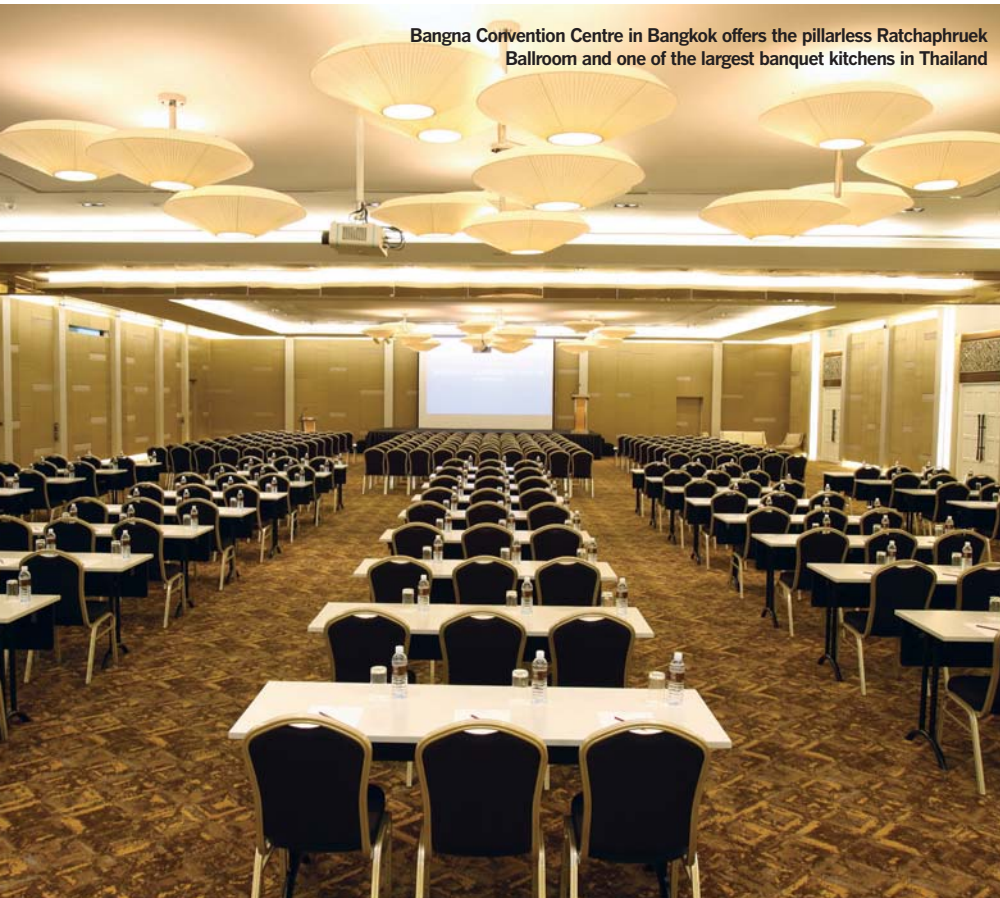
**WORST** I don't have any real negative experiences to report this year, but I'd like to put forth a wish. The Philippines is gaining traction as a genuine MICE option within South-east Asia with the quick rise of new hotels and convention centres. I wish our MICE venues and organisers would share more stories highlighting the creativity and expertise of our event planners in transforming existing MICE venues and destinations into memorable experiences.

## Feizal Samath

*Correspondent-Sri Lanka*

**BEST** A medical congress with doctors from Asia, including Sri Lanka, Australia and New Zealand. Initial speeches being over, it was time to present honorary fellowships – the names being announced, the citations read by a colleague and the 'potential' Fellow present before the eminent gathering. The fourth name was read out, the recipient stood up, and there followed an awkward silence. The doctor who was supposed to present his colleague was absent.

Five minutes passed, then the head of the Sri Lanka College of Surgeons, without missing a beat, stepped down from the stage, whispered a few words to an eminent colleague and went back to his seat on the stage. A few moments, the eminent surgeon presented his colleague, with no paper or speech in hand, totally impromptu, and the ceremonial inauguration of the conference continued. It was a lesson in how not to get flustered when faced with a minor 'crisis'.



Bangna Convention Centre in Bangkok offers the pillarless Ratchaphruek Ballroom and one of the largest banquet kitchens in Thailand

## Asian markets roar ahead

Despite recent event bid losses, Thailand's MICE sector soars on rising regional arrivals. By **Greg Lowe**

**T**hailand's MICE industry posted solid growth in the first three quarters of the financial year, rising 12 per cent on the back of strong Asian arrivals and a recovery in Europe and the US, based on figures from Thailand Conventions and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB).

Having attracted 747,072 foreign MICE visitors to Thailand from October 2012 to June 2013 to generate a revenue of 64.3 billion baht (US\$2 billion), this positive performance left TCEB confident of reaching its target of 940,000 delegates and rev-

enue of 88 billion baht this financial year.

International conventions were the key contributor during the period, accounting for 223,463 delegates, or 29.9 per cent of all MICE travellers, and 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 was the key feeder market, accounting for 72.7 per cent of MICE travellers (543,016 delegates) and 46.8 billion

baht in revenue. Europe sent 83,772 delegates to Thailand during the first-half to generate 7.2 billion baht, followed by the US with 43,165 MICE travellers to post a revenue of 3.7 billion baht.

While the Thai MICE industry performed well in 2013, it suffered a blow in June when the Paris-based Bureau of International Expositions rejected the kingdom's bid to hold the 2020 World Expo in Ayutthaya citing a lack of government support for the project.

Senior industry figures blamed political wrangling for the failure – the process was initiated under the previous Democrat-led government but received lukewarm reception under the current Pheu Thai administration – which tarnished the country's image as a major international event destination, although the industry was unlikely to suffer financially from losing the bid.

Thailand met another setback the same month when local protests scuppered plans to host the F1 night race in Bangkok's historic centre from 2014.

On the upside, there were a number of infrastructure developments across the country. The long-awaited Chiang Mai International Convention and Exhibition Centre held its inaugural event in May 2013 with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit. The venue is currently hosting smaller events and seminars but it will likely take some more months until the ICT systems and additional facilities needed for large-scale conventions and exhibitions to come online.

Following a 40 million baht renovation, Bangna Convention Centre reopened in Bangkok in July under Oakwood's management, featuring the 1,000-pax pillarless Ratchaphruek Ballroom as its main event venue.

August saw IMPACT Exhibition Management's launch of the 80-year-old Grand Postal Building in the heart of the capital to offer a historic venue with 3,000m<sup>2</sup> of event space with a capacity of close to 600 pax.

Having seen an upswing in quoting activities from clients, local MICE specialists have predicted a strong close to business for 2013, but a consistent downward pressure on costs continues to pose challenges to the industry.

Furthermore, one commonly reported downside of growing business from Asia is regional clients' penchant for increasingly short lead times for event and incentive bookings – typically as short as anything from two to six weeks. ■

## Pattaya catches MICE wave

By Greg Lowe

MICE business is on the rise in Pattaya fuelled by domestic and international demand, however, the lack of large-scale venues is limiting the city's competitiveness in the face of growing competition within the country, according to industry experts.

Pattaya is currently Thailand's second top MICE city, according to Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB). Recent growth in the local sector has come from within Thailand, while maturing leisure source markets are creating new opportunities for the city's meetings industry, shared Holger Groninger, general manager of Wave Hotel and The Bayview.

"MICE business for Pattaya in general

has been good, not only from overseas. The local conference market has developed especially well. The city has big potential due to its proximity to Bangkok and the Eastern Seaboard's industrial parks," he said.

"New opportunities are coming from markets like Russia, which is normally just holidaymakers, plus China, which is developing its own (outbound) MICE industry with Pattaya as one of the favourite destinations."

New hotels are constantly rolling out in Pattaya, which has up to 70,000 rooms available during peak season although only 12 per cent are in licensed properties, according to Thai Hotels Association.

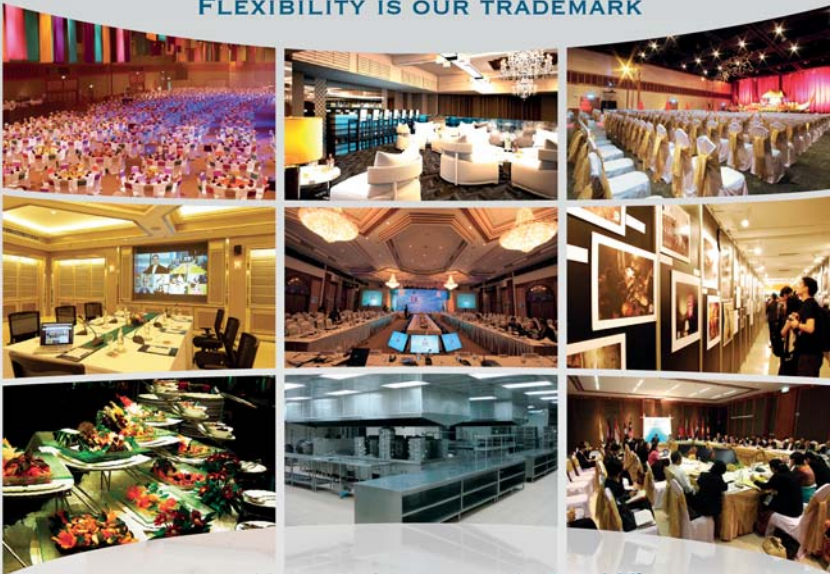


**"MICE business for Pattaya has been good...The local conference market has developed especially well. The city has big potential due to its proximity to Bangkok and the Eastern Seaboard's industrial parks."**

**Holger Groninger**

General manager  
Wave Hotel and The Bayview

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Meanwhile, demand and supply for upscale properties in Pattaya are also increasing. Wave, the 21-room boutique property that opened earlier this year, is proving popular with corporate groups for themed dinners or as an executive wing for larger groups using event facilities at hotel's sister property, The Bayview.

More recently, the 165-room Centara Grand Phratamnak Pattaya and the 231-room Centara Grand Modus Resort Pattaya were launched in the last quarter of 2013, adding 101m<sup>2</sup> and 236m<sup>2</sup> of function space respectively to the city's existing inventory.

However, this growth is being constrained by a glut of new hotels in the city, all of which are competing for a piece of the market, as well as new direct flights to popular Thai destinations such as Phuket, Groninger pointed out.

Furthermore, the MICE industry's growth continues to be crimped by the lack of venues, said Andrew Langdon, senior vice president of Jones Lang LaSalle



An aerial view of Pattaya's developed coastline

Hotels.

"MICE is still a niche market in Pattaya, even if it has grown to 20 per cent of the local market from 10 per cent five years ago," he said. "The main problem is (the shortage of) MICE facilities, especially convention centres...and there is nothing (large-scale) in the pipeline."

Pattaya currently has 102 meetings rooms across its hotels, as well as three large convention and exhibition centres – Ambassador City Jomtien Hotel, East-

ern National Sports Training Center and Pattaya Exhibition and Convention Hall (PEACH) – offering a combined total space of 13,212m<sup>2</sup>, according to TCEB.

From January to August 2013, Pattaya held 54 events which drew 23,494 attendees, with the most notable including Metlife Korea, Infinitus 2013 Group China, Abbott National Conference Group and Merck Chemical Division. However, TCEB was unable to provide growth figures for the city's performance. ■

## NEED TO KNOW

### Cycle through a lush river island

It may come as a surprise that Bangkok has its own green lungs just a short journey from the hustle and bustle of Sukhumvit Road, but Bang Kra Jao is a veritable jungle located on the western banks of the Chao Phraya River. Accessible via a short boat ride, one of the best ways to explore the lush area is on two wheels.

SpiceRoads runs a half-day tour which covers 25km across the island at a gentle pace. Contact (66-2) 381-7490 or visit [www.spiceroads.com](http://www.spiceroads.com) for tour information and bookings.



### Progressive Indian cuisine

Helmed by the E! Bulli-trained chef Gaggan Anand, Gaggan features an unorthodox approach to Indian cooking. Sous-vide, gelification and plenty of liquid nitrogen are deployed to add a new dimension to traditional curries.

Nestled on Bangkok's Langsuan Road, the restaurant's 24-pax private dining room is ideal for bigger groups or corporate dining events. Sampling the tasting menu at the 10-pax Chef's Table is highly recommended.

Visit [www.eatatgaggan.com](http://www.eatatgaggan.com) for more information.



### A slice of Rome in Bangkok

Appia on Sukhumvit 31 is regarded as one of Bangkok's most popular new restaurants due to its successful marriage of Thai-style eating – sharing lots of smaller dishes with friends – with rustic Roman recipes. From hand-cut pasta to slow-roast meats, Appia excels at presenting a traditional Italian experience in a contemporary setting. The interior of the 65-seater restaurant is just as charming, with raw, concrete floors and warm-coloured woods.

Reservations are essential. Call (66-2) 261-2056.

### Teambuilding fun through mystery solving

Set in the Interchange 21 Building in Bangkok's Asok district, the Escape Hunt Experience is a murder mystery adventure that transports groups of two to five people back into the past to play detective and solve a heinous crime within 60 minutes. While there are strong teambuilding elements to the game, the key focus is fun.

Visit [www.escapehunt.com](http://www.escapehunt.com) for more information.

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networks of the MICE Bureau at Korea Tourism Organization and discover the very best of Korea.



## EASY ACCESS

Korea is easily accessible from most major cities in the world, providing convenience and a strategic advantage to MICE planners. More than 70 international airlines fly to Korea from over 170 cities, of which 35 are

within two hours' flight. Its international airports are supported by a well-developed network of express and intercity buses, metro buses and subways that makes domestic travel a breeze. Korea's efficient and inexpensive public transportation system is frequent, safe, and conveniently linked to major convention venues.

## OUTSTANDING INFRASTRUCTURE

Whether planning for a meeting of 10 or 10,000 people, you will be able to find a suitable venue in Korea. Your options range from traditional Korean houses rich with heritage details to modern, purpose-built, state-of-the-art centers. All convention venues are equipped to provide outstanding services through their excellent infrastructure and facilities. Korea presently offers nine convention centers: Seoul COEX, Busan BEXCO, Gyeonggi-do KINTEX, Incheon Songdo Convensia, Daegu EXCO, Daejeon DCC, Gwangju Kim Dae Jung Convention Center, Changwon CECO, and Jeju Island ICC Jeju.

Three new projects will soon add to Korea's world-class MICE infrastructure: The Dongdaemun Design Plaza and Exhibition Center will be ready by 2013, Gyeongju Convention Center



by 2014, and the Korail Convention Center by 2015. With more than 620 hotels and 67,000 rooms, MICE planners can choose from well-managed budget inns to deluxe hotels by international chains, many conveniently located within walking distance to convention centers.



## DELIGHTFUL SHOPPING

Korea's diversity of shopping destinations is an exciting mix of old and new. International visitors will be delighted by the country's glittering department stores and shopping malls as much as its charming traditional markets. Whether you are looking for luxury brands, local crafts, the latest fashion, cosmetics, souvenirs or lifestyle products, Korea is a shopper's paradise. Check out Korea's major department stores—Lotte, Hyundai and Shinsegae—as well as local markets where locals go for quality products at lower prices. It's this perfect mix that makes Korea the excellent getaway for shopping, sightseeing and entertainment.

*Modern-day Korea is a multifaceted destination for sightseeing, shopping and entertainment.*



## KOREA MICE BUREAU CUSTOMIZED SERVICE

Korea MICE Bureau, working with other regional MICE Bureaus, DMC/PCOs and other MICE-related businesses, play a core role in bringing international events to Korea. Its support services are available right from the initial planning stages through to the final phases of an event, with the goal of ensuring success for all stakeholders. Among its services:

- ▶ Comprehensive information on MICE facilities and industry partners
- ▶ Introduction to relevant government bodies and third party event organizers
- ▶ Coordination with local suppliers
- ▶ Assistance with coordination of special events, pre- and post-tours, spouse tours, etc.
- ▶ Coordination and organization of site inspection tours and orientation trips
- ▶ Production of promotional brochures, videos, photos, etc.
- ▶ Assistance with bidding, attendance-building and hosting

## VIBRANT TOURISM

With a history dating back some 5,000 years, Korea is a modern nation with a large number of cultural sites of interest to visitors. In 2012, 11.1 million foreign tourists visited Korea, making it the 20th most visited country in the world. This is a rise from 8.5 million in 2010.

The worldwide popularity of K-pop has certainly played a part in recent years too. Gyeongbokgung Palace, Myeongdong, N Seoul Tower, Dongdaemun, Cheong Wa Dae (Blue house), Bukchon Hanok Village, Changdeokgung, Insadong, Hongdae, Itaewon, Namiseom Island (location for the blockbuster Korean TV drama series *Winter Sonata*) continue to be some of the most popular tourist attractions.

Today, Korea is a multifaceted destination for sightseeing, shopping and entertainment. Its rich history continues to be recognized and is best represented by its eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites, which include Seokguram Grotto, Bulguksa Temple and Haeinsa.

## HIGH TECH

Home to global electronics giants Samsung and LG and known to be an early adopter of leading technologies, Korea enjoys one of the world's highest average Internet connection bandwidth. High-tech conveniences abound and IT services at convention centers are no exception. The advanced infrastructure include sophisticated videoconferencing systems, simultaneous interpretation as well as public address and video surveillance systems.





# KOREA

*beyond meetings*

## SPOTLIGHT

# REGIONAL SPECIALIZATION & HOME-GROWN EVENTS

Since the Korean government identified MICE as one of the new growth engines for the country back in 2009, Korea's MICE industry has experienced accelerated growth on the back of strong government support. Korea was ranked fifth in the world in 2012 according to UIA, thanks to the numerous international conferences it hosted. The growth in the last few years has been especially remarkable.

In view of the global competition for MICE, the Government and the Korea Tourism Organization MICE Bureau are formulating a new strategy known as 'Regional Specialized Convention'. The aim is to strengthen the country's nine MICE cities—Seoul, Incheon, Gyeonggi, Daejeon, Daegu, Busan, Gyeongnam, Gwangju and Jeju—and improve MICE standards throughout the region. The ultimate goal is to sharpen the competitiveness of Korea's MICE industry.



The 'Regional Specialized Convention' campaign is a certification programme where the strategic industries of a region, its social and cultural attractions and home-grown events are given the necessary support.

The focus is not so much on attracting one-time events to the region but to develop a strong network of societies, research institutions, convention bureaus and local businesses that understand MICE. This network of industry players will form the foundation for steady, progressive growth.

Funding is given according to the relevance of an event to the local or regional industries, international competitiveness and its potential to grow as an international conference. The recommendations of a dedicated advisory group on various processes from planning to execution will also be taken into consideration.



This certification process is designed to enhance the credibility of Korean private-sector organisations on the global MICE arena. It will help in many operational activities, such as when dealing with overseas speakers and buyers and the marketing of an event.

Another feature of this campaign is that it is a public-private partnership. The Korea Tourism Organization oversees business planning and operations, events financing and advisory support, while the regional convention bureaus, working with event organisers, develop, plan and market an event.

To date, 11 conventions related to disability and welfare, water, high-tech, marine plants, 3D-IT and other industries have been selected for this 'Regional Specialized Convention' campaign. The most notable are the International Convention on Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology (i-CREATE) and the Global Textile Vision Forum. According to Korea Tourism Organization MICE Bureau, foreign participation in these "Specialized Convention" events increased by more than 20% in 2011 from the previous year.

**The 'Regional Specialized Convention' campaign is a certification programme where the strategic industries of a region, its social and cultural attractions and home-grown events are given the necessary support.**



Miaoli's Hualu Flower Leisure Farm is popular for one-day meetings



# In nature's embrace

More business event planners are clamouring for Taiwan's scenic leisure farms, but housing large overnight groups is a challenge, writes **Lee Pei Qi**

Planners of small-sized meetings and incentives are increasingly discovering treasures in Taiwan's lush city outskirts. The country's array of leisure farms, which offer an integrated recreational concept combining accommodation and meeting facilities and authentic farming experience in scenic locations, are enticing a rising number of business event groups that want to combine the great outdoors with meetings.

According to Shiny Chiu, chief operation officer of international marketing at the Taiwan Leisure Farming Development Association, more than 200,000 foreigners

visited the leisure farms in 2012, up from an approximate 160,000 in 2011.

There are about 300 leisure farms in Taiwan today, and visitors come mainly from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, trying their hands at activities such as sheep shearing, fruit picking and glutinous rice ball making.

While leisure farms are predominantly patronised by leisure travellers, Chiu said more companies are realising they can marry meetings with incentives at these attractions. She does not have the figures for MICE visitors, but said the number has "definitely gone up".

For instance, at the 52-hectare Fairy

Lake Leisure Farm in Tainan, which sits on a hill 277m above ground, sixth-generation manager Ding Jing Chun said the farm has been hosting an "increasing handful" of meeting and incentive groups from Singapore and Malaysia in the past two years.

Ding said: "It is not often that people can be exposed to the roots of agriculture, so we offer them an authentic farming experience that is not possible in the big cities they live in today."

Fairy Lake Leisure Farm, which grows longan, Arabica coffee and oranges, offers hands-on activities for groups. Participants can learn about growing cof-

**“Meetings held at the leisure farms take people out of the traditional air-conditioned hotel, which is less interesting. Many are now looking for places that can take them away from the busy city.”**

**Shinny Chiu**

COO, international marketing,  
Taiwan Leisure Farming Development  
Association

fee plants in between longan trees, making dried longan the traditional way, roasting coffee beans and preparing traditional rice cakes from scratch.

Ding added that the farm’s expansive meeting room, which is well-equipped with a projector and audio equipment, is also widely utilised. This space can accommodate 200 pax classroom-style.

However, Fairy Lake Leisure Farm has only 42 double-bed guestrooms, which makes it unsuitable for hosting overnight groups with over 100 delegates.

Chiu noted that Fairy Lake Leisure Farm is not the only leisure farm that lacks ac-

commodation capacity. Most farms do not have more than 50 guestrooms each.

Rollin Farm in Taichung, which sits amid tranquil and picturesque hills and promises a “heavenly” experience with close proximity to the clouds, is in the same predicament. The farm offers only 12 guestrooms.

Chiu said: “It is a win-lose situation because these farms are situated in natural surroundings, and you do not want to sacrifice the environment by building more rooms.”

Another farm, the 14-hectare San-Fu Leisure Farm in Yilan, is surrounded by natural forests of the National Botanic Garden and offers only 19 double-bed guestrooms for overnight guests.

The farm’s business manager, Lusia Hsu, said the farm is more popular with local incentives, hosting at least five groups of 40 to 80 delegates each month. Despite capacity limitations, Hsu is looking to court corporate traffic from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong where growing demand is expected.

She added: “We see more planners today requesting for retreats in (natural surroundings) because (the environment) calms their mind and body. Meetings can be quite stressful...the natural setting can

help them to de-stress.”

Although San-Fu Leisure Farm’s conference room can seat 100 people, Hsu noted that its inventory of only 19 guestrooms deters large overnight groups from booking. Hence, she suggests for such groups to utilise the farm in the day, and then head back to the city for the night.

The same constraint plagues Hualu Flower Leisure Farm in Miaoli. Although the farm offers a well-equipped conference hall that can seat 200 people, it only has 18 guestrooms.

Nevertheless, farm representative Amy Chang said the farm will join forces with others that are located within walking distance to accommodate large corporate groups together.

Chang added that her farm is largely popular for day meetings and instead of utilising the conference hall, most groups prefer to wander into the meadows for an outdoor gathering.

Chiu concluded: “Meetings held at the leisure farms take people out of the traditional air-conditioned hotel, which is less interesting. Many are now looking for places that can take them away from the busy city, which makes leisure farms the perfect option for combining work and leisure.” ■

## Kaohsiung gets busy with MICE

**By Karen Yue and Lee Pei Qi**

Determined to have a cut of the lucrative MICE business, Taiwan’s Kaohsiung City Government has in 2013 established the Meeting & Event Promotion Office and entrusted it with destination promotion and event bidding responsibilities.

Vincent Tseng, director-general of Kaohsiung City Government, explained: “Kaohsiung has been attracting small meetings for years, but the recent Asia Pacific Cities Summit in September really warmed up the city’s pursuit of large-scale international meetings.

“We were also encouraged to establish this office because of the new Kaohsiung Exhibition Center which opens next year. Two major trade events are already confirmed – the Taiwan International Fastener Show and the Taiwan International Boat Show. The city never had a dedicated convention and exhibition centre. This office will help local PCO/PEOs bid for events to fill the new venue.”

Slated to open in April 2014, Kaohsiung

Exhibition Center will feature a wave-like design to complement its waterfront location and offer capacity for 1,500 standard booths as well as a conference hall for 2,000 people, two conference halls for 800 people each and 10 conference rooms for 20 to 40 people.

Alice Chou, Meeting & Event Promotion Office director, said Kaohsiung Exhibition

Center has the potential to host marine-related trade events as it is located along a deep, natural harbour and allows boats to be brought into the exhibition space.

Amanda Hsu, project manager of Meeting & Event Promotion Office, is confident that the new MICE venue will give business event planners and delegates “a new reason to come to Taiwan and visit a new



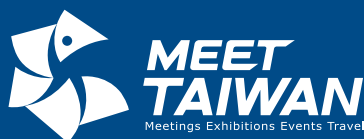
The new Kaohsiung Exhibition Center gives the city ammunition to court large events



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city”.

Indeed, Kaohsiung deserves the “new city” reference, as Kaohsiung City was merged with Kaohsiung County in 2011 to form Greater Kaohsiung.

Part of the new metropolis is the Asian New Bay Area, where the Kaohsiung Exhibition Center sits along with several other facilities that will open progressively over the next two years. They include Kaohsiung Maritime Cultural & Popular Music Centre, which will boast an outdoor theatre for more than 12,000 pax and nine indoor halls; Dadong Culture & Art Center, which will offer an 800-seat theatre and a 200-seat music hall; as well as a library, a cruise terminal and several hotels.

Tseng said: “Kaohsiung now has a lot more land to develop new hardware for business events. Attractions in the outskirts, now part of the city, will be used in enhancing pre- and post-show tours and incentive experiences.”

Hsu said Kaohsiung Exhibition Center hopes to distinguish itself from the Taipei



**“Located along a deep harbour, Kaohsiung Exhibition Center has the potential to host marine-related events, allowing boats into the exhibition space.”**

**Alice Chou**

Meeting & Event Promotion Office director  
Kaohsiung Exhibition Center

World Trade Centre with its strategic location next to Kaohsiung Port, one of the largest of its kind in the world.

She said: “It is the only waterfront MICE venue in Taiwan. Some of our conference rooms offer ocean views. Just imagine how refreshing that will be for event delegates.”

While planners are currently more accustomed to hosting business events in Taipei, some of them are looking forward to the additional option in Kaohsiung.

Senior project executive of Taiwan-based APAC MICE, Jin Liao, said: “We normally prefer to hold our activities in Taipei because delegates are more com-

fortable with being in the main city. But it is good to be able to offer a new option.”

Vicky Lin, senior event executive of TW MICE Event & DMC, agrees that “Taipei is the usual go-to place for (business events) since there is no lack of hotels and meeting facilities” and said Kaohsiung must develop more supporting infrastructure and build greater awareness to succeed in its MICE ambitions.

Chou told *TTGmice* that the new Meeting & Event Promotion Office will get “far more active” in destination promotions and MICE tradeshow participation in 2014 when it secures new funds from the government. ■

## NEED TO KNOW



### Meet in a humble house

My Humble House Group launches its first hotel brand, Humble House Taipei, this December.

The 235-key hotel, designed by Hirsch Bedner Associates, features contemporary art and design elements and promises “a refreshing cosmopolitan experience”.

Located in Taipei’s Xinyi financial district, Humble House Taipei offers event planners a 702m<sup>2</sup> ballroom which can accommodate up to 1,000 guests, as well as two meeting rooms and a VIP room. Several restaurants are also on offer.

### Free Wi-Fi for all

Expanding on the country’s existing free Wi-Fi programme for locals, iTaiwan now gives foreign visitors equal online access.

Since June 2013, visitors can register for an iTaiwan account at any Taiwan Tourism Bureau counter or centre at the airport, as well as at train and mass rapid transit stations.

Travellers will need to identify themselves with their passport in order to enjoy this free Internet connection.

### Be tickled pink

Event planners with a spouse programme to plan for a female-dominant group can consider the new Barbie Café.

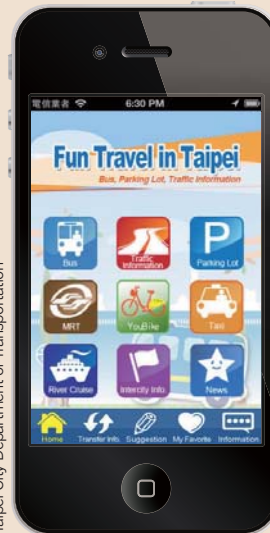
Licensed by Mattel, the US toy manufacturing giant, the café opened earlier in 2013.

Unsurprisingly, the interior features everything in pink, from the sofas to the tables. Even the chirpy army of waitresses are dressed in pink, complete with tutus and tiaras.

### Map your way

Exploring Taipei independently before or after a meeting is much easier now with a new tourist attraction map function within the Fun Travel in Taipei mobile app.

Available for Android smartphone users, the function allows visitors to find recommendations for attractions and access bus and train schedules, among other information.



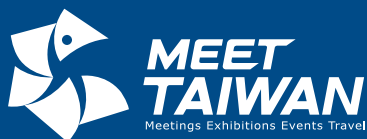
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# MEET PASSION


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KL City view



# A strong proposition

A flurry of MICE incentives and initiatives have given Malaysia a slew of business events in 2013, and it is doing even more in the new year, writes **S Puvaneswary**

For the first eight months of 2013, the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) secured 96 international and regional conventions and incentives, which drew an estimated 50,000 delegates from all over the world to the country and generated an estimated RM573 million (US\$181.4 million) in economic impact.

Business events made up 5.3 per cent of Malaysia's total 25 million arrivals in 2012, and MyCEB wants to grow this share to eight per cent, or 2.9 million out of the projected 36 million arrivals, in 2020.

The MICE bureau has kept up a steady stream of initiatives to position the country as a preferred MICE destination, following the success of its *Kesatria 1Malaysia* ambassador programme.

Initiated in January 2012, the programme resulted in two major conference wins in 2013 – Women Deliver 2013 (WD 2013) in May and 7<sup>th</sup> IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS 2013) in June. Both events were among the top three conventions held in 2013 in terms of delegate attendance.

“Both conferences have managed to collectively bring more than 10,000 delegates to the country. WD 2013 created an economic impact of more than RM42.6 million while IAS 2013 achieved about RM44.6 million,” said MyCEB CEO, Zulkefli Sharif.

To further incentivise overseas meeting planners and their clients to choose Malaysia as their next MICE destination, MyCEB launched the *Malaysia Twin Deal* programme in late July. Aimed at corporate meeting and incentive groups, the scheme entitles international groups with at least 50 foreign delegates to value-added support. Perks are offered to both delegates and event planners.

The programme will, however, expire on December 31, 2013.

Meanwhile, Zulkefli recognises that the strength of the local association is key to securing international conventions.

He said: “MyCEB is constantly searching for national associations that are willing and able to host international events. Most local associations are run by volunteers and are not active globally, while

new and emerging associations are not bid-ready as they may be under-resourced, volunteer-run and short on time.”

To encourage local associations to bid for and host international conventions in Malaysia, MyCEB launched the *Association Development Programme* (ADP) in June, offering local associations a wide range of strategic initiatives put together by the bureau. These include association management seminars, conference planning seminars, bid support (financial and non-financial) and international engagements. ADP's educational sessions provide training for associations, from establishing to managing and bidding for international conferences.

Yap Sook Ling, director of AOS Conventions & Events Malaysia, told *TTGmice*:

“ADP is a good initiative as it will help associations to better understand the bidding process, which will in turn make it easier for PCOs and DMCs to work with them. It will also help associations understand that there are a lot of opportunities available, that they can bid for global and regional meetings and congresses.



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- A "Selamat Datang" gift
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- Experiential Malaysian cultural showcase
- Malaysian cultural performance

#### 200 PARTICIPANTS AND ABOVE\*

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

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

\* Terms and conditions apply. Visit [www.myceb.com.my/promotions](http://www.myceb.com.my/promotions) for details.

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For more information, please contact:

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“Many associations still think that the job of DMCs merely involves booking of hotel (guestrooms) and ballrooms. ADP will dispel that misconception and create better awareness of what is involved in making an international conference successful and the tools that are available, such as specialised software for...registration, conference session bookings and delegate payment.”

MyCEB's efforts to catalyse the growth of Malaysia's MICE industry also included the debut of rAWr (Recognising Award Winning Results) Awards in September 2013. Organised by the bureau and the Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (MACEOS), the awards sought to recognise excellence, leadership, professional standards, innovation and best practices within the business events industry. It was conceived with the intention of creating benchmarks for business event players to consistently provide the best services and products to event organisers

and attendees, and covered 27 categories within the four main components of the MICE industry including Best International Conference, Best Trade Exhibition, Best Incentive Programme, Best Event and Best Environmental Initiative.

Commenting on the positive influence the rAWr Awards has on the country's MICE sector, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre general manager, Peter Brokenshire, said: “Given the increasing value of business tourism to the nation's tourism receipts, the importance of a programme like this cannot be underestimated.

“I am confident it will spur stakeholders to continue upgrading and enhancing the quality and delivery of their products and services, and at the same time raise the level of professionalism so Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia remain a destination of choice for the global meetings industry.”

MyCEB's soft initiatives are complemented by new tourism hardware such as hotel developments in the vicinity of the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre and

expansion of the popular centre.

Moving forward, the capital city's five-star inventory is expected to increase by 12.2 per cent with an additional 1,283 rooms through new hotel openings between 2014 and 2016. New five-star brands debuting in Kuala Lumpur include St. Regis Kuala Lumpur with 208 rooms and 160 residences, scheduled to open in December 2014; Banyan Tree Signatures Pavilion Kuala Lumpur with 50 suites, scheduled for 2015; and W Kuala Lumpur with 150 rooms, scheduled for 2016.

Aaron Tai, DMC services director at Reliance Conventions & Events, believes that the additional room inventory will aid the bidding of large congresses and stabilise room rates in the bustling city centre.

Air connectivity to Kuala Lumpur is also improving. In 2013 the airport welcomed six new airlines including Air France and Turkish Airlines.

Passenger handling capacity will improve too when the new low-cost terminal klia2 opens in May 2014. ■



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# Corporate fun in Kuantan's wild

By S Puvaneswary

Since it opened in 2009, Bukit Gambang Resort City (BGRC) integrated resort in Kuantan has largely appealed to the domestic market, both to the leisure and business events segments.

Now armed with new additions such as the Safari Park and the Bukit Gambang MICE Centre which houses the largest pillarless ballroom (with capacity for 3,100 pax in a round table banquet setting) recorded by the Malaysia Book of Records and 11 new meeting spaces, BGRC offers an even stronger proposition for MICE buyers. The integrated resort's management is keen to attract meeting planners and corporate delegates from Singapore, India and China – markets that generate year-round traffic and are among the top 10 tourist arrival sources for Malaysia.

Karen Tan, BGRC spokesperson, said: "With the new attractions in the 138-acre (55.8-hectare) Safari Park, coupled with the 45.8-acre Water Park, there are enough things to do here to increase delegate stay from one or two nights to three. The park itself has enough attractions to occupy delegates for a whole day."

BGRC works with Tourism Malaysia and inbound travel consultants to organise familiarisation trips for the MICE and travel media, meeting planners and corporate companies from Singapore, China and India. In addition, it also has a sales representative in Singapore.

Tan added: "Overseas promotions started early-2013 and results are expected to show in 2014. Currently, the domestic MICE market makes up about 50 per cent of total visitors to the resort, while the remaining are leisure tourists. Many local

companies like to host their family day and company outing at the resort.

"We are targeting both local and overseas MICE groups as they are more high-yield compared to leisure tourists who are mainly day trippers or tend to stay for a night or two. MICE delegates will use our meeting, teambuilding and recreational facilities and ask for customised dining menus. They also tend to bring their family members along to enjoy our leisure facilities."

According to Tan, BGRC will court event planners who are looking for flexible, unique venues.

"BGRC is sprawled across 727 acres of lush secondary jungle (and) we have 1,866 guestrooms to (support) our collection of 34 venues," she explained.

At press time in end-November, BGRC is gearing up to launch a new meeting space within the Safari Park's Wild Savannah section, located on a hill overlooking free roaming wild animals such as tigers, elephants, hippopotamus and giraffes.

"It is almost like having a meeting in the wild, but with modern comforts and meeting facilities," she said.

Event planners are offered a unique dining option at the Simba Hill Gourmet Hall, where clear ceiling-to-floor glass walls bring the wild outside into the venue. These glass walls separate the restaurant from three white lions that roam freely within their enclosure.

Tan said: "The white lions are the main highlight of this restaurant and for delegates, it is an awesome opportunity to dine, watch and take photographs of these endangered species from Africa."

BGRC also boasts its own in-house teambuilding event facilitators to conduct outdoor and indoor activities for up to 500 people per session.

Tan said: "The temporary closure of Genting Outdoor Theme Park at Resorts World Genting works to our advantage as we can offer companies and meeting planners an alternative venue. Here, we want our visitors to have fun and bond with one another, but at the same time we try to instill a love for nature and animal conservation." ■



Fairy-tale entrance to Bukit Gambang Resort City

## Ideas

### Two-day post-meeting nature escape in Pahang



Tourism Malaysia

#### Day 1

From Kuala Tembeling Pier in Pahang, Malaysia, depart for Kuala Tahan by motorised longboat. Kuala Tahan is the main entrance to Taman Negara National Park. Pass by local villages and lush tropical rainforest en route. If you are lucky, you may sight local wildlife. Check-in at Mutiara Taman Negara resort.

After dinner, enjoy a slide show on Taman Negara National Park, the oldest rainforest in the world, and some of the wildlife that inhabit the area. A brief orientation of the national park, led by a guide, and a night walk through the 130-million-old rainforest will follow.

#### Day 2

Put on some sturdy walking shoes and go on a jungle walk after breakfast. The accompanying nature guide will introduce the rich flora found on Tereseck Hill. On a clear day, from Tereseck Hill, delegates will be able to see Mount Tahan, the highest peak in Peninsular Malaysia.

After lunch, hop on a motorised boat to reach the cataracts of Lata Berkoh where there is a crisp pool great for swimming or a relaxing soak.

Return to the resort come evening.

*Itinerary by Luxury Tours Malaysia*

## NEED TO KNOW



### New Traders hotel opens in Johor

Traders Hotel, Puteri Harbour, Johor began welcoming guests on June 1. Located on the southern tip of Peninsular Malaysia and a mere 15-minute drive from Singapore, the hotel offers a variety of meeting spaces. The hotel ballroom, VIP Room and pre-function area can collectively accommodate up to 600 guests, while five other multi-function rooms are suitable for smaller groups ranging from 40 to 280 guests.

The hotel's 283 stylish rooms and suites are complemented by free Internet access, a business centre, health club, rooftop infinity pool and landscaped garden, among other features.

### Meetings on the Desaru Coast

Desaru Coast, Malaysia's first luxury integrated destination located on the south-eastern coast of Peninsular Malaysia, will open in 2015. Visitors will find a choice of top-name hotels including Sheraton Desaru Resort, Aman Country Club and Aman Villas, two aquatic theme parks, two championship golf courses, a hospitality school, a waterfront retail village and a state-of-the-art convention centre.

Strategically located at the heart of the Desaru Coast development, the Desaru Convention Centre offers banqueting and exhibition space for up to 1,000 guests, on top of meeting rooms, pre-function areas and VIP lounges.



### MyCEB beefs up Delegate Welcome Kit

Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) has padded up its Delegate Welcome Kit with two new offerings – the Conference Mobile Application and Delegates Privilege Card – for conferences with over 500 international delegates.

The Conference Mobile Application provides relevant information such as conference schedules, speakers, surveys and announcements while its destination feature lists Kuala Lumpur's attractions, shopping and dining options. This function will be upgraded later on to include guides to other states around the country.

Meanwhile, delegates can redeem special offers at selected F&B and retail outlets, attractions, and transport services with the Delegates Privilege Card.

For more information, email [info@myceb.com.my](mailto:info@myceb.com.my)

### Genting to open Twentieth Century Fox theme park

Resorts World Genting will splash out more than RM400 million (US\$125.9 million) to build a Twentieth Century Fox theme park, following a licensing partnership signed between the two parties in July 2013. Scheduled to open in 2016, the new theme park will be built within Resorts World Genting grounds and feature over 25 rides and attractions based on some of Fox's most recognisable and powerful film brands, including Ice Age, Rio, Alien and Night at the Museum.

The Genting Outdoor Theme Park has been closed since September 1, 2013 to facilitate this construction.

### Gastronomic haven at Le Méridien Kuala Lumpur

One of the newer dining destinations in the Malaysian capital is Gastro Sentral at Le Méridien Kuala Lumpur. Opened in November 2012, the handsome restaurant offers a perfect setting for business luncheons and features an all-day menu consisting of an array of continental, Asian and local delights. It has a show kitchen where the culinary brigade entertains guests with their cooking flair through a wide glass panel. Gastro Sentral can comfortably seat 118 people. Email [lemeridien.kualalumpur@lemeridien.com](mailto:lemeridien.kualalumpur@lemeridien.com) for details.



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 Ballroom In Malaysia

Sichuan province's rich heritage and natural scenery will be leveraged to attract both leisure and business event visitors; martial artists strike a pose at a temple on Mount Emei



# Sichuan in fiery pursuit

Multiple challenges have only fuelled the Chinese province's determination to advance its tourism business, discovers **Prudence Lui**

It has been an eventful year for China's Sichuan province. Cases of an H7N9 outbreak in parts of China earlier this year had worried potential travellers, while Mother Nature had unleashed an earthquake in the province's Lushan County on April 20 and heavy rains in July that resulted in raging floods and mudslides.

Sichuan's tourism performance in the first half of 2013 bore the scars of these challenges. Foreign arrivals fell 7.6 per cent to 802,600, while tourism receipts dipped 6.2 per cent to US\$283 million.

The Tourism Administration of Sichuan Province also attributed the weak tourism

health to external factors, specifically the economic woes in Europe and the US, unstable political conditions in some source markets and the appreciation of the Renminbi, which had discouraged Chinese citizens from travelling.

However, these challenges have only served to strengthen Sichuan's resolve to advance its tourism potential and performance. The provincial tourism office has stepped up overseas sales and marketing promotions. Besides organising overseas sales trips, the office has also invited travel consultants and the media to "experience the charm of Sichuan".

Two prime business event venues are

available in provincial capital Chengdu. Century City New International Convention & Exhibition Center, a massive venue with eight exhibition halls offering 110,000m<sup>2</sup> of total gross rentable area, is located within walking distance of Holiday Inn Chengdu Century City West and East Tower and InterContinental Century City Chengdu. The latter hotel is also connected by a sheltered walkway to another venue, the Century City International Convention Centre, which offers 24 multi-purpose meeting rooms.

Business events hosted in Chengdu can easily include pre- and post-show tours to scenic and historical attractions in the outskirts, such as Huanglongxi Ancient Town, about an hour's car ride from the city centre, or in nearby counties and regions. UNESCO World Heritage Site Jiuzhaigou Valley Scenic and Historic Interest Area is a mere 40-minute flight from Chengdu, but presents a vividly different environment that captures the unique customs of Tibetan and Qiang tribes.

Tourism Administration of Sichuan Province's deputy director, Wu Mian, said: "We are focusing our activities on 13 key international markets that have direct air access to provincial capital Chengdu."

In 2013, the tourism bureau reached out to buyers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, India, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the UK.

Wu noted that arrivals from the US, Germany, France and Malaysia had grown in 2013. American arrivals hit 100,000 while German arrivals leapt 46.4 per cent over the same period in 2012.

Meanwhile, Sichuan's accessibility to global travellers is improving with the addition of new flights through Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport. As of June 2013, the airport was connected with 210 locations, 65 of which are outside of China. These routes included new ones such as Sichuan Airlines' inaugural service to Melbourne launched on February 28, 2013; Qatar Airways' first Chengdu-Doha service which commenced in March; and Air China direct flights to Frankfurt which took off on May 19. On September 22, British Airways kicked off a thrice-weekly service between Chengdu and London.

Come 2014, Chengdu will be further connected with San Francisco, Istanbul and Moscow.

On the hotel front, Chengdu's high-end hotel market will double in size over the next four years, according to CBRE Research. Room supply is expected to exceed 13,000 by 2016. ■

# Hangzhou flexes its muscles

By S T Leng

China's Hangzhou is taking bold steps to sharpen its competitiveness and distinguish itself from the top two Chinese MICE cities, Beijing and Shanghai.

Wang Xinzhang, deputy director, Hangzhou Tourism Commission (HTC), said: "We have identified 10 industries that will lead the city's economic development and guide our choice of international business events to bring to Hangzhou.

"According to ICCA, we are currently third in China, behind Beijing and Shanghai, and 34<sup>th</sup> in Asia-Pacific. Our goal is to be among the top 20 in Asia-Pacific and close our gap with Beijing and Shanghai within five years.

"This year, we have seen more growth in corporate and association meetings and we are targeting five to 10 per cent year-on-year growth. We foresee Hangzhou will continue to attract international meetings

because it has the fourth highest GDP among Chinese capital cities in 2012."

Hangzhou's major incentive groups are from Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Some major events held this year were the NuSkin (950 pax, March) and Takeda Pharmaceutical Company (1,200 pax, April) annual conferences and 9<sup>th</sup> International Society for Apheresis (2,000 pax, May).

Wang added: "In early 2014, we will launch a handbook highlighting Hangzhou's traditional Chinese culture, local communities and contemporary lifestyles, teambuilding ideas, unique venues, as well as nightlife and entertainment, supplemented by itineraries and case studies."

Meanwhile, HTC's Conference Ambassador programme, where influential Hangzhou-based industry leaders are appointed advocates for the city, continues to extend Hangzhou's reach worldwide

and help the city bid for international meetings.

"We also launched the *Meet in Hangzhou - Hangzhou MICE Special Offer Season* campaign in October, which reimburses MICE planners 10 per cent of their expenses if they spend more than RMB5,000 (US\$815) with participating hotels and DMCs. We will run this campaign through to February 2014," shared Wang.

Fam trips remain a priority, he added. "We hope to engage more Asian corporate buyers next year, and strengthen our relationship with partners such as InterContinental Hotels Group and Marriott to reach out to more buyers."

Additionally, Hangzhou participated in major tradeshows in 2013, including AIME, IT&CM China, IMEX and CIBTM. For 2014, it will again be at IMEX and IT&CM China, and is considering ITB Asia. Road shows are also scheduled for Singapore, Belgium and other cities. ■

## NEED TO KNOW



### Watch an opera

Chengdu is the home of Sichuanese opera, which is distinctively different from other forms of Chinese opera. It is more of a play, with plenty of singing, acting and stunts such as face-changing and swordplay.

Shufeng Sichuan Opera House on Qintai Traditional Street (No. 23 Chengdu Qintai Road; Tel: (86-28) 8776-4530) is a good place to catch a performance. Shows start from 20.00 daily, and tickets can be reserved in advance.

### Is this up your alley?

Made up of three ancient streets, Kuanzhai Alley in the city centre is packed with conserved buildings, some of which have been converted into quaint tea houses, restaurants that serve local and international cuisine, and shops selling a variety of things, from trinkets to art pieces.

### New heavyweight

Hailed as the world's largest freestanding building, New Century Global Center is a sight to behold. Opened in June, the 1.7-million-square-meter structure houses offices, two hotels with 2,000 keys altogether, a cinema with multiple theatres, retail outlets and various fun attractions.



### Afterdark entertainment

Business event delegates looking for a fun night out can head to Lan Kwai Fong Chengdu, an entertainment destination that is home to more than 30 restaurants, bars, dance clubs and retail shops. Party animals should hit MIU Club, a venue that draws a loyal following with its dance music and themed parties, while China Groove offers a terrace that makes a great venue for private gatherings.

### Ritz-Carlton brings touch of glamour to Chengdu

Towering above Tianfu Square in the city centre, the new Ritz-Carlton, Chengdu offers 353 rooms, 1,700m<sup>2</sup> of event space which comprises two luxurious ballrooms and seven versatile meeting rooms, five restaurants and bars, a 10-room spa, a fitness centre, and other facilities. Complimentary wireless Internet access is offered throughout the hotel.

## CHECKING IN

## InterContinental Century City Chengdu

Five-star, 555 rooms

Tel: (86-28) 853-49999

Email: peng.chen@ihg.com or rsvn.icchengdu@ihg-etghotels.com

Website: www.intercontinental.com

InterContinental Century City Chengdu sits on Century City Boulevard within Tianfu New Area, a district that is primed to be Chengdu's newest economic and technological hub. Tianfu New Area is expected to be completely ready in 2015. The latest infrastructure to open is the New Century Global Center mixed-use complex (see *Need to know* on previous page).

The hotel is about 30 minutes by car from the airport and city attractions such as Kuanzhai Alley, and a 10-minute stroll from Century City New International Convention & Exhibition Center.

**Meeting facilities**

InterContinental Century City Chengdu operates the Century City International Convention Centre, a venue that is conveniently connected to the hotel tower via a walkway on level five. The centre offers 24 multifunction meeting rooms that are fitted with the necessary audiovisual equipment.

The centre's 2,800m<sup>2</sup> Crystal Ballroom is said to be the largest pillarless ballroom in western China. It can accommodate up to 2,800 people in a theatre setting or 1,530 guests in a banquet layout, and is divisible into six smaller spaces.

**Other facilities**

The hotel sure knows how to make a great first impression. First, I was blown away by the design of the lobby – a sprawling indoor space filled with reproductions of life-size ancient two-storey grey brick houses and lush gardens. One part of this structure functions as the reception area, while the other forms the courtyard-style all-day dining Café.

Second, the hotel is infused with a refreshing scent made by Australian fragrance specialist, Air Aroma. It made me look forward to returning to the hotel every evening.

Facilities in the hotel include a spa, a 24-hour fitness centre and a business centre.

It also sits across the street from Century City New International Convention & Exhibition Center.

**F&B**

One could hardly go hungry or be stuck in a gastronomic rut at the InterContinental Century City Chengdu. The hotel offers a tantalising option of four restaurants, a deli and two bars. The four restaurants are all-day

**Fact file****Largest venue**

Crystal Ballroom, which can accommodate 1,530 guests in a banquet setting or 2,800 in a theatre setting

**Smallest venue**

ShuShui and ShuXiu rooms, which can each host 12 delegates in a boardroom setting

dining Café; La Rôtisserie, an elegant French restaurant that comes with a dreamy garden terrace; Ponti's Ristorante which serves Italian cuisine, and a beautiful Cantonese restaurant that dishes out rather tasty dishes.

But my heart was stolen by Café, largely due to its impressive architecture. Its ancient Chinese courtyard environment comes complete with beautiful, singing birds in delicate cages. A delicious array of international and local dishes is served for breakfast. The noodle soup with meat dumplings is a must-try.

Besides in-house restaurants, the hotel offers a variety of eateries a stone's throw away.

**Rooms**

The hotel offers 555 rooms and suites, including a palatial Presidential Mansion. Non-smoking floors and facilities for the physically challenged are available.

My club room on level 28 is spacious, effortlessly packing in a large work desk with easy-to-reach electrical outlets, a cosy nook with a couch and coffee table where I conducted debriefs with my colleagues, an enormous bed on which I slept like a baby for five nights and a bathroom with an oversized bath that came with complimentary bath salts.

I love the room's perfect blend of modern creature comforts and elegant Chinese touches through accessories such as a jade-green teapot and beautifully painted porcelain cups and scent jars.

Being on such a high floor meant my room commanded a clear view of the emerging new business district.

**Service**

My room booking was found swiftly, allowing me to settle quickly into my room and retire for the night. Service staff are friendly, attentive and responsive – even when Café was packed to the rafters with time-starved business guests during breakfast on weekdays – and most are able to converse in good English.

**VERDICT**

An impressive hotel which will please both business travellers and residential meeting groups.

**Karen Yue**

# Appointments



Andrew Sjaus



Jenny Ramos



Catherine Lee



Peter Clarke



Lillian Tan



Martin Fluck



Trevor McCartney



Neo Ping Peng



James Ramage



Christopher Oakes

## AUSTRALIA

**Andrew Sjaus** has joined **Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre** as F&B manager. Sjaus previously held positions such as conference and events manager at RACV Royal Pines, banquets operations manager at Palazzo Versace and banquets manager at Holiday Inn Surfers Paradise.

**Sunshine Coast Destination** has appointed **Laughlin Rigby** head of marketing. Laughlin has a strong background in tourism and destination marketing, most recently with the Irish Tourist Board, where he played a major role in developing Ireland's largest ever tourism initiative, The Gathering 2013.

**Palazzo Versace** in the Gold Coast has appointed **Jenny Ramos** its director of sales. She joins from Gold Coast's Jupiters Hotel & Casino

where she was sales manager.

## CHINA

**Dusit Fudu Hotels and Resorts** has named **Catherine Lee** vice president sales and marketing. Lee has over 25 years of hospitality experience, having held leadership positions in sales and marketing with major international hotel groups.

**Peter Clarke** is now general manager of **Pudong Shangri-La, East Shanghai**. He was last general manager at Kerry Hotel Pudong, Shanghai.

## INDONESIA

**Starwood Bali Resorts Collection** has appointed **Lillian Tan** cluster director of sales and marketing, based in Bali. Tan is armed with more than 18 years of experience.

**Tjendana Resorts Management** has

picked **Wayne Lunt** its new corporate general manager. Lunt will be responsible for the operations, sales and marketing of Tjendana's seven villa resorts in Bali, Indonesia.

**Roger Habermacher** now helms **Ayana Resort and Spa Bali** and **Rimba Jimbaran Bali** as general manager. He joins from Park Hyatt Beijing in China.

## JAPAN

**Oakwood Worldwide** has promoted **Martin Fluck** to director of operations for Oakwood-branded serviced apartments in North Asia. He was last both country manager for Japan and general manager for Oakwood Premier Tokyo Midtown.

## MIDDLE EAST

**Trevor McCartney** is now the general manager of **Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre**. He joins from

Qatar National Convention Centre where he was director of business development.

## PHILIPPINES

**Marco Polo Ortigas Manila** has named its pre-opening team, including general manager **Adriano Vences** and director of sales and marketing **Pearl Peralta-Maclang**.

Vences was resident manager of Marco Polo Hong Kong and Peralta-Maclang, vice president of sales and marketing of Crimson Hotels and Resorts' management arm, Filarchipelago Hospitality.

## SINGAPORE

**Courtenay Dundy** is now director of sales & marketing of **The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore**. Dundy joins the luxury hotel with nine years of experience helping sales and marketing portfolios in the hospitality industry, and was last director of sales

& marketing of Grand Hyatt Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

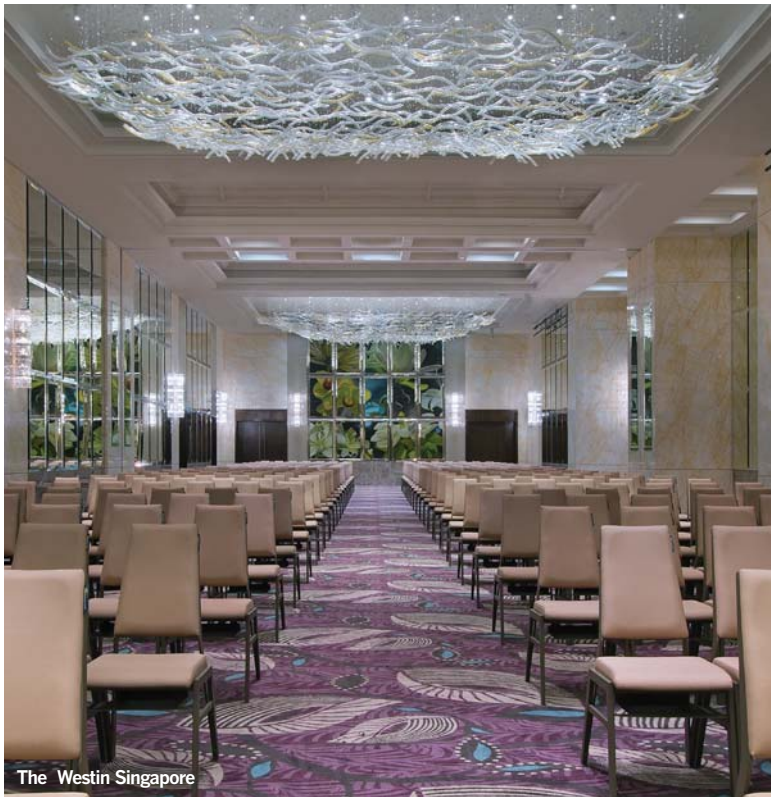
**Neo Ping Peng** is now director of sales with **Swissôtel Merchant Court, Singapore**. She brings with her more than a decade of hospitality sales experience to her new role.

## THAILAND

**Diethelm Travel Group** has appointed **James Ramage** group managing director for sales and marketing. Ramage is armed with three decades of experience in the travel and hospitality industry, having worked with Starwood and Marriott hotels worldwide.

**Christopher Oakes** is now general manager of luxury resort, **Indigo Pearl**, in Phuket. Oakes joins Indigo Pearl with an extensive background in luxury hospitality and resort management.

# Hotel updates



The Westin Singapore



Village Hotel Katong, Singapore



Fairmont Peace Hotel, Shanghai, China

## Fairmont Peace Hotel, Shanghai, China

Fairmont Peace Hotel in Shanghai has expanded its collection of event spaces. The roof terrace offers two new private dining rooms – the 25m<sup>2</sup> Scotland Room and the 35m<sup>2</sup> England Room. Adjacent to the roof terrace is the Nine Heaven Hall, which has been perfectly restored to its original 1920s splendour and offers a 270-degree view of the Huangpu River. Two other new venues are available on the mezzanine level. The 215m<sup>2</sup> Chun Shen Room is good for up to 100 guests in a banquet setting, while the luxurious 110m<sup>2</sup> Thames Room can accommodate up to 50 people in a banquet setting.  
[www.fairmont.com/peace-hotel-shanghai](http://www.fairmont.com/peace-hotel-shanghai)

## Four Points by Sheraton Penang, Malaysia

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide has launched the 220-key Four Points by Sheraton Penang after extensive renovations and rebranding of the beachfront property. It is located on a secluded beachfront in Tanjung Bungah, 45 minutes from Bayan Lepas International Airport and 15 minutes from the UNESCO World Heritage City of Georgetown and Straits Quay, home to Straits

Quay Convention Centre. Several dining outlets, an outdoor pool with ocean views, a 24-hour fitness centre and free Wi-Fi throughout the resort are offered. For meetings and events, the resort boasts 1,100m<sup>2</sup> of flexible space across two ballrooms and a pre-function area.  
[www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com)

## Holiday Inn Express Semarang Simpang Lima, Indonesia

The 198-room Holiday Inn Express Semarang Simpang Lima is a 15-minute drive from Ahmad Yani International Airport, in the centre of Semarang's shopping, dining and entertainment district. Targeting both leisure and business travellers, it offers free Wi-Fi throughout its premises, a Free Express Start Breakfast or a Grab & Go option, a self-service business centre, and other facilities.  
[www.ihg.com/holidayinnexpress/hotels/gb/en/reservation](http://www.ihg.com/holidayinnexpress/hotels/gb/en/reservation)

## Oakwood Residence Prestige Whitefield Bangalore, India

Oakwood Residence Prestige Whitefield Bangalore has opened in the Silicon Valley of India, offer-

ing 143 units overlooking the scenic Varthur Lake. Strategically located in the IT hub of Bangalore and atop Forum Value Mall at Whitefield, the property offers guests easy access to the International Tech Park Bangalore and a variety of entertainment, dining and shopping options. Choose from studio, one- and two-bedroom units. Facilities include the all-day dining Oakleaf Restaurant and Bar, a fitness centre, an outdoor pool, meeting facilities and more.  
[www.oakwoodasia.com/bangalore/oakwood-residence-prestige-whitefield.php](http://www.oakwoodasia.com/bangalore/oakwood-residence-prestige-whitefield.php)

## The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore, India

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company has launched its first hotel in India – the Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore. Located in the centre of downtown Bengaluru, the hotel offers 277 rooms, a range of meeting rooms including a 600m<sup>2</sup> ballroom, a boardroom and three function rooms, seven dining venues to be run by a Michelin-starred chef, a Ritz-Carlton Club Lounge, a spa, a salon and an outdoor pool with poolside lounge and bar. The ballroom is said to be the city's largest pillarless venue of its kind.  
[www.ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/Bangalore](http://www.ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/Bangalore)

## Village Hotel Katong, Singapore

The new Peranakan-themed Village Hotel Katong offers 229 rooms and five meeting rooms – the largest of which can seat 150 guests in a theatre setting. Other facilities include a swimming pool and gym. Guests can also enjoy complimentary Wi-Fi access and airport shuttle service. The hotel is conveniently located 10 minutes from Singapore Expo and 15 minutes from Singapore Changi Airport by car.  
[www.stayfareast.com/en/hotels/village-hotel-katong.aspx](http://www.stayfareast.com/en/hotels/village-hotel-katong.aspx)

## The Westin Singapore

Occupying the 32<sup>nd</sup> to 46<sup>th</sup> floors of the new Asia Square Tower Two development, the 305-key Westin Singapore boasts 10 individual meeting rooms spanning 1,350m<sup>2</sup> of space, a range of F&B venues, a spa, fitness studio and outdoor infinity pool on level 35. All guestrooms are fitted with floor-to-ceiling windows that offer unobstructed views of the city. A dining venue of note is Seasonal Tastes, which features five interactive kitchens and serves lunch and dinner buffets.  
[www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com)



# Case study

## Carlson Rezidor Asia Pacific General Managers Conference

Staff of Carlson Rezidor properties worldwide are put through a real test of team spirit and crisis readiness when their conference in Cebu is shaken up by an earthquake, writes **Rosa Ocampo**



Hotel chiefs and senior executives attending the annual Carlson Rezidor Asia Pacific General Managers Conference 2013 interrupt their meeting to lend a hand at post-quake evacuation and checks

It is in the middle of October and the 21-storey, 400-room Radisson Blu Hotel Cebu was running close to full occupancy. It is also hosting the annual Carlson Rezidor Asia Pacific General Managers Conference 2013 for more than 150 senior executives and general managers from the region as well as the US and Europe.

Also in attendance was Elizabeth Sy, president of the hotel's owner, SM Hotels and Convention Corp, and the daughter of hotel general manager Lyle Lewis who was visiting with her husband and their 18-month-old and four-year-old sons.

The conference programme included full-day meetings on October 14 and 15 and two days of follow-up sessions afterwards, but all that changed in the morning of October 15 at 08:12.

Lewis was on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor preparing for the second day of the meeting when a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck.

"The initial shocks were completely frightening. The building was swaying from side to side more than going up and down. I tried to walk in it, but I lost my balance. It lasted for just about a minute, but it was the longest minute," Lewis described the earthquake that claimed more than 200 lives in the provinces of Bohol and Cebu, flattening 18 antique churches in Bohol and damaging several

<b>Event</b>
Carlson Rezidor Asia Pacific General Managers Conference 2013
<b>No of delegates</b>
Over 150
<b>Venue</b>
Radisson Blu Hotel Cebu, Cebu City
<b>Date</b>
October 14-15, 2013
<b>Objectives</b>
To reach out to the hotels, celebrate their achievements and impart how to make a mark in the hospitality industry
<b>Challenges</b>
Interruption by a magnitude 7.2 earthquake which scrambled conference attendees who jumped in and offered assistance to their colleagues and hotel guests

Cebu landmarks. There would be frequent and strong aftershocks for the next several weeks.

When the quake stopped Lewis went down via the fire exit to lead the evacuation of guests. He thought of his family but "had to push that back in my mind,

hoping that Sam's husband Christian was looking after her and my grandchildren".

Trained in crisis management, the staff of Radisson Blu Hotel Cebu knew what to do during force majeure. The crisis plan was set in place and activated quickly, and the Emergency Response Team was prepared.

Within moments, the PA system announced the evacuation; guests were led to the back garden. Within minutes, guests were offered water, towels, umbrellas, slippers and buffet snacks. A coffee machine was set up; an American guest was surprised that she was being offered a choice of cappuccino or latte in the midst of a strong earthquake.

The hotel team and Carlson Rezidor executives came together to manage the crisis. The other general managers helped, including checking each room for damage. "It was a team effort and I'm pleased that they were here because they helped us a lot," said Lewis.

Sy also proved to be a trouper, assisting and speaking to guests and staff. "She's almost part of our team," said Lewis.

Within an hour of the quake, SM had structural engineers flown in from Manila on company aircraft to check and assure the structural safety of the hotel.

The same afternoon, psychologists specialising in trauma management were ushered in for guests; they also ran several sessions for hotel staff.

A medical service team was quickly on hand; a hospitality desk was set up to keep guests updated and assist in their travel arrangements.

It was quite a feat that no one was harmed or injured.

The hotel reviewed how it handled the earthquake, identifying the areas it did well and areas it needed to focus and improve on. That review would go on to help Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group review and update its crisis manuals and procedures.

Inevitably, the Asia Pacific General Managers Conference 2013 was cancelled for a later date. But the attendees' experience at Radisson Blu Hotel Cebu was an impromptu and unforgettable exercise in teambuilding and handling crisis. ■

# Packages



## CHINA, HONG KONG

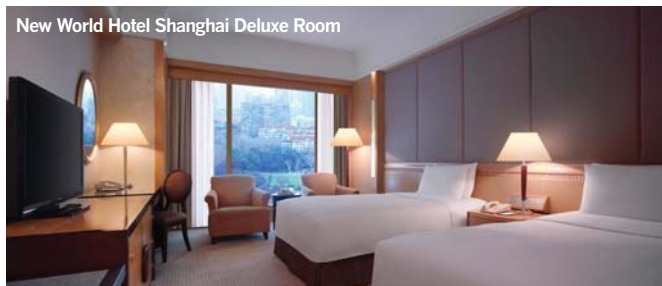
**Regal Hotels International** is offering an early bird promotion to corporate event planners, valid from January 1 to March 31, 2014.

Aimed at TMCs, DMCs, PCOs and PEOs worldwide, the promotion is available at all properties in China and Hong Kong. It features a 15 per cent commission on commissionable room rates or five per cent commission on nett room rates, a theme refreshment break upgrade, use of one LCD projector, Internet access in the meeting venue (limited to two devices), and a guaranteed upgrade for two rooms to the next category for every 20 rooms per booking.

Terms apply.

Visit [www.regalhotel.com](http://www.regalhotel.com)

New World Hotel Shanghai Deluxe Room



## ASIA

**New World Hotels**, which has properties mostly in China and one in Manila, has come up with a year-end package for business travellers.

The *Warm Winter Welcome* package offers a 50 per cent discount every night from the third night onwards, as well as daily breakfast and free Wi-Fi to guests who stay two nights at any New World Hotels property.

The offer is valid between December 14, 2013 and February 14, 2014.

Visit [www.newworldhotels.com](http://www.newworldhotels.com)

## CHINA

**Andaz Shanghai** is offering an annual dinner package for companies looking to usher in 2014 with a bang.

Priced from RMB6,800 (US\$1,118) net per table of at least 10 guests for a Chinese set menu, the New Year party package is valid until March 31, 2014. It includes free flow of soft drinks, juices, local beers and two bottles of imported red wine per table, use of audiovisual system, special room rate for guests and one complimentary night's stay for bookings of more than 20 tables, among others.

Buffet arrangements are available too, and a minimum booking of 40 pax is required. Other terms apply.

All prices include a 15 per cent service charge.

Contact [info.shanghai@andaz.com](mailto:info.shanghai@andaz.com)



## AUSTRALIA

**The Arts Centre Gold Coast**, which offers three function venues of different sizes, has rolled out a Dinner Meeting Package, priced at A\$60 (US\$56) per person.

Venue hire, function and events staff, projector and screen, lectern and microphone, Wi-Fi access, a two-course dinner, one beverage on arrival, tea and coffee, stationery and a registration desk are included in the package.

The Arts Centre Gold Coast's Office Boardroom seats a minimum of 10 pax and maximum of 16 pax; the Panorama Suite has a minimum capacity of 25 pax and maximum of 60 pax; and the largest space, the Paradise Showroom holds a minimum of 60 pax and a maximum 150 pax.

The offer is valid until June 30, 2014 for bookings confirmed before January 31, 2014.

Email [fleming@theartscentregc.com.au](mailto:fleming@theartscentregc.com.au)

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



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