

June 2014

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spending slides

Taiwan grows from
strength to strength

KLCC's new chief,
Alan Pryor, talks about
his plans for the venue



Meet differently

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**Raini Hamdi**
Senior Editor

Meet differently

The last pow-wow I attended, where the sales and editorial teams of TTG Asia Publishing came together to brainstorm ideas for our 40th anniversary this year, was in a hotel meeting room. I remember the room was too big for some 20 of us. We were seated in a U-shape setting. There was coffee & tea, sandwiches and snacks on a table on one side of the four walls. It was pretty normal and traditional. It was a good meeting overall.

Does it matter where we meet? For me, what counts first is always the why and, once it's clear why we are meeting, the how and the where *do* count in whether we will have just a satisfactory meeting, or an outstanding one.

Secretly, I think everybody dreads going to a meeting because the work gets stopped and a chunk of precious time gets lopped off. It's only when they are away from the desk, when they start interacting with colleagues whom they have not met or seen for a while, that people start getting into the spirit of meeting.

So why not get them to be spirited rightaway by meeting in non-traditional venues? This is a trend that is continuing to rise worldwide. Last year, meeting planners surveyed by American Express Meetings & Events Forecast had said they were considering more 'non-traditional' venues as locations for meetings, such as outdoor venues, universities and aquariums. This year's survey results predicted similar trends, with Europe and Asia leading the charge with a 2.5 per cent increase in the use of alternative properties.

So we got our reporters from the region to trawl their destinations for alternative venues (see our cover story this issue) and what they came up with just make us want to meet. Museums and libraries, historical buildings and ancient town halls, opera houses and theatres, national parks and treasured gardens, just to name a few, all have meeting spaces, their ambience likely to inspire and excite. Yes, I agree there are drawbacks, chiefly that these venues invariably lack the one-stop offering of a hotel in terms of AV equipment, F&B, etc. But the inconvenience is worth it if the venue is better able to open hearts, which will unlock minds (and isn't that what a meeting is supposed to do?).

As we get glued 24/7 to monitors and mobiles, the ambience of a meeting place has become more crucial. Hotels themselves are recognising this. Grand Hyatt Singapore, for instance, unveiled its Level 2 recently (see page 5). The breakout rooms I saw were anything but a meeting room.

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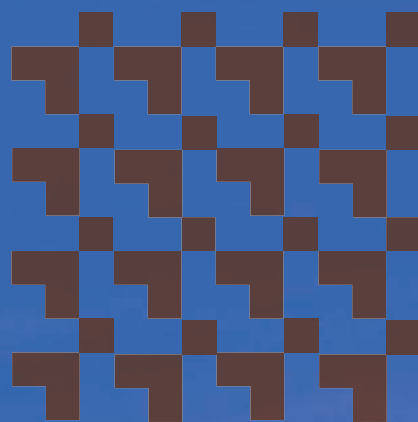
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Seeking the ideal destination for your events and conferences?

Dubai delivers the perfect combination of infrastructure, private and public sector support and a community of trained professionals for conferences, incentives, events and exhibitions. The city is easily accessible, with direct air connections to 260 destinations worldwide. It boasts several event venues including the world-class Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre that offers 90,000 square metres of event space. Dubai also offers over 85,000 hotel rooms in all budget classes, including 24,000 hotel rooms within walking distance of a Dubai Metro station. Add all this together and you will realise why Dubai is the perfect destination for successful events.



We love



A dose of grandeur

The glamorous side of 19th century America has been revived in Regent Singapore's new Manhattan bar. Oozing with sophistication, the 89-seat bar greets guests with an elegant marble entrance and settles them comfortably within a contemporary interior that is furnished with luxurious leather chairs and sofas, and walls lined with woven linen.

Along with its carefully thought-out plush interiors, no effort was spared in the creation of its beverage menu which features 25 seasonally rotating cocktails to take guests through the rich history and flavours of Manhattan's neighbourhoods.

A delightful feature of Manhattan bar is its rickhouse, a workshop featuring over 100 American oak barrels. Regent Singapore is the world's first hotel to boast of such a facility. Exclusive also to the bar is a room housing more than 300 ingredients, including wild cherry bark, shisandra berries and dandelion root – all of which serve as inspirations for unusual tipples and interesting bar bites.

Do not for a second brush off Manhattan bar as just another hotel lounge for business travellers to knock back a few drinks after a long day. The venue is crafted perfectly for upscale corporate parties. It offers three private rooms – the Rockefeller Room, Private Salon and The Library, with capacity for 16, 10 and seven guests respectively. Our favourite is the Rockefeller Room, as it is hidden behind a "secret" door and luxuriously furnished with a banquet, long glossy tables and a TV.

Manhattan bar can be hired entirely before 16.00. A minimum spending of \$10,000 (US\$8,000) is required.

Since its opening in April, the bar has hosted a private jewelry collection showcase and a Great Gatsby-themed party – easy to see why and how.

Call (65) 6725-3377 for reservations.

GHM makes a bolder MICE statement with new property

The Chedi Sakala Bali opened recently, boasting purpose-built facilities for large-scale conferences and weddings, which is a first for a General Hotel Management (GHM) property. Virtually all GHM hotels until now have smaller MICE spaces.

The Chedi Sakala has a 630m² ballroom which can accommodate up to 400 people. It

is fitted with adjustable ambient lighting and state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment. The Chedi Ballroom can be partitioned into six smaller rooms with ample breakout space for light refreshment and informal conversation.

Two of those spaces – the Batur and Agung rooms, named after Bali's two highest peaks – can hold up to 175 people, depending on the seating plan. They can also be combined to double the capacity.

A few steps down, Tanjung Bena Beach can be set up for gatherings, while the immediate poolside area can entertain 350 pax for a buffet reception.

Planners who wish to host a rooftop party can book one of two sprawling skydecks which overlook the pool, beach and ocean. Each skydeck bridges the gap between two *kul kul* towers, a traditional Balinese structure reminiscent in form and function to a Western church steeple. Each tower features a room designed for small private dinners or meetings.

The third GHM hotel to open on Bali, The Chedi Sakala is located half an hour from the international airport in Denpasar and 10 minutes from the island's largest convention centre.



Tokyo gains another Best Western

Best Western International's second hotel in Tokyo has thrown open its doors to guests, offering convenient access to the commercial district and popular attractions such as Tokyo Disneyland and Tokyo SkyTree.

The 184-room Best Western Tokyo Nishikasai is located in Tokyo's Edogawa Ward, minutes from the Nishi-kasai Station on the Tokyo Metro Tozai Line.

Glenn de Souza, vice president of international operations for Asia & the Middle East, Best Western International, said: "With convenient links to Tokyo's main business district and excellent facilities for the corporate market, we expect this superb hotel to be extremely popular with Japanese business travellers."

Amenities available at the midscale Best Western Tokyo Nishikasai include flatscreen LED TVs, free Wi-Fi, a restaurant serving Japanese and international fare, and meeting space for up to 80 pax.

Best Western's other property in Tokyo is the 206-key Best Western Shinjuku Astina Hotel. The hotel chain operates 16 hotels across 12 Japanese cities.

Go green by staying green

In a bid to give back to the community and encourage sustainability, The Westin Singapore is inviting guests to join in its efforts to save energy through its Green Rooms.

Green Rooms refer to the 56 guestrooms on the hotel's 38th and 39th floors that have been specially equipped to monitor and track energy consumption via a meter on the in-room IPTV system.

The meter ranks the guest's energy consumption according to three different categories: green (energy consumption is 20 per cent below average), amber and red.

For every guest whose energy usage falls within the green zone, The Westin Singapore has pledged to donate US\$1 to UNICEF.

Lance J Ourednik, general manager of the property, said: "For The Westin Singapore, we believe that sustaining the environment and sustaining communities create value for everyone and we are excited to invite our guests to be a part of this unique opportunity to improve our community and minimise our impact on the environment."

The new-build hotel's other green initiatives include a green limousine, eco-friendly cleaning chemicals, room sensors for auto shut-offs, energy-efficient lighting and water-conserving low-flow plumbing and sanitary fittings.

Courtyard by Marriott debuts in outskirts of Seoul

Pangyo Techno Valley in suburban Seoul has welcomed the 282-room Courtyard by Marriott Seoul Pangyo. Located in the rising IT cluster in Seongnam city, three minutes from Pangyo subway station, the hotel sits in a 19-storey building along with offices, retail shops, restaurants and coffee houses.

Don Cleary, COO for Asia Pacific, Marriott International, said: "We are delighted to be opening this Courtyard hotel as the first Marriott branded property in Korea's Gyeonggi province, and are proud to be the first hotel to be built in this emerging IT business hub."

Rooms at Courtyard by Marriott Seoul Pangyo range from 26m² to 42m², all equipped with high-speed Internet access.

The Executive Lounge on the 19th floor offers free daily breakfast, evening happy hour service with canapés, complimentary coffee and tea, and free meeting room usage benefits.

F&B options at the hotel include the all-day-dining restaurant MoMo Café which comes with an open kitchen and live cooking stations for international cuisines, and the adjoining MoMo Bar which serves snacks, beverages and spirits with an outdoor terrace overlooking the Pangyo Techno Valley.

The hotel also comes with seven multi-functional meeting rooms and a dedicated event manager.



Grand Hyatt Singapore seeks to innovate MICE space

Grand Hyatt Singapore has unveiled its Level 2 events space, confident it will be as game-changing as its Mezza9 restaurant that gave the industry the show kitchen concept when

it opened years ago.

Gone are the standard break-out rooms and the typical boxy, pillarless banquet hall. Instead, Level 2 of the hotel now features

1,000m² of flexible space that morphs into intimate dining or conference rooms which feel more like meeting in a private Peranakan home than in a nondescript hotel space. These salons can accommodate 33 pax for boardroom meetings, 75 pax for receptions, 120 pax for private dinners or 200 pax for seminars in a theatre setting.

In addition, at the push of a button, a show kitchen and a customised stage are revealed at the 515m² Grand Salon, showcasing live cooking and food preparation right before delegates' eyes. The Grand Salon's capacity is 340 pax for banquets and 700 pax for receptions.

The hotel employed Super Potato, which designed its F&B outlets, to work on the S\$38 million (US\$30 million) refurbishment of its Level 2 and Level 3 into cutting-edge meeting space.

"Wait till you see our Level 3," enthused Willi Martin, area vice president of Hyatt Hotels & Resorts in South-east Asia.

The renovation of the third floor will be finalised in 3Q2014. It will incorporate high ceilings, natural daylight, integrated kitchens and loft kitchens in pre-function areas. As well, the hotel is creating a halal-certified banquet kitchen by the end of this year.

Martin said clients are now aware of the new event venues and a "high" number of events has been secured for this year, ranging from weddings to small and medium-sized social gatherings and product launches. – **Raini Hamdi and Paige Lee Pei Qi**



New phoenix rises at Novotel Clarke Quay

Novotel Clarke Quay has finished refurbishing the highlight of the property's MICE facility – the Phoenix Grand Ballroom – and is offering 10 per cent off meeting packages.

The ballroom can take up to 380 pax in classroom style, 500 for gala dinners or 600 for cocktail receptions.

Suitable for conferences, company dinners and dance parties, and teambuilding events, the facility comes with newly fitted audio-visual systems and LCD projectors.

Kevin Bossino, general manager of Novotel Clarke Quay, said: "Refurbishing the Phoenix Grand Ballroom earlier this year was a key investment to offer the best meeting experience for our international and regional MICE guests."

Novotel Clarke Quay offers 1,200m² of conference space with nine meeting rooms and a dedicated events team to ensure flawless events.

Seminar packages begin at S\$50⁺⁺ (US\$40⁺⁺) and includes rental of meeting rooms, as well as coffee and tea break sessions. All-inclusive meeting packages come with free Wi-Fi for meeting planners and business travellers.

From now until October 31, 2014, planners and organisers will receive 10 per cent off meeting packages while meeting bookers will also enjoy extra commission.



Royal treatment on the Gold Coast

Gold Coast Business Events has joined forces with 28 Gold Coast business events suppliers to create a range of inspiring offers for corporate meeting planners who are looking to give their delegates and winners a royal treatment.

Featuring luxurious weekends away, free cocktail parties, helicopter flights, free accommodation, fantastic conference reductions and much more, the offers are available in one value-packed brochure available for download on the Gold Coast Business Events website – www.GoldCoastBusinessEvents.com.



HOT DEALS



Grand Hyatt Singapore

A discount of five per cent is being dangled by Grand Hyatt Singapore to encourage meeting clients to go green with their events at the city hotel. The offer is only valid when clients adhere to a five-step green programme that requires clients to plan ahead by providing the hotel's event team with all information and event orders 10 days in advance to reduce the use of last minute resources. Meeting deals at Grand Hyatt Singapore are now priced from S\$115⁺⁺ (US\$91⁺⁺) per person and include a welcome break, two coffee breaks and lunch, suitable for groups of 10 to 350 guests.

Contact singapore.grand@hyatt.com.

InterContinental Hong Kong

A summer promotion is now underway at InterContinental Hong Kong. At HK\$800 (US\$103) per person, the Summer Meetings package includes use of a Harbourview Function Room, access to a dedicated personal meeting butler, morning and afternoon coffee breaks with refreshments, roll-in lunch in the meeting room, and complimentary use of standard audiovisual and meeting equipment.

For an additional HK\$300 per person per day, groups can enjoy a welcome coffee break before the meeting, free flow of soft drinks and fresh coffee and tea, a bento lunch at NOBU or buffet lunch at Harbour-

side, and complimentary use of an LCD projector and screen.

The promotion is valid for groups with at least 25 people, and prices are subject to a 10 per cent service charge. Offer ends August 31, 2014. Other terms apply.

Contact iceventshk@ihg.com.

Oriental Residence Bangkok

The luxurious Oriental Residence Bangkok, which offers 145 lavish serviced units, has introduced a meeting package and accommodation offer from now till December 31, 2014.

Priced at 1,500 baht (US\$46) per person per day, the meeting deal includes two coffee breaks, lunch, use of an LCD projector, Wi-Fi access, and shuttle service to BTS Chidlom station.

Grand Deluxe Rooms are available at 4,200 baht per room per night, subject to a minimum booking of 15 rooms. Breakfast is included.

Planners will also enjoy two of the following perks upon event confirmation: one one-bedroom suite for five nights during the meeting; two upgrades to one-bedroom suite; one-way airport transfer by Jaguar XJL; free flow of soft drinks during lunch; assorted Danish pastries for the morning welcome; and an hour-long cocktail reception with soft drinks and beer.

Other terms and conditions apply. All prices exclude surcharges and taxes.

Email Nannaphat.j@oriental-residence.com for more details.



Oriental Residence Bangkok



InterContinental Hong Kong

KLCC kicks meeting deals up a notch with new F&B perks

The Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre has added culturally themed F&B presentations for its conference packages – the Day Conference Packages (DCPs) with a Difference, and Sundown Hour Packages for TenOnCall (TOC) clients.

DCP clients looking to add some colour to their conference can now choose to have a Malay, Chinese, Indian or Western theme for their half or full-day programme.

“The carefully crafted and tailored themes incorporate gastronomically-inspired menus designed to excite, inspire and stimulate the creativity of participants,” said Angeline Lue, the centre’s director of sales & marketing.

Besides the themed menus, which were created by the centre’s 51-strong culinary team, the packages include tailored décor and appropriately attired staff.

DCPs with a Difference now come with free flow coffee and tea for the duration of the event and chilled juices during coffee breaks. These are on top of existing DCPs offerings such as arrival snacks, IT and audiovisual support, free Wi-Fi, a 10 per cent discount for standing lunches, etc.

To round off a day of meetings, the TOC Sundown Hour Packages offer free flow beverages for two hours, a basic PA system and sound technician on standby for a minimum of 50 guests. What’s new is the menu of Asian-inspired mocktails and cocktails with names such as Asian Alchemy, Asian Negroni, Sencha Spice and more.

According to Lue, the centre is always looking “to enhance the guest experience and Malaysia’s rich multicultural heritage proved a fantastic inspiration when we started thinking about upping the game on our already popular Day Conference Packages and TOC offerings.

“This, combined with our Culinaria initiative which places special emphasis on our F&B in order to stand us out from our competitors, provided the perfect opportunity to expand our DCPs and TOC products to give clients more presentation choices in the execution of their meetings and their participants,” Lue added. “This, combined with our Culinaria initiative which places special emphasis on our F&B in order to stand us out from our competitors, provided the perfect opportunity to expand our DCPs and TOC products to give clients more presentation choices in the execution of their meetings and their participants.”

TCEB, Visa spice up MICE travel

Business event visitors are in for a zesty treat with a new online marketing campaign by Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) and Visa dangling special privileges and discounts.

Spice Up Your Business Agenda perks are available to travellers who participate in trade exhibitions in Thailand this year. Kicked off last month, the campaign’s privileges and discounts cover golf, spas, shopping outlets, dining venues and airport transfers.

Wilaiwan Thawichsri, deputy governor for tourism products and services, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), said: “MICE travellers usually have high spending power and are long-stay travellers, so they are an important segment that helps generate revenue to Thailand’s tourism industry. TAT will help promote this campaign through all its overseas offices, both online and offline channels, (so) as to raise awareness of Thailand among international MICE travellers.”

TCEB president Nopparat Maythaveekulchai is confident the campaign would “enhance a business trip, restore the tourism image, and create confidence in MICE travellers who come to Thailand for trade fairs and exhibitions”.

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Brisbane hotels see buzz ahead of G20 summit

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

Brisbane will welcome five new hotels and close to 600 new rooms prior to the G20 Leaders Summit 2014 in November, easing a room inventory shortage that has hampered the city's tourism development in recent years.

According to Brisbane Marketing's latest guide on hotel investment, the city's room shortage is causing the market to defer an estimated 278,000 roomnights every year – about 14 per cent of current demand – and an annual loss of about 121,000 visitors and A\$140 million (US\$131 million) in visitor expenditure.

However, a fresh injection of new hotels currently unfolding across Brisbane's hospitality scene will "help the city become a world-class destination with accommodation that will appeal to both business and leisure travellers", said John Aitken, CEO of Brisbane Marketing.



Aitken: hotel boom to up Brisbane's appeal

Said Brad Mercer, general manager of Four Points by Sheraton Brisbane, which debuted in March with 246 rooms: "Brisbane as a city is experiencing unprecedented growth and development with major international events hosted there now. This destination is being profiled internationally which makes it beneficial for Starwood to open a new hotel in this market now."

Meanwhile, the five-star, 680-room Gambaro Hotel opened its doors earlier this month while the 65-room TRYP Hotel by Wyndham and the 48-room Alpha Mosaic Hotel are expected to be ready by mid-2014 in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley.

By September, SilverNeedle Hospitality would also have completed the A\$50 million revamp of The Chifley at Lennons, doubling its room count to 304, according to the company's area vice president - sales and marketing, Mark Pollard.

CWT ups presence in China

CWT Meetings & Events has received clearance to run its travel management and meetings & events operations in China after being granted a tour operating licence by the China National Tourism Administration.

CWT Meetings & Events China will be led by Shanghai-based Ike Zhang.

Albert Zhong, general manager, CWT China, said: "China's business travel market has grown to become the second largest in the world according to GBTA, and meetings and events are key drivers of this. With the launch of CWT Meetings & Events in China, we aim to grow our presence in this space



Zhong: giving clients in China more power

and provide both local and multinational companies the expertise and support they need to organise creative, cost-effective and impactful meetings and events."

Floyd Widener, senior vice president, CWT Meetings & Events worldwide, noted that "compliance has become increasingly important for companies in China and CWT will continue to work in partnership with its current and prospective clients to ensure compliance is a priority".

Widener added that CWT is the first global travel management company with presence in China to offer both travel management and meeting and events services under the same roof.

{ 2014 Calendar }

June 12-13
ITE Hong Kong
Hong Kong

June 19-21
This Is Gold Coast
Business Exchange
Queensland, Australia

August 19-21
IT&CM India
New Delhi, India

September 17-19
PATA Travel Mart
Phnom Penh,
Cambodia

Destination Asia Thailand guns for Indian clients

Destination Asia Thailand has opened a new inbound India division to bring travellers to the kingdom.

Pornthip Hirunkate, managing director of Destination Asia Thailand, said about the new division: "Destination Asia Thailand sees great potential in the India market, especially in the top-end leisure and MICE segments. We have conducted extensive research and believe that we can offer unique travel products for the India market that will also (encourage) longer stays."

"Destination Asia is also one of the leading MICE operators in Thailand so we will now be extending that decades of experience to the sub-continent," Pornthip added.



Reed: more Indian inbound specialisation to come

The company's inbound India division will not have equity in any outbound travel company or provider in India. All services will be provided by the respective companies in the 11-country

Destination Asia Group, said the DMC in a statement.

According to James Reed, CEO of the Destination Asia Group, the creation of an inbound India division at the DMC's Thailand office is only the beginning of its attempts to tap the Indian travel segment.

He said: "The Destination Asia Group is expanding rapidly in the Far East and we see the inbound India market as very complementary to our business model. We will be opening inbound India divisions in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia and Vietnam soon, and eventually in China, Japan, Indonesia, Laos and Burma (Myanmar).

"The Indian economy is growing rapidly and we definitely see a top-end market that is complementary to our service model and 'industry best' operating standards."

Rajesh Nair has been appointed general manager/India to head the team. He has extensive experience in the inbound India market and lived in Thailand for eight years.

CORRECTION – The pull-out comment on page 13 of *TTGmice* May's In focus feature was erroneously attributed to International SOS's Philippe Guibert. The quote had come from Manila-based corporate travel manager, Dean Fowles.

Albay lands three mega meets

By Marianne Carandang

Philippine Albay province hosted an unprecedented three key back-to-back conferences by ASEAN and the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in May.

Legazpi City in the province hosted the 40th Meeting of the ASEAN Plus Three National Tourism Organizations (May 15-17), the 26th Joint Meeting of the UN World Tourism Organization Commissions for East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia (May 18), and the UNWTO-ASEAN Conference on Tourism and Climate Change (May 19-20).

Maria Ong-Ravanilla, DoT Region V (Bicol) director, said: "It's a breakthrough for Albay, which is viewed as something of a dark horse...having been recognised and chosen for these three events is more

than enough for us."

The emerging MICE destination received 800,000 visitors in 2013, a 66 per cent leap in arrivals over the previous year, Ong-Ravanilla added.

The 115-room Oriental Hotel in the city welcomed a third of the 1,000 delegates. Remaining delegates were housed at St Ellis and Hotel Venezia.

Albay's natural attractions were spotlighted during the events through themed dinners at the Cagsawa Ruins, Lignon Hills, and a tertulia dinner party at the Nuestra Senora de Porteria church in Daraga town. To further showcase the destination, UNWTO secretary-general Taleb Rifai was flown to a helipad near the Mayon volcano crater for cocktails with local dignitaries.

Little shake-up in new ICCA rankings

ICCA has released its annual ranking of top countries and cities for international association meetings, with little change in the line-up for top 10 countries but some movement among the most popular cities.

The US, Germany and Spain continue to lead in terms of the number of meetings held in their respective countries each year. The US hosted 829 meetings, Germany welcomed 722 and Spain saw 562.

Meanwhile, Japan and China have made progress by advancing one and two ranks to take seventh and eighth spot respectively. Japan witnessed 342 meetings while China was a hair's breadth away with 340.

For city rankings, Paris has dislodged Vienna from the number one spot, which the latter has held since 2005. Paris (204 meetings) was number two in 2012.

With 186 meetings last year, Madrid has overtaken Vienna's 182. Barcelona (179) takes fourth place, followed by Berlin (178) which fell from third to fifth place this year. Singapore holds strong from last year at sixth place with 175 international association meetings while London dropped to seventh (166). Istanbul rose to eighth, leaving top 10 newcomers Lisbon and Seoul to share ninth place.

For the full ranking, visit www.icca-world.com.

{ Talking numbers }

86

The number of business events won by Adelaide between July 2013 and March 2014. These triumphs will give the destination a AU\$80 million (US\$75 million) boost in convention business.

350

The amount, in millions of Australian dollars, that is going into the two-stage redevelopment of the Adelaide Convention Centre. The first phase is expected to complete later this year.

{ Advertorial }



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Corporate Travel World (CTW) China 2015 Announced

What is CTW China and what can we expect from its inaugural edition?

TTG Asia Media (TTG) and Carlson Wagonlit Travel, China (CWT), have announced the launch of CTW China, a dedicated event aimed at benefitting the Chinese Corporate Travel professional and other industry players. The much anticipated conference seeks to build industry knowledge and cultivate best practices relating to China's business travel policies and decision-making processes. The very first CTW China 2015, to be held in conjunction with IT&CM China, will boast a full-fledged conference programme coupled with structured procurement sessions with relevant suppliers and plenty of networking avenues that address a local professional's multitude of participation objectives.

Why is this collaboration significant?

According to CWT, China will be the world's largest procurer in the business travel market by 2017. With inputs from CWT, this collaboration will bring valuable dimensions to the event's expertise and knowledge content, while providing CWT the avenue to reinforce their reputation and credibility in the marketplace through CTW China.

How will CTW China be different from CTW Asia-Pacific held in Bangkok?

With its focus centered on the nuances of China's travel industry, CTW China will possess powerful differentiators that stem from the choice of topics, profile of invited speakers and targeted audience. The unique valuable proposition of CTW China will be 100% focused on the Chinese market. Participants will benefit immensely from discussions on salient issues key to Chinese corporations, as well as expert advice from experienced practitioners operating in the same environment and facing the same market forces and challenges.

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Global finance executives to confer in Manila this October

By Marianne Carandang

MANILA The Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (FINEX), a 750-member association founded in 1968, will host the 44th IAFEI World Congress at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel in Manila from October 15-17, 2014.

Carmen Serina (pictured right), FINEX's organising chair for this year's congress, said the event would showcase the Philippines.

"We're no longer the 'sick tiger' of Asia; having it here, now, is timely because our credit standing has been upgraded by several ratings agencies," she told *TTGmice* in an interview.

"Last year, we were in a dilemma because of (Typhoon Haiyan and) Tacloban; in the end, despite the calamity, we decided to show the community that we're back on our feet."

Highlights of the event include a roundtable discussion on the 2015 ASEAN economic integration, with lessons from the European Union, that feature FINEX member and former Philippine secretary of finance Bobby de Ocampo, Harvard-trained former economic secretary Cielito Habito, and Jesse Ang, Philippine representative of the International Finance Corp.

The economic integration will have an impact on the "evolving role" of chief finance officers, who can no longer focus on their "typical" line of work, Serina noted.

"We're no longer competing with local corporations alone; we have to be prepared," she

added.

Other sessions will discuss the global financial landscape, allocation strategy, international treasury and reporting standards, while Philippine highlights include Toyota's success story in the country – another sign of improvement in the economy – and climate change.

"Climate change is the leading risk factor financial institutions are considering now. Companies, banks with local branches, need to know what to do when they're affected (by a natural disaster)," Serina said.

Welcome cocktails for about 400 delegates will be hosted by Central Bank governor Armando Tetangco Jr at the Metropolitan Museum, located within the Central Bank complex.

"This is where the Bank's extensive collection of Philippine coins is kept, even those made during the Spanish colonial period," she said, explaining why the venue was selected.

A golf tournament is also being organised at one of six major courses south of Manila, while side programmes for accompanying spouses include shopping tours to Greenhills Shopping Centre and a handweaving demo of indigenous fiber materials such as *jusi* (banana) and *piña* (pineapple) at Tesoro's Philippine Handicrafts. A post-congress tour will take delegates to Bohol.



Drowning prevention experts pick Penang

PENANG The Life Saving Society Malaysia (LSSM), with the support of the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB), has secured hosting rights to the next World Conference on Drowning Prevention, an event that is organised once every two years by the International Lifesaving Foundation.

To be held in Penang in October next year, the conference will bring together the world's foremost experts, research, systems and information on drowning prevention, rescue, lifesaving and water safety for exchange, debate and further development that will lead to reduction of death and injury in all aquatic environments worldwide.

The gathering is expected to generate RM8.2 million (US\$2.5 million) in economic value, and draw more than 800 delegates from all over the world.

The last World Conference on Drowning Prevention was held in Potsdam, Germany in 2013.

FHC expands into two Chinese cities

SHANGHAI FHC, China's premier food and hospitality tradeshow by China International Exhibitions, a member of Allworld Exhibitions, has responded to its rapid growth by hosting this year's edition in two cities – Shanghai and Chengdu.

The main edition in Shanghai, to be held from November 12 to 14 at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre, will run alongside the second

edition of ProWine China. While a projection of this year's attendance is not available, FHC 2013 attracted 33,839 visitors – 88 per cent of which were from China and the rest from other countries.

The Chengdu edition, branded as FHC West, will be held from November 18 to 19 in Sichuan. It follows the successful introduction of a roadshow in the province last year.



Shanghai New International Expo Centre will host FHC this November

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Budget carriers going the corporate distance



Companies' belt tightening is presenting LCCs the opportunity to expand into the corporate sector with offers such as add-on services and ease of booking through GDSs.

By **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

More corporates are turning towards the buoyant low-cost carriers (LCCs) sector as a way to keep travel costs down while budget airlines in general evolve to cater to this market.

ASEAN countries were among the first to adopt the idea of LCCs in Asia, starting in 2002 with Malaysia-based AirAsia. With attractive airfare offers by LCCs, more travellers started booking their way into short, impulse holidays to nearby destinations.

Corporates have started to come into the picture too, especially the bottomline-conscious small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are now booking their executives on LCCs instead of full-service carriers, slashing their budget for regional travel.

Todd Arthur, vice president, sales & account management, Asia-Pacific, BCD Travel and also Asia board member of Association of Corporate Travel Executives, said: "LCCs now account for over 15 per cent of Asia's fleet which outstrips the growth of full-fledged airlines.

"The bulk of the new aircraft is all coming from the LCCs and these are evolving into hybrid carriers to expand into the corporate market."

Hence to increase their allure to this corporate market, the LCCs have been dishing out additional add-on benefits catered to the busy corporate traveller.

Logan Velaitham, CEO of AirAsia, Singapore, said: "Keeping our unit cost low to offer low fares is key to the success of our business model.

"However, as travellers from other segments are embracing LCC, we are now also offering value-added services such as our Hot Seats, in-flight meals and insurance for a fee without compromising our unit cost – all with the objective to boost ancillary revenue."

According to Velaitham, AirAsia has seen "a big increase" in the business traveller segment over the years, especially with premium offerings like the Red Carpet Service.

Last February, AirAsia rolled out the new Red Carpet Service that costs an additional S\$60 (US\$48) – for travellers who are looking for a speedier travelling process from check-in to landing.

The Red Carpet privileges include a dedicated check-in area, priority baggage tagging and loading, access to the lounge, fast-track immigration and security clearance as well as priority baggage delivery upon arrival.

Likewise for Jetstar Asia, corporate travellers can choose to add on checked baggage and a bundle to better suit their needs. The bundle may include free seat selection, food and beverages and a waiver of change fees. Business class passengers with Qantas Club membership can also access the Qantas Club lounges.

Barathan Pasupathi, CEO, Jetstar Asia, said: "With a tight travel budget to manage, executives of SMEs and MNCs alike will look for services that offer bargain deals.

"Low-fare airlines, budget hotels and the like are top of their needs when planning business trips."

Highlighting that Tigerair has seen a "significant increase" in corporate travel, Ho Yuen Sang, COO of Tigerair, said: "Corporate travellers (especially) like our ease of ticket booking at the last minute, especially for the short sectors, and our



“LCCs now account for over 15 per cent of Asia's fleet which outstrips the growth of full-fledged airlines. The bulk of the new aircraft is all coming from the LCCs and these are evolving into hybrid carriers to expand into the corporate market.”

Todd Arthur

Vice president, sales & account management, Asia-Pacific, BCD Travel and also Asia board member of Association of Corporate Travel Executives

1,000

The number of aircraft LCCs are expected to operate by 2015, which also translates to about 1/3 of Asia's narrow-body fleet

57

The rate (in %) of LCC penetration in the Philippines – highest in Asia and far outstrips the global average LCC penetration rate of 26%

50

The number of LCCs launched in Asia to date. Recognising this growth, Asia's legacy carriers are adopting new multi-brand strategies

Source: Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation

competitive fares.”

Mike Orchard, senior director, Asia-Pacific, Carlson Wagonlit Travel Solutions Group, said: “While LCCs have historically targeted leisure travellers, today most see the value of working with business travel clients as well, and are actively pursuing corporate customers.

“To woo corporates, LCCs have taken a variety of measures, such as amending their product to offer free checked bags and zero change fees.

“Furthermore, some LCCs in Asia-Pacific have begun to participate in the global distribution system (GDS), making it easier for companies to book flights on these airlines through their corporate travel agencies.”

Indeed, more LCCs have turned to GDSs, making it easier for travel consultants to access their content and drive

sales. For instance, since the end of last year, the services of 26 LCCs worldwide are bookable via Abacus.

Hailing the lower price point as its main draw, Orchard added: “The key advantage of using LCCs is the cost – which are 20 per cent cheaper, on average, than full-service carriers.”

According to Velaitham, destinations like Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta and Bangkok are most popular among their business travellers, largely due to the flight frequency provided as well.

However, pointing out existing constraints with LCCs, Orchard said: “As they are driven by the goal to operate at the lowest cost possible, LCCs fly more point-to-point routes while full-service carriers use the hub-and-spoke system, which can make booking connecting flights challenging.

“Many LCCs fly to secondary airports and this can incur additional ground transportation costs that can cancel off the savings from the cheaper airfare.”

Likewise for Joana Yap, general manager, HRG Singapore, who highlighted that while her clients will request for an LCC option for price comparison, most will still opt for full-fledged airlines ultimately.

“At the moment, it is not the corporates' mandate to use LCCs because given the choice, most of them will still prefer a flight that provides everything from baggage to meals.

“While companies may look at various ways to keep their travel budget tight, corporate travellers will use the reasoning that full-fledged airlines promise good productivity to get away (from LCCs),” said Yap.

“LCCs fly more point-to-point routes...which can make booking connecting flights challenging. Many fly to secondary airports and this can incur additional ground transportation costs that cancel off the airfare savings.”

Mike Orchard

Senior director, Asia-Pacific, Carlson Wagonlit Travel Solutions Group





Citroen annual incentive trip

Exotissimo Travel cracks its brain to help French car manufacturer Citroen's 270 incentive participants soak in lots of culture and tradition offered by Myanmar's Yangon, Bagan and Inle Lake, writes **David Andrews**

Organiser
Exotissimo Travel

Client
Citroen

Venue
Myanmar

Dates
November 13, 2013 - March 14, 2014

No. of participants
270, split into nine groups visiting over a period of five months

Objective
To provide an escape from the generic commercial offerings where participants could enjoy cultural immersion, beach activities and interaction with the locals

Challenges
Ensuring all nine times of the trip run smoothly, as well as creating an engaging programme so that participants could walk away with an unforgettable experience

Results
The trip met the clients' expectations, with some participants feeling emotional when departing at the airport

Citroen showed what an incentive trip truly means when it tirelessly sent nine groups of 30 car distributors and sales managers to Myanmar to reward them for the loans they sold.

The first group arrived in Myanmar on November 13, 2013 and the last departed on March 14, 2014. Exotissimo Myanmar MICE manager, Estelle Vergnes, who managed the ground operations, said: "The incentive house had a real passion for Myanmar and wanted to send its clients there before it became a mainstream destination. It was looking for a mix of authentic culture, beach breaks and interaction with local groups.

"To ensure the clients received an unforgettable experience, it was vital to not just show them the sights, but enable them to interact on a personal level through unique cultural insight."

Subsequently an itinerary was created – the nine groups had identical itineraries for ease of operation, except where minor changes were made due to flight delays or local weather conditions – whereby the clients could visit the most famous destinations in Myanmar, including Yangon, Bagan and Inle Lake, with exclusive dinners and opportunities to meet the locals.

In Yangon, besides simply visiting Shwedagon Pagoda, each participant received a benediction from a Buddhist monk in a pavilion. This early introduction to Buddhist life helped participants to better understand and appreciate the local

culture throughout the tour.

In Bagan, it was tempting to just ferry participants around on a horse cart to temples and stupas. To add a unique touch, they were treated to breakfast in a monastery on the banks of the Irrawaddy and cocktails at sunset from the platform of an ancient pagoda. The following evening saw participants taking a mini cruise along the Irrawaddy, stopping at a sand bank for cocktails before releasing hundreds of candles on the water as symbolic offerings.

A highlight was dinner at a local home on Inle Lake. Taking a boat from the lakeside hotel, participants arrived at a traditional wooden Intha house where a host family welcomed them with traditional local food. The home was decorated with candles and oil lamps to create a warm atmosphere.

The following day, lunch was served on a floating barge in the middle of the lake under parasols, a dining experience participants particularly enjoyed.

For the last two days in Ngapali, participants were taken by speedboat to Pearl Island, where they enjoyed BBQ seafood served fresh on the beach, snorkelling and plenty of leisure time. The final evening, a gala dinner on the beach allowed the group to share their experiences as a DJ played soothing melodies. So deep was the engagement that at the airport, some participants cried when saying goodbye to the local guides.



TravelRave Leaders Gala 2013

Innovative programme and creative configuration of the venue enable Singapore Tourism Board to throw a special dinner that captures both the heart and ‘stomach’ of industry guests, writes **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Organiser

Singapore Tourism Board (STB)

Venue

Flower Field Hall, Gardens By the Bay

Dates

October 22, 2013

No. of participants

300

Objective

To celebrate achievements and leadership in the Asian travel and tourism industry, and kick off the fourth edition of TravelRave

Challenges

Having to creatively divide a massive space into different areas to cater to the varying components of the programme while maintaining an element of surprise for the guests

Results

Guests were impressed and STB was able to showcase Singapore as a leading tourism and gastronomic destination through uniquely Singaporean flavours

TravelRave is a yearly platform organised by Singapore Tourism Board (STB) that brings business leaders in Asia’s travel and tourism industry together, driving meaningful discussions in a week-long programme.

Hailed as the special highlight of TravelRave 2013, the TravelRave Leaders Gala was held to celebrate distinguished Asian travel leadership.

Andrew Phua, director, exhibitions and conferences of STB, told *TTGmice*: “The objective of the gala was to provide our guests with a taste of the fourth edition of TravelRave, which includes a showcase of Singaporean flavours in a unique venue.

“We wanted to add an element of surprise during each part of the programme, and made the deliberate effort through creative landscaping to provide a glimpse of what the dinner area had to offer.”

Raving about the specially programmed LED lights in Gardens by the Bay, Phua said they were able to customise the colours in line with their TravelRave brand, which helped provide the oomph factor, and many guests were blown away by the lavish and colourful decorations.

Hailing the flexible landscape of the Gardens by the Bay as crucial in accommodating to the Gala’s requirements, he said: “The Flower Field Hall within the Flower Dome provided an exclusive and intimate setting suitable for the Gala, while remaining accessible.”

He explained that while some guests chose to take a leisurely stroll through the gardens before the Gala, others preferred to take the buggies right to the Flower Field Hall.

Additionally, to align with the theme of TravelRave, STB wanted to offer a range of flavours to its guests. Phua said the board managed to rope in various chefs who could curate a distinctive brand and identity for themselves at this gala.

Highlighting the ability of the venue to customise, he said: “We brought in a food truck, a popsicle push-cart, and even mobile planters. All of them required vastly different props and furnishings.

“However (with Gardens by the Bay), we managed to balance consistency in presentation through landscaping and decorations, while bringing out the different characteristics of the chefs’ offerings.”

Phua added that the key guiding principle for this event was to provide a unique dining experience. Hence they were also able to curate a special menu to include distinct Singaporean flavours such as claypot rice with Chinese mushrooms, *nasi lemak* sushi roll, sambal eggs bruschetta, seafood udon laksa and *pulot hitam* sticky pudding with *gula melaka*.

He said: “The team spent almost six whole months preparing for this and our efforts paid off. We were heartened to hear that our guests had enjoyed the evening tremendously.”



Chiang Mai Fest 2014

The move of the event this year to a new location outside of the city centre presents a few challenges to the organiser, which still manages to pull it all together with sound planning and partnerships, writes **David Andrews**

Organiser

Earth, Wind and Fire

Venue

Promenada Resort, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Dates

March 1-2, 2014

No. of participants

15,000, over two days

Objective

Create a festival-like atmosphere in Chiang Mai with international artistes performing over two days

Challenges

New location outside the city required widespread advertising through sponsors and the provision of transport for guests

Solution

Worked with newly opened Promenada Resort which was looking to promote itself, and with the tourism board, media, hotel and F&B partners

In 2014, the Chiang Mai Fest was moved to a new site due to the reconstruction of the previous location, Tha Phae Gate. Organiser Earth, Wind and Fire decided to move the event to the new Promenada Resort located approximately four kilometres outside of the city centre. Organising the two-day event in this new location brought with it benefits as well as challenges.

While Promenada offered about the same space as Tha Phae Gate for the confines of the event, it offered the benefits of a grassed area for guests to sit and relax on, thereby affording a more festive atmosphere, as well as a range of on-site facilities such as toilets and covered parking (which reduced traffic congestion).

Tjeert Kwant, president and CEO of ECC Group, which owns Promenada, offered the location with no charge for electricity, access to facilities within the resort and free shuttle buses to and from various locations in the city centre.

However, moving to a new location meant greater publicity efforts for the festival and the free shuttle service. Poster campaigns and heavy advertising in the local papers were supported by Promenada and Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), which allocated a budget to the festival. The budget also covered the transportation of media participants, who were invited from Bangkok and flown up to Chiang Mai, with hotel accommoda-

tion provided.

Alongside TAT, media partners included Chiang Mai Lanna Business Association and a number of local hotels and restaurants which provided catering services. Each business also assisted in the promotion of the event beforehand by displaying posters in their premises.

Planning started three months prior to the event with a media conference arranged in Chiang Mai and Bangkok to promote the new site to the Thai media. Following the conference, a series of press releases with updates on performing artistes and the benefits of the new site were dispersed to the media. The theme of the festival was A Cultural Music Exchange, with seven international artistes hailing from Singapore, Thailand, South Africa, Malaysia and the US.

Over the course of two days, 15,000 people attended the festival, with the shuttle bus service to and from the city centre proving very welcomed, not only among locals but with tourists who were staying in Chiang Mai.

Also in attendance at the festival apart from the resort owners were Charoenrit Sa-nguansat, deputy governor of Chiang Mai, Robina Marks, South African ambassador to Thailand, and Pensuda Priaram, chairman of the board of TAT. Pensuda even graced the event further by taking to the stage during the opening performance to play the piano, as part of the welcoming ceremony.



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Meet differently

Companies looking to better engage their meeting delegates and inspire creative thinking are increasingly turning their attention to non-traditional venues, discover **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Paige Lee Pei Qi, S Puvaneswary and Mimi Hudoyo**

Traditional meeting venues in hotels and multifunctional convention centres have always been a safe and natural option for corporate event planners, but times they are a-changing.

When meeting planners were surveyed for the 2013 American Express Meetings & Events Forecast, they said they were considering more non-traditional properties as locations for meetings, such as outdoor venues, universities and aquariums. This year's study threw up similar trends, with Europe and Asia leading the charge with a 2.5 per cent increase in the use of alternative properties. In North America, the use of non-traditional facilities is expected to increase as a result of a stronger desire for locations that are considered "hip and trendy" for more promotional events.

Event specialists in Asia who spoke to *TTGmice* shared similar observations among their clients.

Yves Van Kerrebroeck, director of style and MICE, ICS Travel Group, which is headquartered in Bangkok and has operations in 15 countries, said: "Although there still exists and always will be a large demand for the more traditional meeting space at a hotel or resort, we...have seen these new trends develop over the years."

He added: "We've always offered our American, European and Australian clients venues that provide a cultural connection to the region they are visiting, but we are also seeing a willingness among our Asia-Pacific clients to move away from the more traditional meeting venues. Over the last few years we have seen this trend develop most strongly among corporate clients from large international

companies located in the traditional business capitals such as Singapore and Hong Kong."

Explaining the growing interest in non-traditional meeting venues, Van Kerrebroeck said: "Increased competition has led to a greater focus on non-conventional venues that save cost, offer more value and engage participants. Meetings require greater engagement and interaction, therefore there is a stronger need for looser structures that are more attendee-friendly and allow for dynamic and interactive breakout sessions. We have noticed an increased amount of unscheduled meeting time, which requires separate multifunctional spaces with hospitality services."

Sharing the same view, RedAntz Group Malaysia's managing director, Danny Chan, said: "The key reason for choosing non-traditional venues is usually related to trends. Plus, such venues give meeting attendees a chance to (think creatively) and spark the imagination. They create a non-conformist ambience for unobstructed flow of thoughts and ideas."

Andrew Koh, managing director of Events Architects Singapore, observed that "organisers are pulling out all the stops to make events more appealing" and more clients are becoming receptive to the idea of meeting in a non-traditional venue.

And for meetings that must follow a fixed programme format and flow, using a unique venue "can change the mood and setting of the (event)", Koh added.

According to event specialists, small-sized meeting groups are more likely to gravitate towards non-traditional venues.

Karma Events Jogjakarta's Enny



Clowwise from top left: Indochina Sails, Vietnam; Flower Field Hall at Gardens by the Bay, Singapore; Melbourne Cricket Ground, Australia

Ratnadewi said groups of less than 300 delegates were more likely to choose to meet in museums, university halls, galleries and houses that have been converted into function spaces.

"Events using non-traditional venues are usually small in size, with most of them being domestic corporate meetings. The programme would include teambuilding or outdoor activities," shared Ketut Jaman, managing director of Melali MICE Bali.

For Chan, non-traditional venues are more popular with seminars and meetings with less than 50 participants "as they may not require the full services offered by a hotel or convention centre".

Upper management meetings or board of directors' reviews that require "something different to the classic meeting setup" were also more likely to go for alternative venues, observed Van Kerrebroeck.

Daniel Chua, managing director of Singapore-based conference organiser Aonia, pointed out that the choice of venue is



also dependent on the message the event seeks to convey.

“A good planner will propose a venue that can convey messages more effectively. Most non-traditional venues are more suited to (marketing) events such as product launches. We also see greater financial prudence (among our clients), which may account for more cost effective venues – available in these locations – being considered.”

However, Chua admitted that some non-traditional locations could come with added costs “due to the uniqueness of the venue”.

Ketut agrees: “Such venues are not necessarily cheaper than hotels or convention centres, as you need to bring in support equipment such as sound systems, Internet routers and in some cases, air-conditioning.”

Enny also noted that some venues, such as museums, provide only a space to meet and organisers are expected to provide everything else. Despite their

logistical shortcomings, she believes that non-traditional venues offer “memorable experiences for participants”.

“We held a conference at Batik Winosastro in Jogjakarta, which was a little warm but delegates got to try their hands at batik-making and bring home their creations,” she added.

As price remains a key consideration for her clients, Jacqueline Haiu, senior manager events at Diethelm Events Malaysia, told *TTGmice* that the demand for non-traditional meeting venues is still relatively small.

“Hotels and convention centres are still most popular because they offer excellent rates with state-of-the-art meeting facilities. Non-traditional venues do not offer meeting packages and often require organisers to incur additional costs for stage and audiovisual set-up. We do encounter requests for such venues once in a blue moon (but) materialisation is low as pricing remains the key deciding factor,” said Haiu.

“MEETINGS REQUIRE GREATER ENGAGEMENT AND INTERACTION, THEREFORE THERE IS A STRONGER NEED FOR LOOSER STRUCTURES THAT ARE MORE ATTENDEE-FRIENDLY AND ALLOW FOR DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE BREAKOUT SESSIONS.”

Yves Van Kerrebroeck

Director of style and MICE,
ICS Travel Group

What's your pick?

“It all depends on the nature of the meeting. If the staff is arranging for something that can allow for more flexibility like a casual, themed meeting and the event is internal, we can afford to think out of the box. Non-conventional venues will definitely be more interesting and attractive because they promise some fun.”

Irene Leong

Singapore travel lead
Accenture

“We hardly hold meetings at outdoor or non-traditional venues as we have meeting rooms in our office. If the number of participants is more than what can be accommodated in our own premises, we will choose to hold meetings at hotels with appropriate facilities.

As Ikea views itself as a low-profile company, we do not engage in extravagant practices. If we were to spend more money on such activities, it will impact costs and product prices, which we do not want.”

Warakorn Sinthuwongsanont

Administrator executive/travel Thailand,
Ikea Trading (Hong Kong)

“Hotels are too predictable sometimes. From the room setting to the typical tea breaks, you can expect the outcome of the meeting or function before even attending. It lacks excitement and surprise. Non-traditional venues offer room to create more excitement. Such places are also more trendy, and at times, give a better package price as compared with traditional venues.

With the influence of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, the

sharing of images and updates have become second-nature. Can you imagine placing delegates in an environment where there are four walls and zero excitement? The influence of social media will eventually drive meeting organisers to go beyond the norm and create more exciting and memorable events.”

Elaine Choo

Marketing manager
Rohto Mentholatum Malaysia

“Organising events at (non-traditional) places can be a little cheaper than in a hotel, but that is not always the case. Some places are even more expensive, but we get a different ambiance so that is worth it.”

Wanda Febriane

General manager of procurement
Mitra Adiperkasa

Attractive alternatives

By Karen Yue, Paige Lee Pei Qi, S Puvaneswary, Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Greg Lowe, Mimi Hudoyo, Prudence Lui, Rosa Ocampo and Rohit Kaul

Indochina Sails

Location Halong Bay, Vietnam

Why it's great Delegates can enjoy gorgeous views of limestone mountains dotting Halong Bay while meeting onboard a traditional wooden boat with luxury services. Meeting planners seeking longer itineraries can organise a special cocktail party on the sundeck followed by dinner in a natural cave. For overnight cruises, the boat will be anchored in the bay and delegates can look forward to waking up to a glorious sunrise over Halong Bay. Customised cruises are available for private charters. Indochina Sails offers three boats with 15 to 23 cabins.

Drawbacks None

Capacity 30-50 pax

Contact Luxury Travel; www.luxurytravelvietnam.com

Hoi An Ancient Town

Location Hoi An, Vietnam

Why it's great Recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for being an exceptionally well-preserved example of a traditional Asian trading port, Hoi An Ancient Town is a quaint and easy-to-navigate destination with plenty of shops and restaurants, a wide range of international-standard



hotels and resorts, and a plethora of activities such as scooter tours. A rolling agenda of workshops, destination presentations and more traditional meetings can be held in different venues across town, including the atelier of one of Vietnam's most famous tailors, a repurposed former police station set in a beautiful colonial building and a typical local coffee shop overlooking the stunning riverside.

Drawbacks Limited infrastructure and a lack of experienced suppliers outside of traditional meeting venues, so more planning and preparation work are required. Hoi An Ancient Town is a car- and motorbike-free zone, but this limitation can be turned into an asset by using local modes of transport (cyclos, bicycles, small boats, etc) to move clients around. This adds another cultural dimension beyond the traditional meeting set-up.

Capacity Small groups only; very few venues can seat more than 50 participants. For larger groups, this can be overcome by splitting groups and using a rolling agenda of activities in different venues across town.

Contact ICS Travel Group; www.icstravelgroup.com

Saigon Opera House

Location Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Why it's great A major landmark of Ho Chi Minh City, the stately French colonial architecture befits corporate groups seek-

ing a grand and atmospheric meeting venue. Venue possibilities at this three-storey historic building range from the main auditorium to meeting rooms of various sizes. Following meetings, planners can also arrange for delegates to watch performances at the opera house, which is home to the Ho Chi Minh City Ballet Symphony Orchestra and Opera and the A O Show, an acrobatic performance.

Drawbacks None

Capacity 80-400 pax

Contact Vietnam DMC; www.asiatopdmc.info



The Pod

Location National Library Building, Singapore

Why it's great The National Library Building itself is hailed as a knowledge icon and a prominent landmark in the heart of the arts, cultural, entertainment and civic district of Singapore. Strategically located on the sea-facing side of the building and sitting on the 16th floor, The Pod offers a panoramic view of the cityscape.

Drawbacks There is only one elevator serving The Pod, so brace for traffic congestion at the start and end of meetings.

Capacity 132 pax, theatre-style

Contact (65) 6332-3133

Forest Lodge

Location Singapore Zoological Gardens

Why it's great This air-conditioned function venue is decked in warm shades of wood and exudes a resort-like feel. It is ideal for companies looking for a less formal setting for their meetings. An outdoor patio is also available for meal service or teambuilding activities.

Drawbacks None

Capacity 280 pax, theatre-style

Contact (65) 6360-2285

Big 5 Pavilion

Location Safari Park, Bukit Gambang Resort City, Malaysia

Why it's great Delegates can meet in the wild and yet still enjoy creature comforts. The Big 5 Pavilion, scheduled to open end of 2014, will have elephants, lions, hyenas and other wild animals roam free beneath. A giraffe may greet meeting delegates at the window occasionally. There will also be ample space for breakout sessions and dining gatherings.

Meanwhile, meeting groups will be supported by hotels and resorts within the new-build Bukit Gambang Resort City integrated resort in Kuantan, which is also equipped with a dedicated business events centre.

Drawbacks None

Capacity 240 pax, theatre-style; 180 pax, classroom-style; 120 pax, banquet setting

Contact Sharifah Normah Ahmad, (60-3) 8943-8388 / sharifah@sentoria.com.my



Sarawak Cultural Village

Location Kuching, Sarawak

Why it's great This is a living museum of the seven major tribes in Sarawak, set against a backdrop of rainforest and Mount Santubong. City warriors will appreciate a refreshing touch of nature in their meeting environment. Five meeting spaces of various sizes are available to accommodate groups of 30 to 400 pax. Teambuilding and casual gatherings can be hosted in the village's outdoor venues.

Drawbacks None

Capacity 400 delegates, theatre-style

Contact enquiry@scv.com.my / www.scv.com.my

Patio Function House

Location Jakarta, Indonesia

Why it's great Originally a Japanese restaurant, the Patio Function House is now a dedicated venue for event hire. It offers a bar, a lounge and three meeting rooms overlooking fish ponds and gardens. Overall, the venue exudes a homely, relaxing atmosphere. Meeting planners are supported by Patio Function House's list of catering service associates. The management can also help to arrange with vendors for other necessities such as additional furniture, sound system and decoration.

Drawbacks The partitions of the meeting rooms are not sound-proof to the standards of convention centres.

Capacity 50 pax

Contact www.patio-venue.com

Sukhothai Historical Park

Location Sukhothai, Thailand

Why it's great This Unesco World Heritage Site was once the capital of the Sukhothai kingdom during the 13th and 14th century. It boasts more than 190 ruins over a 70km² area, but the best place for events lies within the walls of the ancient city. Delegates can meet under marquees and later enjoy a traditional



Attractions

Northern Thai khantoke dinner and cultural show.
Drawbacks It's outdoors, so watch the weather. Event facilities must also be arranged by the organiser.
Capacity Less than 100 delegates
Contact hp_sukhothai@finearts.go.th

FullyBooked Top Shelf

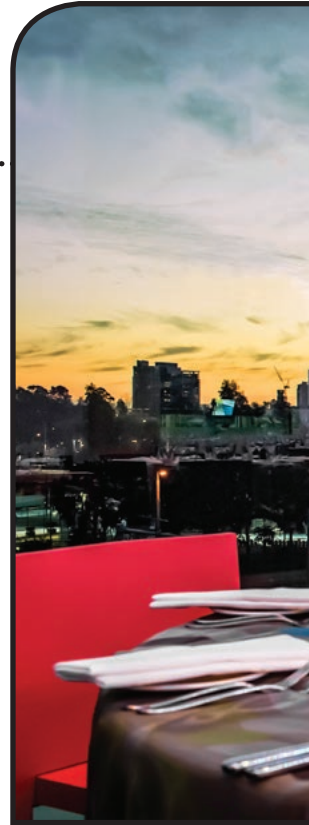
Location Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, the Philippines

Why it's great The rooftop of this five-storey bookstore is often used for book-themed events and offers views of the cityscape. Delegates who are meeting on this deck can also browse books at the bookstore during their free time.

Drawbacks Event organisers will have to source for their own caterers should food be required. Also, some creative decorations will be needed, as the rooftop is dressed only in plain flooring and white walls.

Capacity 200 pax, banquet-style

Contact lorainesanchez@fullybookedonline.com



Jao Tsung-I Academy

Location Kowloon, Hong Kong

Why it's great Sprawled over 32,000m² on a hillside at Lai Chi Kok, the new Jao Tsung-I Academy (JTIA) is a Grade III historic compound that was once the former Lai Chi Kok Hospital. Following a revitalisation project, JTIA now houses five double-storey buildings with 89 furnished guestrooms and the Academy which offers a range of spaces for meetings and networking functions. Meeting planners can choose from a theatre, multifunction halls, a skylight atrium, classrooms and workshops.

Two other winning points about JTIA is its free Wi-Fi access and proximity to MTR Mei Foo Station. Free shuttle service to MTR Lai Chi Kok Station and MTR Mei Foo Station is available every 30 minutes.

Drawbacks Priority booking is offered to NGOs.

Capacity 100 pax in the theatre and lecture hall; 200 pax in the Skylight Atrium; 20 to 70 pax in the 10 activity rooms

Contact info@jtia.hk / www.jtia.hk



Sea Life Melbourne Aquarium

Location Melbourne, Australia

Why it's great It was recently renovated to offer fresh attractions and unique spaces for meetings, seminars and corporate dining functions. Conferences can be held in the Yarra Room, which offers clear views of the Yarra River. The chilly Antarctica room, where King and Gentoo penguins hang out behind a glass enclosure, is sure to keep delegates awake in the morning and right after lunch. A number of other attrac-

tions within the aquarium are also available for event hire, such as the the Coral Atoll which boasts a large, stunning aquarium as its centrepiece, and the Upper Deck which is themed after the Australian rainforest.

Drawbacks None

Capacity The Yarra Room can accommodate 120 pax theatre-style, while the Antarctica room can seat 160 pax.

Contact www.fivestarfuctions.com.au / functions@melbourneaquarium.com.au



Melbourne Cricket Ground

Location Melbourne, Australia

Why it's great It is regarded as one of the world's greatest sporting arena and its grounds bear the footprints of many sport legends. From a meeting planner's point of view, Melbourne Cricket Ground offers a variety of spaces to suit different events. There are 12 venues available for hire, with most offering sweeping views of the lush cricket ground. Delegates can even unwind at the end of a long day of meetings with pre-dinner cocktails in the National Sports Museum, where iconic cricket memorabilia are put on display.

Drawbacks Should catering be required, planners are only allowed to engage the venue's official caterer, Epicure. That said, Epicure is a popular and well-regarded catering specialist in Australia, and food quality is guaranteed.

Capacity The largest venue is the Members Dining Room, which can seat 1,000 pax. This is followed by the Olympic Room, good for 800. Smaller groups can consider the Hans Ebeling Room, which has a capacity for 180 pax.

Contact events@epicure.com.au



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Fax: (852) 2286 8686

Email: info@airport.regalhotel.com

regalrewards

www.regalhotel.com



National Museum of the Philippines

Location Manila, the Philippines

Why it's great The venue is a work of art in itself: two colonial buildings packed with history and where the country's priceless treasures are kept. High ceilings, elegant architecture, marble flooring and art pieces serve as built-in décor in the museum's multiple venues: conference rooms, special exhibit halls, session hall, courtyard.

As a bonus, the museum's various galleries can be opened for meeting delegates.

The attraction is also safe and secure, comes with ample parking space, and audiovisual and lighting equipment are available upon request.

Drawbacks None

Capacity Over 1,000 pax

Contact nationalmuseumph@yahoo.com.ph / (632) 527-1215



Crown Wine Cellar

Location Shouson Hill, Hong Kong

Why it's great Located in Shouson Hill, an exclusive suburb on Hong Kong Island, Crown Wine Cellars is nestled in a park-like setting which is also of immense historical significance having been declared a UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Site in 2007. It specialises in wine-handling and storage, while providing three interconnecting rooms for off-site meetings.

Drawbacks This is a private member's clubhouse and event bookers are required to sign up for a Silver membership. The membership, however, does not incur recurring charges.

Capacity 100 pax, seated, clubhouse; 70 pax, theatre-style, The Conservatory; 30 pax, theatre-style, Main Underground Bunker

Contact Noelle Shek, (852) 2580-6287 / nshek@crownw.com

Heritage Transport Museum

Location Tauru-Gurgaon, India

Why it's great Pegged as India's first comprehensive transport museum, the Heritage Transport Museum showcases the evolution of transportation in India. The museum exhibits motorised vehicles of different makes, like a 1924 Ford and a 1932 Chevrolet. The museum sprawls across four levels and occupies an area

of 8,361m². Meeting planners can utilise various spaces including the exhibition galleries, library and reference centre, conference rooms, mini auditorium, and even the museum shop.

Drawbacks None

Capacity More than 200 pax, seated

Contact (91-99) 91-477002

Plataran Dharmawangsa

Location Jakarta, Indonesia

Why it's great The centuries-old traditional Javanese *joglo* and *limasan* houses used to host weddings, but they have been renovated and upgraded to be more events-ready. While the traditional Javanese design has been retained, modern comforts such as air-conditioning have been added. Today, Plataran Dharmawangsa is well equipped to host meetings and corporate gatherings.

Drawbacks None

Capacity 30 to 50 pax

Contact salesjakarta@plataran.com

Cultural Center of the Philippines

Location Manila, the Philippines

Why it's great Besides the Silangan Hall which offers splendid sunset views over the Manila Bay and night panorama of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines complex, there are many other venues to choose from. Theatres, galleries, halls and a museum can be hired for corporate events.

The centre's performing arts groups such as Ballet Philippines, Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra and Tanghalang Pilipino (Philippine Theatre) can be hired too.

Tours of the centre can be arranged, and ushers can don Filipino attire and motifs to welcome and serve delegates.

Drawbacks None

Capacity 300 pax, cocktails, Silangan Hall; 3,000 pax, seated, all other venues combined

Contact ccpbooking@yahoo.com / (632) 832-3659

Vyas Ghat

Location Rishikesh, India

Why it's great Situated on the banks of river Ganges, Vyas Ghat is a pristine location which can be used for hosting a meeting



under tents. The picturesque venue and the majestic river create a spiritual setting and bring meeting delegates close to Mother Nature.

Drawbacks One has to raft across river Ganges to reach Vyas Ghat and modern comforts are lacking. Organisers will also need to transport meeting supplies and catering equipment over, which adds to the cost.

Capacity 200 pax

Contact Shikhar Travels; (91-11) 4717-1000



Flower Field Hall

Location Gardens by the Bay, Singapore

Why it's great Nestled within the Flower Dome, the Flower Field Hall enchants guests with a periodically changing flower field display on one side and a spectacular view of the Marina Bay skyline on the other. This indoor space also boasts a ceiling adorned with special LED lights that create a fairyland atmosphere.

Drawbacks None

Capacity 800 pax, theatre-style

Contact venue.hire@gardensbythebay.com.sg

Flow House Bangkok

Location Bangkok, Thailand

Why it's great With one of the few FlowRider surf machines in the region, two small-size meetings rooms, outside spaces and a bar and separate restaurant, this venue is ideal for more relaxed meetings and groups wanting to incorporate incentive or teambuilding activities. Full catering and event support is available regardless of group size, as well as audiovisual systems and Wi-Fi.

Drawbacks There can be a reasonable amount of noise on a busy day if the client does not book the entire venue.

Capacity 40-50 pax, FlowMotion Room; 25-30 pax, Flow-Party Room; 50-80 pax, Flow Bar; 1,000 pax, entire venue

Contact www.flowhousebangkok.com / (66-0-2) 108-5210



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Siam Society and Khamthieng House Museum

Location Bangkok, Thailand

Why it's great Steeped in history the Khamthieng House is a 160-year-old teak northern-style stilt building and home to an ethnographic museum full of artefacts relating to Thailand's agricultural past and traditions. The larger Siam Society building next door, which is home to the eponymous research body, includes an auditorium among its facilities.

Drawbacks Events and meetings have to be approved by the society's executive committee.

Capacity 25-30 pax, Khamthieng House; 180-200 people, Auditorium in Siam Society

Contact www.siam-society.org / (66-0-2) 6616-4707

Melbourne Town Hall

Location Melbourne, Australia

Why it's great Not only is this century-old building a part in Melbourne's history, it is also where the Beatles and Abba greeted their fans when their tour took them to the city. The handsome architecture houses eight elegant function rooms that are suitable for board meetings, presentations and conferences.

Drawbacks Should catering be required, planners are only allowed to engage the venue's official caterer Epicure. That said, Epicure is a popular and well-regarded catering specialist in Australia, and food quality is guaranteed.

Capacity The Main Hall is the largest space and can take 1,500 guests. The art deco-style Swanston Hall is good for 280 pax, theatre-style, while the Council Chambers, with its ornate ceiling, carved wood panelling and stain glass windows, make an impactful venue for presentations to 42 guests.

Contact events@epicure.com.au

Tribal Council

Location Sunway Lagoon Theme Park, Malaysia

Why it's great With an African tribal feel, the Tribal Council venue within Sunway Lagoon Theme Park makes it easy for delegates to forget they are in the city centre. Basic facilities included



are projector screen with built-in sound system and wireless microphone, flip chart and stationery. Full- and half-day meeting packages are available. Meeting planners can work with the sales team to design a meeting and theme park combination package.

Drawbacks None

Capacity 36 pax, theatre-style; 14 pax, boardroom setting

Contact ask_lagoon@sunway.com.my

Culture Gully

Location Kingdom of Dreams, Gurgaon, India

Why it's great Kingdom of Dreams is India's first and only live entertainment destination, bringing a unique blend of Indian art, culture, heritage, crafts, cuisine and performing arts together with the technological wizardry of today. Culture Gully, one of the core attractions of Kingdom of Dreams is an elaborate boulevard that recreates a busy Indian street, showcasing renowned local handicrafts and live performances by traditional artists. It makes an exciting environment for meetings.

Drawbacks None

Capacity 500 pax

Contact (91-124) 452-8000



Asia Society Hong Kong Center

Location Admiralty, Hong Kong

Why it's great This heritage site in Admiralty was a military explosives storage compound between the 1860s and the 1940s but was abandoned for more than three decades. It was reborn after months of renovation – funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Trust – as a cultural hub. Today it is run by the non-profit Asia Society Hong Kong. The building offers spaces for meetings. A winning factor is the venue's lush environment, making it a natural oasis within a concrete jungle.

Drawbacks None

Capacity 350 pax, Hong Kong Jockey Club Hall; 20 to 50 pax, two meeting rooms; 120 to 150 pax, two outdoor venues; 107 pax, theatre

Contact Anna Kwong, akwong@asiasociety.org



New Zealand has so much to offer; beautiful scenery, cultural experiences, fine food and wine, soft adventure, extreme adrenaline-pumping activities, shopping, pampering, and much more!

THINK FRESH CHOOSE NEW ZEALAND

Nothing beats the 100% Pure New Zealand, Naturally Beyond Convention experience for incentives and meetings, and nothing beats hosting an event that goes beyond convention in New Zealand. Find out why.

Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) proudly launched its Business Events strategy in Asia in September last year, and is geared up and ready to welcome MICE groups from China, Singapore, Malaysia, India and Thailand.

Mischa Mannix-Opie, TNZ regional manager, South & South-east Asia, said: "The appointment of a **Singapore-based business events manager** in December last year will provide us with the necessary support to meet the needs of planners and end-users to host successful incentives and meetings in Auckland and beyond."

"Auckland and New Zealand have a **large inventory of business events infrastructure**, and we are now building partnerships with DMCs and travel agents with MICE divisions catering to corporate clients looking for long-haul destinations to organise new, unique, and fresh events," she added.

Ample indoor and outdoor meeting spaces, unique venues, and a myriad of pre- and post-event options make New Zealand an ideal meetings choice. "Our challenge is to highlight the vast activities and opportunities

available to delegates and to encourage them to extend and maximise their stay in New Zealand," Mannix-Opie noted.

Auckland is the best-connected city in New Zealand, with about 70 per cent of visitors flying directly into Auckland International Airport. It is linked to **32 cities** and is served by

18 international airlines including Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, Cathay Pacific, and Thai Airways.

According to John Gregory, executive director, Pan Pacific Travel, Asian incentive and meeting groups also have the option of coming to Auckland via Australia.

Pan Pacific Travel has been handling Asian MICE groups for more than 10 years and participated in IT&CMA – Asia's largest MICE show held yearly in Bangkok – for the first time in 2013.

Gregory said: "**New Zealand is a fresh destination for Asian MICE** and offers numerous options for mid- to high-end incentive groups, teambuilding activities, and gala events."

"New Zealand is easy to visit and it's now equipped to handle the Asian visitor better than ever," he added.



Discover what New Zealand has to offer and the many exciting incentive and meeting ideas in **AUCKLAND, HAMILTON & WAIKATO, and ROTORUA** in the following pages.



THE PACIFIC MEETING PLACE



Photos: Viaduct Events Centre



Viaduct Events Centre.

Auckland's beautiful waterfront, bustling CBD, and colourful fringe areas are packed with restaurants, bars, and retail therapy – a great starting point for any MICE group.

IT'S hard to miss the iconic **Sky Tower**, a landmark feature of the dynamic CBD and a useful navigation tool. Sky Tower is part of **SKYCITY**, a thriving hub of business, commercial and retail activity. Often described as "a city within a city", SKYCITY offers unrivalled convenience for business travellers, and is within walking distance of The Queen Street shopping district.

SKYCITY houses two business hotels – the five-star **SKYCITY Grand Hotel** and the four-and-a-half star **SKYCITY Hotel**, the **Auckland Convention Centre**, the **East Day Spa**, a world-class casino, and more than 20 top-class restaurants, cafés and bars.

For entertainment with an added kick, **SkyJump** and **SkyWalk** at Sky Tower are fun teambuilding activities that are sure to excite any MICE group.

SKYCITY FAST FACTS

- The **SKYCITY Auckland Convention Centre** has 21 meeting rooms across two floors with a total of 5,000 m² of space, and free wi-fi throughout. It can house up to 1,750 people.
- **SKYCITY Grand Hotel** has 300 rooms, while **SKYCITY Hotel** has 320 rooms.
- Celebrity chef restaurants include **The Grill by Sean Connolly**; **The Sugar Club** featuring Peter Gordon's fusion cuisine on level 53 of Sky Tower; **Masu by Nic Watt**, a Japanese robata restaurant and bar; **Gusto Cucina & Bar** at the Grand; and Chinese fine dining restaurant **Jade Dragon**.
- **SkyJump**: Leap off New Zealand's highest base jump at 192m off the ground going at 85kpm.
- **SkyWalk**: Walk 192m off the ground on the outer ledge of Sky Tower for amazing views of the city's harbour and city landmarks.

www.skycityauckland.co.nz



SkyWalk at Sky Tower.



SKYCITY Auckland Convention Centre.

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IT doesn't get better than a ride on a Harley Davidson equipped with state-of-the-art sound system, wi-fi, and GPS. Dress the part in a leather jacket and helmet for protection – and for those wanting to complete the look, goggles are available on request.



Feel the wind in your face as you see the city in a unique, one-of-a-kind way. Get up close and personal, see the bright city lights and hear the eclectic city sounds as you absorb the atmosphere on one truly unforgettable journey.

Bularangi Harley Davidson Motor Bike Tours offers exclusive pick-ups and drop-offs, as well as tailor-made tours in and around Auckland, and beyond. For those wishing to explore further, cross the Auckland Harbour Bridge, zoom around the city and discover Northcote lined with million dollar homes. Drive past the popular retail therapy precincts of Ponsonby, Parnell, and Newmarket, and check out the beautiful Auckland Domain and the Auckland War Memorial Museum before arriving at Viaduct Harbour for lunch at one of the many popular waterfront eateries.

www.bularangi.com/harley

Sail away, sail away, sail away

Small and large groups can turn to Explore Events to provide transfers in style, and a wide range of water experiences and teambuilding activities.

MICE groups can relax and enjoy the sights of the harbour on a **private charter vessel**, or leave the hustle and bustle of Auckland behind on a cruiser for a **whale and dolphin safari**. Those with a little competitive spirit can follow in the footsteps of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince William and Kate Middleton, and team up for **match racing** aboard ex-America's Cup yachts – no sailing experience required.



Explore Events

provides tailored solutions using a diverse fleet of vessels and range of sailing and cruising options. Regular programmes offered by Explore Events include Get Up Close to Nature Whale and Dolphin Safari; Cruise in Style Evening Harbour Cruise; America's Cup Action Sailing and Match Racing; and Get Out on the Water Sailing and Racing.

www.exploregroup.co.nz

Food and the city

Be spoilt for choice and indulge in the finest food and wine New Zealand has to offer in popular locales within the CBD.

FOODIES and gourmands will delight in Auckland's vibrant food scene with easy-to-get-to gems scattered all over.

Kick start your morning with breakfast at **Ortolana** (www.britomart.org/ortolana) in trendy Britomart before boarding a cruise at one of the nearby wharves. Set within an elegant sun-lit conservatory with indoor and outdoor seating, the contemporary bistro can accommodate 90 people.

The Bularangi Harley Davidson Motor Bike Tour can make a pit stop at Market Square, Viaduct Harbour, for a quick or leisurely bite at **The Foodstore** (www.thefoodstore.tv), which uses natural and organic New Zealand produce from local farmers.

Dining options abound but celebrity chef Peter Gordon's **The Sugar Club** (www.skycityauckland.co.nz/restaurants/the-sugar-club) on level 53 of Sky Tower, is the perfect pairing of fusion fine dining complemented



Britomart.



Ortolana.

with a spectacular view, and the bonus of the occasional wave from passing SkyWalkers.

Michelin-starred chef Josh Emmett helms **Ostro** (www.britomart.org/ostro), the Italian word for a southerly wind. This modern international-style brasserie and bar is upscale yet unpretentious. Also in Britomart, Ostro takes up the entire second floor of the Seafarers Building, which is undergoing a highly anticipated transformation into six floors of eateries and bars.

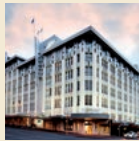
Simon Gault's **Euro Restaurant & Bar** (www.eurobar.co.nz) at Princes Wharf Shed 22 is exceptional for its food, and the equally exceptional view. Your waiter will be happy to recommend the daily specials and offer his expertise on the house wine pairings.

For a casual meal close to Sky Tower, **Kushi Japanese Kitchen & Bar** (www.kushi.co.nz) in Durham Street West offers a wide selection of sashimi, sushi and cooked dishes. The large space is suitable for groups.

CBD HOTELS

»» HERITAGE AUCKLAND

NUMBER OF ROOMS
467



This centrally located hotel boasts high ceilings, native timber floors, and larger room sizes. Facilities include a heated rooftop swimming pool, an all-weather flood-lit tennis court, an indoor lap pool, two gyms, and a spa.

Meeting space: There are 11 meeting rooms for up to 12 people, dinner facilities for 300 people, and a conference room for up to 400 people in theatre style. The beautifully restored art deco Grand Tearoom ballroom is a popular wedding and gala event venue with sweeping views across the Waitemata Harbour.

www.heritagehotels.co.nz/hotels/heritage-auckland

»» HILTON AUCKLAND

NUMBER OF ROOMS
165



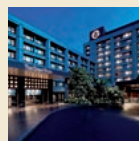
Located on Princes Wharf, the hotel reflects the surrounding maritime environment and is a short walk from the CBD and the entertainment precincts on the waterfront.

Meeting space: There are two floors of function rooms and its largest area, the Exhibition Floor, can accommodate 400 people for a cocktail, and 330 people for a banquet.

www.auckland.hilton.com

»» THE LANGHAM AUCKLAND

NUMBER OF ROOMS
411



The luxury five-star hotel features the signature Chuan Spa offering treatments based on traditional Chinese medicine. It is within walking distance of SKYCITY, and there is a complimentary

shuttle to the waterfront area.

Meeting space: The hotel has 16 function rooms plus two ballrooms – with one of the largest pillarless hotel ballrooms in New Zealand. The Great Room can accommodate up to 1,400 people for a cocktail, and up to 900 for a banquet.

www.auckland.langhamhotels.co.nz

»» SOFITEL AUCKLAND VIADUCT HARBOUR

NUMBER OF ROOMS
172



Rooms at the luxury five-star property feature Juliette balconies, floor-to-ceiling windows and oversized bathrooms. So Spa offers the Greenstone Massage; in Maori tradition, the greenstone is believed to possess intuitive healing and harmonising properties

Meeting space: The hotel has more than 500m² of function space, and five venues that can accommodate up to 130 people theatre style, and up to 160 for cocktails.

www.sofitel-auckland.com

AIRPORT HOTEL

»» NOVOTEL AUCKLAND AIRPORT HOTEL

NUMBER OF ROOMS
263



Late-night arrivals into Auckland International Airport have the option of staying at Novotel Auckland Airport before starting any MICE programme the following day. The hotel has one

F&B outlet, the Square Restaurant and Bar, and a fitness centre called In Balance.

Meeting space: There are two dedicated meeting floors and its function rooms can accommodate between 12 and 315 people.

www.novotelaucklandairport.co.nz

»» OTHER HOTEL OPTIONS

- **Novotel Rotorua Lakeside**
www.novotelrotorua.co.nz
- **Millennium Hotel Rotorua**
www.millenniumhotels.co.nz

HEAD SOUTH TO ROTORUA



The hub of Maori culture and geothermal activity is also home to teambuilding activities galore, and heart-thumping outdoor adventures. Get ready to have fun, and scream!

TE PUIA in Rotorua is New Zealand's living **Maori cultural centre** and visitors can marvel at the geological wonders of Te Whakarewarewa Valley, where the geothermal activity that dates back 40,000 years can still be seen today. With over 500 volcanic pools and 65 geysers, visitors can participate in the interactive activities at Te Puia, and catch the world famous **Pohutu geyser**, which erupts regularly and can reach over 30m skywards!

Tim Cossar, Te Puia's CEO, said the attraction is developing its site masterplan to add new facilities and expand its offerings to attract Asian incentive groups, which

increasingly are becoming an important part of the business.

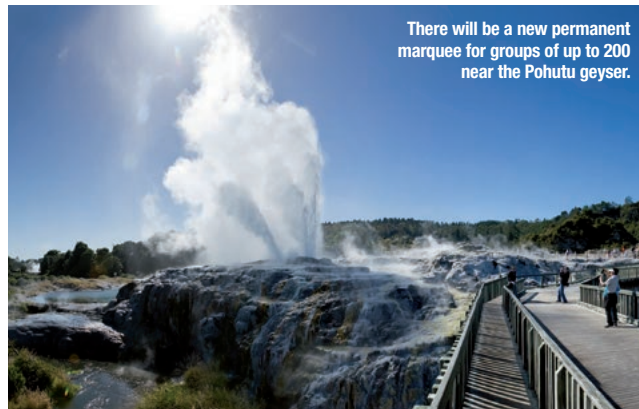
"We are about 18 months away from introducing the new facilities. We want to give incentive groups a deeper experience in order to encourage them to hold functions here," Cossar said.

The expansion includes plans for a permanent marquee – with kitchen and bathroom facilities near the geyser – that can cater for up to **200 guests for a sit-down dinner**. In addition, the attraction also aims to introduce footbaths and mini-spas, and to recruit its first **Chinese-speaking Maori guide** in the coming months.

While waiting for the expansion plans to be completed, visitors can still experience guided tours of Te Puia's **weaving and carving schools** every evening, before the not-to-be missed performance of the **Te Po**, a traditional Maori welcome and cultural performance. This is followed by a **Maori-style hangi** (earth oven) dinner at Te Puia's dining room, which can accommodate 120,



Maori culture and crafts come alive at Te Puia.



There will be a new permanent marquee for groups of up to 200 near the Pohutu geyser.

and an additional 80 people in an adjacent space. The evening ends with a viewing of the **Whakarewarewa Geothermal Valley** lit-up against the night sky.

Te Puia also offers the **Pohutu (geyser) by Night** experience, and the mouth-watering **Ingō - Beer, Bubbles and Mussels** meal in the Ngararatutara Marquee. Fresh New Zealand mussels, king prawns, corn and vegetables are placed in flax woven baskets and poached in the geothermal spring.

Rotorua is about a three-hour drive from Auckland.

www.tepuia.com

Thrills and spills at Agroventures

ADRENALINE junkies, get set to get your fill of five unique adventures at Agroventures. New Zealand's premier adventure park, **Agroventures** is suitable for incentive groups of any size and is ideal for teambuilding activities, races, and partner programmes.

Agroventures has the world's only **Shweeb**, a jet sprint experience to race through space. Groups with the need for speed can take on the **Agrojet**, New Zealand's fastest jetboating experience.

The park also has New Zealand's only **outdoor wind tunnel** and the **Freefall Xtreme** flying experience. Daredevils can triple up, climb into three Swoop sacks hauled towards the sky, and swing towards the earth at 130kph. It's not something you do every day so make sure somebody is taking that split-second shot. For the genuinely hardcore, take the plunge at the **Rotorua Bungy jump**. Brave the 43m drop on your own, or do it in tandem with a mate and see who screams louder!

For those looking for tamer adventures, Agroventures also offers **agriculture and unique farming activities** on its 142ha park where up to 600 people can participate in the Amazing Farm Race, or rotational teambuilding activities.

Exclusive use of the park can be arranged for MICE groups depending on the number of people and activities selected.

www.agroventures.co.nz



OUTSIDE AUCKLAND

Waiheke Island for the day

A 35-MINUTE ferry ride away from Auckland's CBD is Waiheke Island filled with its beautiful beaches, picturesque vineyards, and luscious local fare.

Take an exclusive tour to enjoy the vistas and be amazed by the spectacular coastline. Combine your visit with wine and olive tastings at the island's three **vineyards** and an **olive estate**.

Waiheke Island is also known for its **arts and crafts** stores and stalls that sell a range of art prints, pottery, jewellery, paintings, art supplies, and Maori arts and crafts.

For the adventurous, **Wild on Waiheke** (www.wildonwaiheke.co.nz) offers clay bird shooting or archery among the vines. You can also zipline through the stunning native forest with **EcoZip Adventures** (www.ecozipadventures.co.nz).

There's just so much to see and do you might miss the ferry back to the city!



Mudbrick Vineyard, Waiheke Island.

A working farm, a blockbuster movie set

WHO is not a fan of the epic Middle Earth fantasy adventure films based on Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*? In Waikato, experience a real Hollywood movie set at Hobbiton!

The **Hobbiton Movie Set** is now a permanent structure on the 500ha Alexander Farm, situated in the Waikato region, mid-way between Auckland and Rotorua. The Shire, 44 hobbit holes, the party tree, and the Green Dragon Inn and Mill all come to life at the Hobbiton Movie Set, and for a few hours you are part of the movie magic.

Go on a tour of the movie set, and get behind-the-scene scoops on what went



on during filming. The standard tour is 90 minutes long, and visitors have time to enjoy an exclusive pouring of **Hobbiton ale, stout, cider, and ginger ale at the Green Dragon Inn**, and also have some pub grub.

After the last tour of the day at 4.30pm, incentive groups of between 220 and 1,200 people can be **accommodated at various locations** on the grounds of the movie set. www.hobbitontours.com



Up, up and away to Skyline

FOR incentive groups that are into soft adventure, the journey to **Skyline Rotorua** starts in a Doppelpayr gondola up the side of the dormant Mt Ngongotaha volcano. The cable car climbs 900m above sea level at its peak, and visitors are rewarded with some of the best views of Rotorua as it ascends to the top.

Skyline Rotorua also boasts a **Sky Swing**, which travels at speeds of up to 150kph, and the **Zoom Zipline** was just added in April. The high-speed twin zipline descends 385m down the side of Mt Ngongotaha, followed by a unique 10m Quickjump system, followed by a "freefall" from the landing platform.

Apart from the view, visitors can enjoy a fun-filled gravity ride on the **Luge**, a three-wheel cart using a unique braking and steering system, designed and built in Rotorua and a world first.

If the activities and scenery works up an appetite, indulge in a hearty meal at **Art of the Grill** or the **Food Market Kitchen**, which can accommodate up to 450 people.

A million-dollar expansion is under way with the addition of multiple cooking stations and space that can be divided into four sections for themed formal or casual events. There is also the **Forest Function Venue** on site, a marquee equipped with a kitchen, bar and bathrooms, which can accommodate 250 people.

In addition, incentive groups can also go on **helicopter rides** and explore **interactive nature trails**, or visit the **Volcanic Hills Winery's Wine Tasting Room**, and New Zealand's first **Jelly Belly Gallery & Store**.

www.skyline.co.nz



The Luge.



Volcanic Hills Winery's Wine Tasting Room.

Teambuilding at twilight with OffroadNZ



IF teambuilding programmes by day no longer excite, surprise participants with activities

that start when the sun begins to set. Welcome to **OffroadNZ's twilight adventures!**

Participants arrive in darkness, but as the programme kicks off, the sound of a cranking motor breaks the silence and turns into a throaty rumble, as the darkness is pierced by 20,000 watts of light... Suddenly, a bright red jetboat and a Monster 4x4 appear from nowhere!

OffroadNZ's twilight teambuilding programme can incorporate jetboating, archery, clay bird shooting, Raceline Karting in a state-of-the art four-stroke 390cc Sodi kart, 4WD Bush Safari, and a **Monster 4x4 Thrill Ride**.

To build team spirit, the **4WD Bush Safari**, for example, allows teams of two to four drivers to take turns at the wheel and experience some of the trickiest offroad driving encounters. Those without a driving licence can sit back on the Monster 4x4 ride to experience one adrenaline rush after another as the driver swerves and wriggles through the deep bush. All "Survivors" receive a certificate to mark the occasion!

The evening culminates with a campsite bonfire where a native bush camp dinner is served, to top off a remarkable night of adventure.

www.offroadnz.co.nz

LARGE SPACES UNIQUE VENUES

Waterfront views, lush surroundings

Meeting planners and corporate end-users have a wide choice of facilities to suit their conferencing needs in Auckland, Hamilton, and Rotorua. Auckland's beautiful CBD waterfront is one of the city's unique selling points, and you have to see the number of conference and gala event options to appreciate this MICE destination.

»» THE CLOUD, SHED 10



Located in the premium location of **Queens Wharf**, next to the ferry terminal and opposite the trendy Britomart, The Cloud and Shed 10 sit side-by-side.

Built for the 2011 Rugby World Cup and stretching 180m long, **The Cloud** can accommodate up to 5,000 people. Its exhibition floor, lower and upper mezzanine can be set up in classroom or theatre style to accommodate between 100 and 2,300 people. Built in 1910 and thoughtfully restored to retain its heritage value, **Shed 10** is the only original structure that remains on Queens Wharf. The two-storey building can accommodate up to 3,000 people and can be set up in classroom or theatre style to seat between 800 and 1,200 people.

Both facilities offer stunning views of Waitemata Harbour, making it the ideal backdrop for almost any event – exhibitions, gala dinners, product launches, fashion shows, conferences, and more.
www.queens-wharf.co.nz

»» VIADUCT EVENTS CENTRE



Opened in August 2011 on Waitemata Harbour, the three-storey centre is **Auckland's largest banquet venue** with 6,000m² of space and 1,200 seating capacity.

Surrounded by glass walls, the centre offers spectacular harbour and city views, and an abundance of natural light. Large service doors measuring 10m by 8m provide easy access for sizeable products such as yachts and cars. Multiples access points at the centre also allow easy indoor-outdoor traffic flow to the surrounding wharf. Each of the function rooms on the centre's second level comes with a balcony overlooking the Viaduct Basin, perfect for the warmer months.
www.aucklandconventions.co.nz

»» CLAUDELANDS CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION CENTRE



In the Hamilton region, a 90-minute drive down south of Auckland, stands Claudelands. Set in 34ha of parkland, this is one of New Zealand's newest events facilities.

Claudelands has 10,000m² of indoor and outdoor exhibition space. With 11 meeting rooms, the conference centre can accommodate more than 1,200 people, with the main conference space, the Heaphy Room, seating 900 people. Adjacent to the conference and exhibition centre is **The Arena**, an auditorium that can comfortably hold 6,000 people for general admission, 5,000 people for assigned seating, and 1,400 people for banquet events.
claudelands.co.nz

»» ROTORUA ENERGY EVENTS CENTRE



Sitting on the edge of Lake Rotorua in the picturesque Government Gardens, this multi-purpose centre boasts **10 events spaces** ideal for conferences, exhibitions, gala dinners, and other events.

With a total floor area of 8,255m² it can accommodate 2,600 people for a sit-down dinner, and 4,000 people theatre style. It is close to its sister facility, the **Rotorua Convention Centre**.
www.eventsandvenues.co.nz

»» DISTINCTION ROTORUA HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE



Built in 1978 and renovated recently, Rotorua Hotel has 133 rooms.

It is the **largest hotel-based conference centre in Rotorua** with the Fenton Room accommodating up to 500 people theatre style. There are eight conference rooms, including breakout rooms, smaller lounges, and the boardroom. The Fenton Foyer can also be used as an exhibition space.

The hotel's F&B outlets include the Pavilion restaurant, Mr Yakitori Restaurant, D Bar, and the all-day dining Kowhai Restaurant.
www.distinctionrotorua.co.nz

VENUES THAT SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

THE WHARF



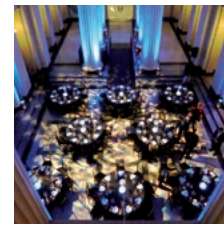
A beautiful, grand venue, The Wharf is popular for intimate incentives, gala dinners, award events, and weddings.

Surrounded by the waters of Waitemata Harbour across the Auckland Harbour Bridge, both the indoor and outdoor spaces offer breathtaking views of the city skyline and harbour by day, and the twinkling city lights by night.

The venue comprises The Grand View, The Pearl, The Harbour Lounge, and The Harbour Terrace, and can accommodate up to 600 people.

The stunning, two-storey Grand View room, with an atrium in the centre, can also be set up for acrobatic performances, dancing, and a live band.
www.thewharf.co.nz

AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM



Located in the Auckland Domain, the museum offers a number of unique spaces like the marble neo-classical Grand Foyer, and themed galleries for different events.

The Grand Foyer can accommodate 150 for a sit-down dinner, and 400 for cocktails.

The stunning 578m² Event Centre comes with two pre-function areas and provides a 360° view over Auckland. It can accommodate 450 people seated, and 600 people standing.

The breathtaking architecture of the museum's Atrium is also suitable for 600 people for cocktails and performances.
www.aucklandmuseum.com

LUXURY TRANSPORT PROVIDERS

Auckland-based **Hallmark Chauffeur Drive** operates a fleet of luxury cars such as the BMW 730 L, luxury vans, and mini coaches, and provides a nation-wide service.
www.limos.co.nz

Rotorua-based **Xquisit Limousines & Tours** operates a fleet of seven wi-fi enabled vehicles, including two stretch-limousines, and provides private tours for up to 11 people.
www.xquizit.co.nz



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Footfalls up, spending slides

A strong currency and rising competition from other destinations are making business a little tougher for Singapore MICE players, writes **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Corporate travellers are spending less, according to the latest preliminary estimates by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), which revealed a decline of six per cent between January and September last year, compared to the same period in 2012.

STB's CEO, Lionel Yeo, said: "In 2013, we saw that corporate budget was tightened for business travel, (a result of) cyclical factors related to economic uncertainty. What is heartening is that business travellers are still coming to Singapore, it is just that they are spending less."

Nevertheless, the business travel and MICE sectors continue to be a key contributor of Singapore's tourism receipts. In 2012, the number of business visitors rose to 3.4 million, from 3.2 million in 2011. Expenditure by these visitors grew 2.3 per cent to an estimated S\$5.7 billion (US\$4.5 billion).

From January to September 2013, business travel and MICE visitor arrivals stood at 2.6 million, a six per cent year-on-year growth, while expenditure fell six per cent year-on-year to an estimated S\$4.1 billion.

Yvonne Low, executive director of The Traveller DMC, told *TTGmice* that her company saw a 15 per cent year-on-year decline in MICE business last year.

Low said: "Our market from India dropped significantly because of the weakening rupee, which makes it even more expensive to come to Singapore."

"With Singapore's (consistently strong) currency, the purchasing power of the Indians becomes a lot lower and it makes our destination less attractive even for high-end clients."

Likewise, Tour East's group vice president of sales and marketing, Judy Lum, said "substantial growth" evaded her company in 2013.



"Budget is critical to the selection process of a destination, especially for the MICE segment," Lum said. "Any softening of hotel rates will help a destination look more attractive price wise."

According to Elinda Ong, director of sales, Grand Park City Hall, the emergence of more mid-scale hotels in the market has helped make "rates and product offerings become more competitive among the hotels".

Ong remains optimistic about the future and expects business from the MICE sector to grow three-fold this year.

Although the Raffles City Convention Centre played host to an increased number of events last year, Ng Sok Hia, executive assistant manager, sales and marketing, Fairmont Singapore and Swissôtel The Stamford, warned that Singapore is facing rising competition from neighbouring countries.

"Despite offering a conducive environment supported by our strategic location in Asia, Singapore is challenged by equally developed cities such as Macau, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur for MICE events," Ng said.

Singapore offers a conducive environment for business and corporate gatherings

To strengthen Singapore's business value proposition, STB rolled out a new set of sustainability guidelines last November.

STB executive director for business tourism development, Chew Tiong



"In 2013, we saw that corporate budget was tightened for business travel, (a result of) cyclical factors related to economic uncertainty. What is heartening is that business travellers are still coming to Singapore, it is just that they are spending less."

Lionel Yeo
CEO
Singapore Tourism Board

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.

"Green initiatives are therefore gaining traction among MICE event organisers, who recognise that such endeavours significantly enhance the overall visitor experience."

Life's a (South) Beach

In Singapore, where 'MBS vs Suntec' is something of a sport for MICE observers, it is one goal for Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre and nil for Marina Bay Sands (MBS) as South Beach Development gets ready for its soft-opening in the first quarter of 2015.

The mixed use project, which ropes in designers such as Norman Foster and Philippe Starck, believes it will add a new shine to the Suntec Singapore and Raffles City convention area. South Beach is located in front of Raffles Hotel on the Beach Road side and will be connected directly to

Suntec Singapore on the Nicoll Highway side via an overhead bridge.

"Before MBS opened, this was the only MICE hub, with hotels within the vicinity of Suntec benefiting from conferences held at the convention centre," said Aloysius Lee, CEO, South Beach Consortium.

He added: "With a working agreement on the bridge that links our hotel to the convention centre, we will naturally work closely with Suntec. We will encourage our corporate guests to hold their meetings there while we also believe we will benefit when Suntec secures events, as our hotel is directly connected to it."

Suntec's CEO, Arun Madhok, said Suntec is looking forward to future collaboration with South Beach.

"I'm confident that this development will add to the vibrance of the area and enhance the experience for all visitors," he said.

South Beach, developed by City Developments Limited Singapore and IOI Corporation Berhad, comprises over 46,000m² of Grade A office space; 190 residential units; a 654-room hotel designed by Philippe Starck; a retail concept; and a private membership club.

Currently, the hotel is called The South Beach. A decision has yet to be made on a third-party management, franchise or marketing representation.

Beach Road once was a tranquil seaside. Massive land reclamation saw the setting up of Beach Road Camp on the South Beach site, comprising three army blocks serving as headquarters for homegrown military forces, along

with an 'NCO' club with its famous Olympic size swimming pool for army, naval and air force officers. The three blocks and the club are being conserved to maintain the heritage of the location.

For example, one of the three bars at the hotel will be a 'Court Martial Bar', conserved from the actual Court Martial room where National Service men were martialled even for little offences such as losing their registration passes.

With 654 rooms, MICE will be a big part of the revenue-generation strategy. MICE facilities include a ballroom which seats around 500 pax for a banquet and 350 pax for cocktails.

For F&B, the hotel will offer an all-day dining establishment while the development is also signing up a "stylish, contemporary experience that combines shopping and dining in a space of 30,000 square feet (2,787m²).

Added Lee: "Planners can do incentives here and we're working closely with Suntec to have a fair share of convention delegates. I believe we have the best access to Suntec – from the hotel, just a walk across Nicoll Highway through an overland bridge and you're already at the convention hall.

"We're creating a new product, probably the first in Asia that offers this kind of a lifestyle choice. With high occupancies in Singapore, we are a serious choice for all segments, be it MICE, bleasure, leisure, etc. Most new hotels that are opening are smaller in roomcount. We have 650 rooms."

As for rates, Lee would only say: "The current rates of hotels in the neighbourhood are around S\$400 (US\$317) to S\$500." – **Raini Hamdi**

The massive mixed use project will comprise a hotel and meeting facilities





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18 Marina Gardens Drive, Singapore 018953

How I did Responsible Business Forum 2013

Held at Marina Bay Sands (MBS), the Responsible Business Forum (RBF) 2013 was a two-day forum which saw more than 500 business leaders, NGOs and policy makers from South-east Asia in attendance.

For this event, MBS played a big role in championing sustainable event planning along with the organisers. To ensure RBF meets its green standards and goal of creating a 100 per cent carbon-offset event, MBS ensured aspects such as the event setup, menu planning and waste management allowed delegates to give back to the community.

For instance, MBS used advanced movement sensors that are integrated with the building management system to control lighting when no one is in the room. The property also provided its Sands ECO360° standards in meeting rooms, which meant no pre-setting of paper, mints and water at tables. Water dispensers and glasses were provided instead.

A customised vegetarian Harvest Menu was also provided too. Fresh produce and ingredients on the Harvest Menu were sourced locally and from nearby markets in Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia to minimise the carbon footprint of food imports. To reduce food wastage, there were no pre-served beverages during food service and most condiments were served in bulk.

Delegates were also invited to participate in MBS' *Soap for Hope*, a programme which collects leftover shampoo and soap from hotel rooms. *Soap for Hope* stations were set up at the event and collections were distributed to Food from the Heart, a charity organisation. Unconsumed bread from the forum were also donated to the organisation.



Need to know



Eat well, meet well

A fine way to rejuvenate the minds and spirits of meeting attendees is to take them out for a healthy and refreshing meal in soothing environs.

Debunking the myth that healthy cuisine is bland and boring, Tangerine at ESPA, Resorts World Sentosa takes the best from Asian and Western cuisines and creates a tasty and nutritious menu that will delight even the fussiest of diners. Celebrity chefs Sam Leong and Forest Leong join forces with a resident nutritionist to deliver highlights such as Cured Atlantic Salmon with Granny Smith Apple and Celery Juice, and a low-calorie Aloe Vera, Rosella Gelo and Calamansi dessert.

Set amid a serene and lush landscape, Tangerine has been a hit with corporate groups and had recently hosted a 24-pax dinner event and two 27-pax company gatherings. Contact dining@rwsentosa.com for reservations.

Flavourful history

One of Singapore's iconic heritage sites, the Clifford Pier, can now be enjoyed over a meal.

The brand new 272-seat, all-day dining restaurant, The Clifford Pier, pays homage to Singapore's hawker food culture through local favourites such as Soup *Kambing* (a traditional spiced mutton soup), *laksa* and Teochew porridge.

Located at the foot of the Fullerton Bay Hotel, the historical venue has been carefully restored and enhanced to evoke a sense of nostalgia.

Email cliffordpier@fullertonbayhotel.com for more information.

Eye-popping dining surprise

A fine-dining pop-up restaurant will set up shop in Singapore's historic Tanjong Pagar Railway Station this month. Mooted by My Private Chef, a company that specialises in bespoke dining experiences, the first chapter of *Stories: A Pop Up Restaurant* will be held from June 26 to 29. Tickets are priced from S\$188 (US\$150) to S\$248 and available on www.myprivatechef.com.sg.

A different celebrity chef and location will be featured for each chapter.

Wings of Time soars right in

Sentosa's popular *Songs of the Sea* night show has ended its seven-year run, making way for a new multimedia performance come June 17.

Called the *Wings of Time*, the show is set at the same outdoor theatre against a new 10m tall backdrop. Produced by events company ECA2, *Wings of Time* promises an array of multimedia effects including new robotic fountains, 3D video mapping and enhanced pyrotechnic effects, coupled with a live cast and audience engagement.

Wings of Time will be performed daily with shows at 19.40 and 20.40, each with a running time of 25 minutes at Siloso Beach. Premium seats are available at S\$23 (US\$18) per person, while standard seats are at S\$18.



A Cuban celebration in Capella Singapore

Hot Havana nights are now a reality every day at Bob's Bar in Capella Singapore. Meticulous research has been made to recreate an authentically glamorous Cuban-inspired bar through lively music, quality libations – with an emphasis on rum-based cocktails – and food, and exquisite glassware. Come Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, local jazz maestro Jeremy Monteiro and his band, Latin Jazz Trio, will fire up the night with the passionate beats of Latin Jazz from 19.00.

For reservations, call (65) 6591-5047.

Checking in

Four-star, 298 rooms and suites
9 Bras Basah Road, Singapore 189559
Tel: (65) 6336-0220
email: info.rhs@fareast.com.sg
www.rendezvoushotels.com/singapore

Rendezvous Hotel Singapore



Rendezvous Hotel Singapore is blessed with a great location, sitting in the heart of the city and within the arts and cultural district of Bras Basah. It is close to the Singapore Art Museum, the National Museum of Singapore, the Orchard Road shopping belt, the Raffles City/Suntec convention area and the central business district.

Meeting facilities The hotel's largest event venue, the 290m² Symphony Ballroom, can seat up to 240 people, banquet-style. Smaller groups can opt for three other ballrooms – Symphony I, II and III – which can seat 80, 60 and 60 respectively in a banquet setting. There are three additional breakout rooms that can each accommodate 20 guests.

All function rooms are equipped with audiovisual and lighting amenities. Wi-Fi is provided for free throughout the hotel and event spaces, which is a big plus factor for all travellers and meeting delegates today.

Rooms In reflecting the hotel's vibrant energy and new artistic personality, Far East Hospitality redesigned several guest touchpoints into a visual spectacle of art with the use of technology earlier this year. Upon entering the hotel, I was intrigued by a magnificent floor-to-ceiling sculpture which resembled a futuristic tree trunk, along with wall panels behind the reception that changed colours every four hours throughout the day.

This artistic revamp was extended to the Club Rooms on the three highest levels of the hotel. I was housed in one of these splendid rooms, which came adorned with one of Oscar Wilde's famous quotes, "Illusion is the first of all

pleasures".

My room was fitted with the usual amenities like a flatscreen TV, minibar and work desk. The bathroom came with a rain shower and a smart toilet, but no bath.

F&B The hotel features the award-winning Straits Café which is a food haven for Singaporeans and hotel guests alike, offering daily breakfast, lunch and dinner in buffet-style. I was impressed with the diverse dinner buffet offerings which included authentic local favourites such as *roti prata*, *rojak*, *laksa* and *popiah* – all coming together to literally give travellers a taste of Singapore.

The seafood spread of freshly grilled tiger prawns, lobsters, squids and crabs was amazing. And with Straits Café specialising in local delights, the dessert station featured a fascinating array of durian treats including durian-flavoured cakes, puddings, mousse and crepes.

The adjoining Rendezvous Gallery also provides guests convenient access to more dining options such as Balzac Brasserie, Baja Fresh and Fung Ding Hung restaurant.

What stood out for me was the alfresco dining concept at The Courtyard, which is housed under a glass ceiling. It was therapeutic to sit amid the palms trees and bask in natural sunlight. And at night, stars could be spied from The Courtyard.

Other facilities The Plaza Club Lounge on the 11th floor is exclusive to club floor guests, and offers all-day complimentary refreshments as well as cocktails from 18.00 to 20.00. Complimentary printing services are available too.

There is also a pool, an outdoor heated Jacuzzi and a fitness centre.

FACT FILE

Maximum pax for meetings 240 at the Symphony Ballroom, banquet-style

Recent events handled

- Institute of Mental Health's two-day conference for 65 pax (April 2014)
- Kellogg Asia Pacific's two-day conference for 100 pax (April 2014)

VERDICT



The hotel scores high in my book for its superb location in the city, excellent service and delightful dining quality.

Paige Lee Pei Qi



The Sanctuary of Truth, an all-wood temple, has been a stellar attraction of Pattaya

Cast in a new light

Pattaya has in recent years shed some of its seedy reputation but work is still needed to improve its infrastructure and attractions, writes **Greg Lowe**

Pattaya's MICE industry remains in relatively good health although the ongoing political turmoil in Bangkok is expected to hamper performance this year. The sector continues to grow incrementally, however, domestic trade dominates the market which will not be able to meet its full potential on the international level until the local infrastructure and product offerings are improved, according to industry stakeholders.

While several new properties opened last year, including Wave Pattaya and Centara Grand Phratamnak Pattaya, these hotels cater for smaller groups and 2013 passed by without major developments that could be used to promote the city as a MICE destination in a big way.

New attractions and meetings-friendly properties remain key to driving international business, especially given the dampening effect that anti-government protests in Bangkok

and the related travel advisories had on trade, explained Holger Groninger, general manager of The Bayview Pattaya and Wave Pattaya.

"International MICE business as well as government meetings were heavily affected due to the travel advisories sent out by the embassies," he said. "Existing business was initially shifted from Bangkok to Pattaya, but new meeting requests have come in very slowly."

Robert Lohrmann, general man-

ager of Centara Grand Mirage Beach Resort Pattaya, said: "Pattaya's MICE market has not yet reached its potential. The majority of current events are generated by domestic corporates and local social events... We do see more interest from Asian hubs such as Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and South Korea, but this has not been developed yet."

In order to more effectively promote Pattaya as a MICE destination, seven hotels – Centara Grand Mirage Beach Resort Pattaya, Amari Orchid Pattaya, Holiday Inn Pattaya, The Zign Hotel, Dusit Thani Pattaya, Garden Cliff Resort & Spa and Cape Dara Resort – officially formed the North Pattaya Alliance with Tourism Authority of Thailand and Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau earlier this year to promote the city's value offering at the Asia-Pacific Meetings & Incentives Expo in Australia in February.

Few deny the destination's potential to attract business, given its location just 1.5 hours from Suvarnabhumi International Airport and that it has shaken off some of its reputation

as a red light city by the sea. This enhanced image is partly driven by the arrival of more internationally branded properties over the past eight years. Research by Jones Lang LaSalle shows the city is home to more attractions than any other destination in

Thailand. It also boasts 23 golf clubs and courses in the surrounding area and was named Best Golf Destination Asia and Australasia 2012 by the International Golf Tour Operators Association.

However, MICE specialists such as

MICE trends

Domestic MICE groups typically number between 200 pax to 1,000 pax, with most organising meetings and conferences, said Bundarik Kusolvitya, managing director of The City Hotel Sriracha and president of Thai Hotels Association (Eastern Chapter). Average stays range from three days/two nights to four days/three nights, and budgets vary from 2,000 baht (US\$62) to 5,000 baht per person per day.

The government sector and professional associations mostly organise meetings and conferences while corporates hold meetings and incen-

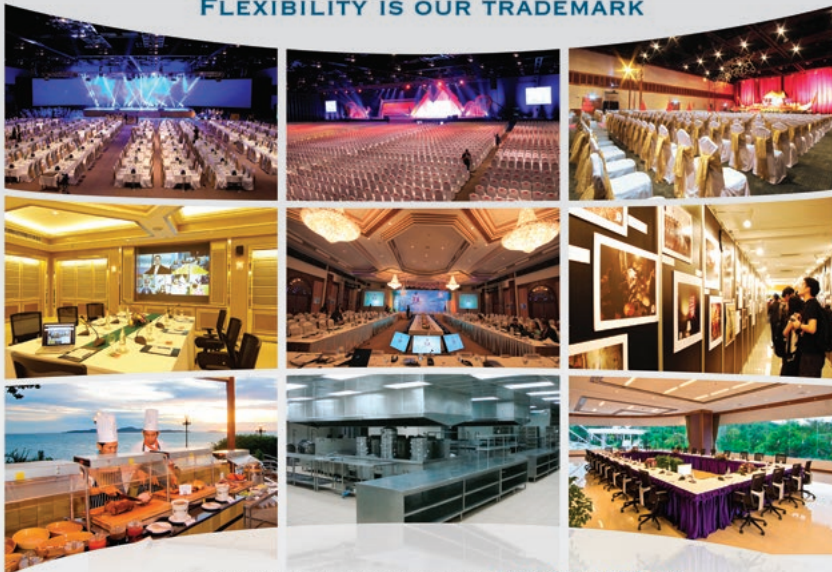
tives. More exhibitions are being held in Pattaya, but these are still relatively few and far between.

Overseas delegates favour incentives, conventions and meetings, with groups ranging from 500 pax to 10,000 pax and daily spending per person starting at 3,000 baht, she said.



Bundarik Kusolvitya
Managing director
The City Hotel Sriracha

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“Pattaya’s MICE market has not yet reached its potential. The majority of current events are generated by domestic corporates and local social events...We do see more interest from Asian hubs such as Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and South Korea, but this has not been developed yet.”

Robert Lohrmann,
General manager
Centara Grand Mirage Beach Resort Pattaya

Teerapong Suksabai, MICE events manager at Asia World Destination Management, still consider Hilton Pattaya a “new” property even though it opened in 2010, underscoring the need for more product launches.

The coming six to twelve months will see several significant developments though. The 275-room Woraburi The Ritz was launched in March, with an adjacent 1,000-capacity convention centre due for completion by the end of this year while sister property, Woraburi Heritage, will add another 500 rooms to supply

in 2H2014.

Jones Lang LaSalle said that majority of new hotels in Pattaya’s development pipeline from now until 2016 will be in the upper or high-end scale, enabling the destination to attract more higher-spending groups.

Until these new developments come online, the city’s existing supply, such as PEACH (Pattaya Exhibition and Convention Hall) at the Royal Cliff Hotel and Dusit Thani Pattaya will continue to dominate the trade and be sufficient to service existing demand, said Teerapong.

“I would rate Pattaya four out of

five for MICE,” he said. “A few clients have said the destination is not as interesting as it used to be and that the beaches are not as clean, but Pattaya still has a good variety of hotels for all markets and budgets.

“Service is good in some of the large hotels equipped with experienced staff. Royal Cliff is still good for medium to massive events, they have a lot of space to play with,” he added.

In terms of attractions, Splashdown Waterpark Pattaya – an adult theme park based on the TV programme *Wipeout* – has debuted in the first quarter of the year, while May 2014 saw the inauguration of Siam Country Club Waterside, an 18-hole, IMG-designed golf course.

Two new water parks are coming up in Pattaya. Cartoon Network Amazon, a 5.7ha site featuring more than 150 attractions, will soft launch on July 31, 2014. Ramayana Water Park, a one-billion-baht project (US\$30.8 million) with seven zones spread across 16 hectares, is reportedly South-east Asia’s largest water park and is tabled to open in 1Q2015.

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How I did an 850-pax conference

Pattaya still has the power to attract large-size events and conferences, although the destination suffers from a lack of operational staff experienced in the MICE industry, said Teerapong Suksabai, MICE events manager at Asia World Destination Management.

Asia World organised a major pharmaceutical conference for 850 delegates from Russia and CIS countries at Royal Cliff Pattaya in February 2014. While the event did not have too many elements beyond the conference itself and a gala dinner, the number of attendees did raise some challenges.

“After the event we had an internal team debriefing about the service quality,” said Teerapong. “One of the key challenges is that with a large group of more than 700 delegates, we often need to hire additional staff to assist with some functions such as a gala dinner.”

Beyond its permanent headcount of eight specialists, the DMC had to outsource an additional 10 staff for the night, which brought with it control issues regarding understanding the client’s needs as well as the speed and quality of service.

“(The outsourced staff) were good, but they still could not cover all of the tasks we assigned them as they were still new to the MICE business,” he said. “This goes to show that Thailand still lacks experienced MICE staff who really know and understand what the business is and how it operates.”

Staffing was not the only issue Teerapong’s team had to overcome that night. “The client ordered last-minute changes to the decor and arrangements for the gala dinner just one day before the event. We had to bring some equipment from Bangkok but we managed to get everything done just in time.

“Overall, the event was successful and we received very good feedback about ground services and hotel from our client,” he said.

Need to know



Riding the meeting wave

Wave Pattaya opened last year, providing a perfect complement to its 260-room sister property, The Bayview Pattaya. Located on Beach Road, the four-storey, 21-room Miami South Beach-style property features Art Deco interiors, whose contemporary approach to room design lends to a more informal, relaxed environment.

Groups can access meetings facilities and additional restaurants and the spa at the connecting Bayview, with the boutique Wave making an ideal location for hosting board members and other high-level executives.

More information can be viewed at www.wavepattaya.com.

TCEB lures MICE travellers with Pattaya offer

Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau's (TCEB) Pattaya MICE City promotion offers a motorcade service from the airport to designated hotels and corporate social responsibility activities for groups of more than 100 delegates. Groups of 300 pax or more will also receive a VIP reception, welcome drinks and a motorcade to destinations within the city. For groups exceeding 500 delegates, the city will also provide a special performance and enhanced hotels rates for longer stays.

Convention settings underway at Woraburi The Ritz

Due to launch later this year, the convention hall at the recently launched Woraburi The Ritz will feature the latest audio-visual technology and space accommodating up to 1,000 pax. The hall can be used banquet-style or divided into three separate sections, making it suitable for small groups and larger events. Woraburi Heritage, a connecting property with 500 rooms, is due to open in 2H2014.

Visit www.woraburi-theritz.com for details.



Toon delights at water park

The first Cartoon Network-themed waterpark will open on July 31 to feature 10 themed zones, water rollercoasters and the world's largest aqua playground with more than 150 different water features. Other attractions at this 5.7ha beachfront development in Bang Saray include meet-and-greet activities with key Cartoon Network characters, the mammoth Foodville dining facility and live acrobatics shows.

The venue also offers corporate packages for groups as well as after-hours hire for special events. Visit www.cartoonnetworkkamazone.com for more information.

New greens in Pattaya

Siam Country Club strengthened its position as one of the area's leading golfing facilities when it opened Siam Country Club Waterside in May 2014. The new 18-hole, 6.8km championship course was designed by IMG and covers 80 hectares. The course's landscape features plenty of lakes, streams and water features alongside a new clubhouse offering panoramas of the surrounding environment. Golfers will be able to play at Siam Country Club's existing 18-hole Old Course and the 27-hole Plantation course. More details at www.siamcountryclub.com





Taipei, as the capital city, makes a natural top choice for business events but its sister cities are fast emerging in the mind of organisers

From strength to strength

From new venues to innovative social media outreach programmes, Taiwan is doing what it can to keep raising its appeal as a business events destination, reports **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

When Meet Taiwan launched its four-year *Taiwan's MICE Industry Pilot Program* in 2013 it had in mind a single aim to steer Taiwan's MICE industry to a shining position on the global stage through the rapid development of related facilities and services.

Lily Su, senior manager of Meet Taiwan, said: "We are now elevating the quality and efficiency of MICE services to sharpen Taiwan's international image and competitive edge as a MICE brand."

Aiding Taiwan's branding effort is a successful meeting app called *Shake and Share*, which took home the Best Marketing Award at the ICCA Congress in 2012. It invites event delegates to play the role of destination promoters by sharing photos of their time in Taiwan through social media channels.

According to Su, the app has been used by 13 international conferences and more than 30,000 attendees from 60 countries.

"It is getting increasingly competitive with so many countries fighting (for events) so we must keep up and make sure we can stand out from the rest," Su said.

Having said that, Su opined that Taiwan is already very competitive in the global conference market.

"We have a track record of hosting more than 100 ICCA qualified events every year, which demonstrates our extensive practical experience in this area. Delegates can be confident of hosting conferences in Taiwan."

According to ICCA's 2013 ranking of destinations by the number of conventions hosted a year, Taipei took 27th spot on the global chart with 117 qualified events in 2012. It ranked eighth across Asia that year.

Su said key congresses held over the past few years include the 2011 International Design Alliance Congress which pulled in 3,000 visitors, the International Real Estate Federation's 64th annual congress in 2013 with 1,000 delegates, and the Asia-Pacific ITS Forum and Exhibition 2011 that involved 568 participants from more than 20 countries.

Louis Su, general manager of Taiwan Investment & Business Centre, told *TTGmice* that Taiwan is recognised especially for its "impressive level" of research and development in medical, technology and scientific sectors.

Sharing similar sentiments is Adam Cheng, executive director of Dongda International Development Consultant, who organises conferences. He said: "Taiwan is quite advanced in research and development, so it attracts a lot of conferences in health and science industries. Such conferences are good for our economy because the attendance for one event can range from 1,000 to 10,000."

Besides Taipei, Taiwan Investment & Business Centre's Su said Taichung, Kaohsiung and Taitung are cities that are hotting up as destinations for congresses now.

Kaohsiung Exhibition Center which opened its doors in April and the TWTC Nangang Exhibition Hall 2 in Taipei, to be completed in June 2016, are two new venues that Su expects will create new opportunities for Taiwan in the Asian MICE industry.

Emphasising Taiwan's overall ap-



The Confucius Temple, built in 1666, is among several historical draws in Tainan

peal as a business events destination, Cheng said “the beauty of Taiwan is that we have convenient transport routes linking city to city, allowing event delegates to explore other parts of Taiwan (beyond Taipei)”.

He added: “Taipei is a convenient and practical option (for business events) but if organisers or delegates want a more unique experience, like a destination with stronger culture for instance, Tainan can be considered.”

Tainan’s effort to restore old buildings and preserve historical monuments in recent years has helped to create a distinct local cultural and artistic space. Almost like a testament to its efforts, Tainan elbowed its

way into the ICCA rankings for the first time in 2011. The following year, Tainan was placed the 82nd city in the Asia-Pacific and Middle East ranking, having hosted five meetings.

According to Meet Taiwan’s Su, most conferences in Tainan are hosted by pharmaceutical companies. It is also common to see conference groups in Taipei extending south to Tainan for a local cultural tour.

Kaohsiung, which also made it to the ICCA rankings for the first time in 2011, came in at 36th spot with 14 congresses in 2012.

Encouraged by their entry into the prized ICCA rankings, Tainan and Kaohsiung now have big plans to

enhance their event infrastructure in the near future.

As these cities enjoy a cooler climate than their northern sisters, conference activities need not be confined to indoor venues but can be extended to the outdoor environment, rendering more flexible use of available spaces.

Meanwhile, even more is being done to further enhance Taiwan’s brand value. Last December, Meet Taiwan unveiled a new graphic design with the message, *Love at First Sight*, as the overall conceptual image of the Meet Taiwan programme.

It joins current branding messages *Come Together in Taiwan’s Exhibition* for the exhibitions sector, *Listen to Your Idea* for the meetings and conferences sector, and *Encounter Taiwan’s Splendid Life* for the incentive sector.

Su noted that Taiwan’s brand image was further boosted by a New York Times listing that placed the country number 11 on its list of 52 Places to Go in 2014, published earlier this year.



“Taipei is normally the most popular city (for business events) because it is the capital, but the beauty of Taiwan is that we have convenient transport routes linking city to city, allowing event delegates to explore other parts of Taiwan.”

Adam Cheng

Executive director, Dongda International Development Consultant

Ideas A day in Danshui

Kick off your morning with a 40-minutes ride to Danshui from your hotel in Taipei city centre.

Head to the traditional market in the heart of Danshui, where locals purchase their daily supplies. Watch farmers trade produce in a lively atmosphere.

Next, pay the famous Danshui Longshan Temple a visit and continue onwards to the nearby Danshui Master Temple. The latter is home to several statues of divine beings as well as exquisite carvings.

Walk on to Danshui Old Street, where traditional buildings are constructed with red bricks. Hear how the government of Taiwan had planned to rebuild this area at one

time and how the local residents – together with history and culture experts – joined forces to preserve the architecture. Today, this authentic street has become one of Danshui’s most unique attractions.

Your exploration of Danshui continues on to the Little White House, the former home of the Danshui Tax Division, and Fort San Domingo, a red fort built by the Spanish. Here, consider how each colonial building portrays Danshui’s different eras and offers an interesting juxtaposition to earlier sights.

Amid the walking, don’t miss the opportunity to sample Danshui’s most famous and authentic dish – *ah gei*, made with a sheet of beancurd stuffed with bean thread noodles and



eaten with sweet or spicy sauces. In addition to fish ball soup, enjoy other local snacks such as grilled squid, local biscuits and an array of delicious desserts.

The Fisherman's Wharf in Danshui is regarded by many as a great place to catch the sunset

Itinerary by Etravel Connect

Need to know



A grand new stay in Taipei

Scheduled to open this month, the luxurious Mandarin Oriental, Taipei is a grand structure in the business district on Dunhua North Road. It offers 256 rooms and a versatile range of event spaces including the Grand Ballroom, a 960m² space with 7.3-metre high ceiling. This venue can accommodate up to 1,200 guests.

For event planners who require smaller venues, the Mandarin Ballroom is good for up to 550 guests while each of the five Oriental rooms can be configured in different layouts for 10 to 110 guests.

Other facilities include an array of quality dining destinations and a two-storey spa.

Easier ways to get connected

The Taiwan Tourism Bureau has updated its popular iTaiwan free Wi-fi scheme, making it even easier for international tourists to take advantage of free Internet connection across the country.

Whereas in the past visitors to Taiwan had to queue at the airport for an iTaiwan username and password, today they can conveniently apply for the same online, ahead of their arrival.

The iTaiwan scheme is open to any international tourist visiting the country and access to free Wi-Fi is valid for up to 30 days, with the possibility of extending to 90 days thereafter.

Visitors can register via the website <http://itaiwan.taiwan.net.tw/>.

Privileges in a card

Created specially for foreign event delegates to Taiwan, the Meet Taiwan Card offers cardholders perks at more than 200 merchants with almost 4,000 branches close to meeting facilities or exhibition venues nationwide.

Participating merchants include restaurants and retailers located within the Taipei World Trade Center Exhibition Hall 1, TWTC Nangang Exhibition Hall and Taipei International Convention Center.

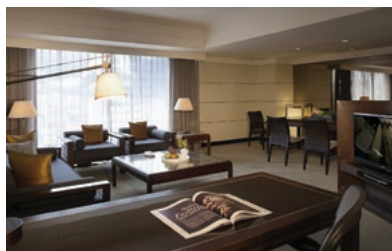
The latest version of the Meet Taiwan Card comes with smart phone applications that dish out special deals and supply cardholders with shop information, a GPS service, a taxi guide and links to social media recommendations.

Contact the Taiwan MICE Project Office at (886-2) 2392-0788 or mpo@meettaiwan.tw for more details on the card.

Regent Taipei tunes into needs of Muslim travellers

Muslim business travellers to the Taiwanese capital will feel at home at the Regent Taipei, whose restaurant, Azie, was recently awarded the "Muslim-friendly Restaurant" certification.

The hotel has also rolled out a package to offer the Muslim community the signature Regent experience. The *Muslim Guest Accommodation Package* provides guests access to guestrooms that come with a prayer rug, a compass, a Quran and Salat schedules. Restrooms in these guestrooms are furnished with "smart" toilets with built-in bidets.



Kaohsiung Exhibition Center Corp

Kaohsiung Exhibition Center is now open

The Kaohsiung Exhibition Centre swung open its doors in April, offering event planners access to an exhibition hall with capacity for 1,500 standard booths, a conference hall for 2,000 people, two conference halls for 800 people each, and 10 conference rooms for 20 to 40 people. The waterfront multifunctional exhibition and convention venue, operated by Uniplan Group, is expected to serve over 800,000 event visitors in 2014 and generate NT\$3 billion (US\$99.6 million) in revenue for the destination.



Transforming cities

Ho Chi Minh City leads the way in Vietnam's MICE industry, but Danang is making inroads with growing links and room supply. By **David Andrews**

Modeled after the original Hotel de Ville in Paris, the People's Committee Hall stands among modern buildings in Ho Chi Minh City's downtown

Vietnam's events industry is undergoing rapid transformation, and this is most apparent in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), Danang and Hanoi, three key cities where the majority of MICE activities are focused.

According to Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT), business travellers accounted for over 1.2 million arrivals, or 16 per cent of inbound tourism figures, in 2013.

The Vietnamese MICE industry is "professionalising", observed Thomas de Lange, general manager of Citynevents.com. "Venues are getting more experienced in handling larger events and conferences. I don't think we are as experienced as Singapore, Malaysia or Thailand but we are getting there."

The country's economic hub, HCMC

remains a preferred MICE destination with its good mix of culture, entertainment and sightseeing options, plus availability of quality accommodation and meeting venues.

Patrick Basset, COO for Accor Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and the Philippines, said: "The meeting market overall for Accor hotels in Vietnam increased a whopping 85 per cent year-on-year in 2013, in which the top three market feeders into our hotels grew significantly owing to our three newly opened hotels – Pullman Saigon Centre, Novotel Saigon Centre and ibis Saigon South. We are seeing continuing strong demand in the first quarter of this year and hope to maintain the momentum in this market for the rest of the year."

Josephine Lim, regional director of South-East Asia at Preferred Hotel Group, commented: "There is a growing demand by both business and leisure travel sectors for new options in Vietnam. In response we have recently made our debut in HCMC with Sedona Suites, a member of Sterling Hotels."

Meanwhile, Starwood is on track to open Le Méridien Saigon in 2015 to meet the demand for upscale accommodation, according to Alison Taylor, senior vice-president for sales in Asia-Pacific at Starwood Hotels & Resorts.

Venue suppliers are reporting positive industry sentiments too. Saigon Exhibition and Convention Centre hosted 34 events last year, up from 26 events in 2012, with 26 events booked so far for 2014, according to branding

Destination: Vietnam

and marketing manager, Nguyen Vu.

HCMC has also benefited from its steadily growing air connections. Vietnam Airlines has started twice-weekly HCMC-Fuzhou services from March 31. EVA Air has stepped up frequency on its Taipei (Taoyuan)-HCMC route from 10 to 13 weekly flights since March 30, with a 14th weekly service to be introduced from July 1, 2014.

On the domestic front, VietJet Air has launched a new HCMC-Dalat route from March 22, while Vietnam Airlines has temporarily increased flights to Hue from Hanoi and HCMC for summer 2014.

Said Taylor: "While Vietnam's source markets for MICE are mainly from the Asia-Pacific region including India, China, Singapore and other ASEAN nations, with better connectivity we are also starting to see MICE groups from longer-haul markets."

She added: "Being only an hour's flight away from Hanoi and HCMC, Danang is often paired with either destination, particularly for incentive groups, which is the fastest-growing MICE segment for Vietnam."



A meeting room in Sedona Suites Ho Chi Minh City

Exotissimo Vietnam MICE manager, Alexis Delespierre, said: "We are receiving more requests for Danang and Hoi An since the opening of more hotels in the area and the completion of the international airport."

Sharing similar sentiments, Tan Robert, director of sales & marketing at Lac Hong Voyages, said: "Danang is a popular choice but it is hampered by a lack of direct international flights, and we lose a lot of clients

from the Middle East as they often opt for Bangkok or Malaysia with direct flights."

He added: "We are now pushing our marketing campaigns toward the Japanese and Russian markets where chartered flights to Danang are available."

Although a shortage of large-scale convention centers and limited international flights in the central region remain challenges, industry stakeholders also urged VNAT to play a stronger role in promoting Vietnam as a potential destination for MICE groups and meeting planners overseas.

Accor's Basset would like the Vietnamese NTO to "support more sales call missions, increase visibility, invite more involvement from the private sector at MICE trade shows, and offer incentives to entice MICE organisers and DMCs to increase traffic into Vietnam."



"The meeting market overall for Accor hotels in Vietnam increased a whopping 85 per cent year-on-year in 2013, in which the top three market feeders into our hotels grew significantly owing to our three new hotels."

Patrick Basset

COO, Accor Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and the Philippines

How I did Novo Nordisk Malaysia's annual conference

Asia World Destination Management was appointed the organiser for healthcare company Novo Nordisk's Malaysian operations department annual conference, which took place over January 21-27, 2013 in Danang and Hoi An with 85 attendees.

Natalia Kortchouganova, regional operations director at Asia World Enterprise, told *TTGmice* that the biggest challenge was finding a suitable hotel with "generous meeting space to accommodate three full days of meetings with plenty of leisure facilities and dining options".

The beachside Hyatt Regency Danang Resort and Spa was selected for its ample leisure facilities and meeting rooms that could accommodate over 100 pax, plus a location that allowed

guests easy accessibility to local restaurants in Danang's centre.

The final two days of the programme involved the exploration of Hoi An City, including visits to surrounding fishing villages and Cham Museum, followed by a trip to Marble Mountains to enjoy panoramic views of Danang.

"One highly noted (experience) based on participants' feedback was the opportunity to join farming activities in Tra Que Village - reached on bicycle from Hoi An. From there the journey continued to Cua Dai sand dunes where a local fisherman taught how to cast a net," said Kortchouganova. "Finally the group was split into two teams for basket boat racing with prizes for the winners."



View from the Marble Mountains in Danang

Although the client requested for minor adjustments to the timing of select events, they did not affect the overall planned schedule. "The client was especially impressed by the sightseeing aspect and glimpse into local ways of life," said Kortchouganova.

Need to know



Soar over Halong Bay on seaplanes

Come August 2014, Hai Au Aviation will launch a selection of 25- and 40-minute flight options on a pair of 12-seater seaplanes over Halong Bay. Clients can take off from the Tuan Chau Island Marina and enjoy a bird's eye view of a scenic bay dotted with dramatic limestone formations below. The company also offers seaplane services in Nha Trang and Ho Chi Minh City. For more information, email info@haiauaviation.com



New Marriott in Hanoi

JW Marriott Hotel Hanoi, which opened its doors in late-2013, is a 450-room property located adjacent to the Vietnam National Convention Center. In addition to six restaurants, the hotel also boasts a total of 17 meeting rooms offering over 3,600m² in meeting space, including two ballrooms with extensive public foyers.

Hong Kong Airlines heads to Saigon

Hong Kong Airlines has launched the Hong Kong-Ho Chi Minh City route from March 17, 2014. Operated on an Airbus A320 aircraft configured with all-economy class, the service operates every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The new Ho Chi Minh City service complements Hong Kong Airlines' daily flight to Hanoi, bringing the carrier's total flights between Hong Kong and Vietnam to 10 weekly.



Another Eastin takes shape in Hanoi

Absolute Hotel Services Group has entered into a management agreement with Vietnam's Ngoc Joint Venture Company to rename and manage Lakeside Hotel Hanoi under the Eastin Hotels and Residences brand. Scheduled to reopen in mid-2014 as Eastin Hotel Hanoi, the property will see its 90 rooms and public areas revamped, alongside the addition of an all-day dining restaurant, a fitness centre and a small meeting room that can accommodate up to 80 pax. www.eastinhotelsresidences.com

Pullman lands in Saigon

Since February 2014, Pullman Saigon Centre has started operations in Ho Chi Minh City's District 1. The 306-room hotel is home to four bars and restaurants, a swimming pool, a fitness centre and a spa. There are five meeting rooms, with the largest able to accommodate 600 guests. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the property.



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Geoff Stephens



Sheryl Lim



Andrew Bunn



Klaus Gottschalk

Australia

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre has named **Geoff Stephens** chief financial officer. Stephens joins from Melbourne Cricket Club where he was finance manager.

Hong Kong

Langham Hospitality Group has appointed **Robert A Warman** as CEO. Succeeding Brett Butcher, who has retired from Langham, Warman brings to his new role over 33 years' experience in the industry. Warman was last president and COO of Capella Hotel Group, as well as co-chairman of the Capella Asia board.

India

InterContinental Hotels Group has appointed **Donald A Wingell** director of food & beverage for South-West Asia. Based at the corporate office in Gurgaon, New Delhi, Wingell is responsible for driving F&B performance in the region while working closely with hotel general managers and F&B teams to maximise revenue and service delivery. He was last director of food & beverage at Crowne Plaza Ottawa, Canada.

Indonesia

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has appointed **Maximilian von Reden** as general manager of **Mandarin Oriental, Jakarta**. He replaces Mark

Bradford who is now general manager of Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech in Morocco. Von Reden has 21 years' experience in hospitality and was last hotel manager at Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo.

Japan

Kana Nomoto has moved from Yokohama Convention & Visitors Bureau to **Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau** where she has taken on the role of manager, business events team.

Malaysia

Sheryl Lim is now director of business development at **Hilton Petaling Jaya, Malaysia**. Lim first entered the industry through Hilton Kuala Lumpur a decade ago as director of sales – groups, conventions and events, a position she held for seven years.

New Zealand

Darren Burden now heads Christchurch's leading venue management company, **Vbase**, as general manager. He takes on his new role following several years in Dunedin where he played a pivotal role in the development of the multi-million-dollar Forsyth Barr Stadium.

Singapore

Emirates Airline has appointed **Andrew Bunn** its new country manager for Singapore

& Brunei, based in the Lion City. Bunn succeeds Nick Rees who has been promoted to regional manager commercial operations, Far East & Australasia at Emirates' headquarters in Dubai.

Grand Mercure Singapore

Roxy recently welcomed its new general manager, **Klaus Gottschalk**. Armed with over 35 years of hospitality industry experience, Gottschalk has worked in senior management positions in Europe, the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, China and Malaysia. He joins the Singapore hotel from Pullman Kuala Lumpur Bangsar where he was in charge of the pre-opening and opening phases.

Millennium and Copthorne International has named **Riaz Mahmood** the general manager of **Orchard Hotel Singapore**. The hospitality veteran of 20 years brings with him a wealth of international industry experience from his time with major hotels in Asia-Pacific and Middle East countries. He was most recently the general manager of the Sheraton Danmam Hotel and Towers, Saudi Arabia.

Thailand

Austin Robinson now helms **Centara Karon Resort Phuket** and **Waterfront Suites Phuket by Centara**. His last position was general manager of Centara Nova



Riaz Mahmood



Austin Robinson

Hotel & Spa Pattaya, Centara Boutique Collection and Centara Pattaya Resort.

Vietnam

Park Hyatt Saigon has made **Jan-Hendrik Meidinger** its new general manager. The German national first joined Hyatt in 1999 as assistant front office manager at Grand Hyatt Hong Kong. He rose to the position of executive assistant manager, rooms, before being named hotel manager of Grand Hyatt Taipei in 2006. He then moved to Hyatt Regency Guam in 2010 as general manager.

Over coffee with

Alan Pryor

The new chief of Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre is more than ready to take over the reins from former poster boy of the centre, Peter Brokenshire. He shares the venue's future plans and discusses industry outlook with **S Puvaneswary**

Congratulations on your new role as general manager. What will you be focusing on?

First and foremost, to maintain and develop the team we already have in place. Our team is our most valuable asset and without them, the centre's achievements since opening would not have been possible. I believe it is through this team that we will maintain and enhance the internationally renowned standards and reputation as Malaysia's premier convention facility.

Keeping a close eye on the ever-changing trends and business landscape will be another focus point. You can never become complacent even when things are going well, so we will definitely be ensuring our successful working relationship with Team Malaysia partners – Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia Airlines, Malaysia Airports Holdings, Kuala Lumpur City Council and Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) – continues to function well in our efforts to grow the country's business tourism global footprint.

Your predecessor Peter Brokenshire was very much an advocate of the 'open door' style of management. What is your approach?

Having first worked with Peter when we opened the Durban International Convention Centre and again at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre for the past three years, I would say that we have a slightly different management style but we definitely have very similar values. I am also a firm believer in a transparent management style and like to be visible to team members and clients through regular contact with them around the centre. It is important to be able to monitor and experience your standards first hand and you really can't test those if you are sitting in your office.

Will you be making any changes to the centre in the months ahead?

I am a firm believer in the saying 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it!' As such, there

are no major changes on the horizon at the moment. However, we have always adopted an approach of continually adding value to our product offerings and as such will be introducing various enhanced products over the course of the next year. Our focus remains to enhance our service delivery in response to changing trends and/or circumstances. Evolution, not revolution!

What kind of enhanced products can we expect to see?

The centre will be rolling out enhanced culinary offerings throughout the year and these will be announced in due course. We are also in the process of finalising our product offerings which we hope will help diminish any perception of hidden costs. We will package our ancillary charges more effectively to pass on added value to our clients. There is also our RM7.5 million (US\$2.24 million) investment in four technology projects this year, which will improve our world-class service delivery for delegates and visitors alike.

I would like to hear more about the four technology projects.

They include upgrading the data centre backbone infrastructure to 10 gigabytes, introducing a digital walkie-talkie system, implementing an IP (Internet Protocol) CCTV (Closed-Circuit Television) system and improving the virtualised server environment for the data centre.

You have been with the centre for three years. What changes have you witnessed in the environment?

One of the more noticeable ones has been the giant strides Malaysia has made in terms of its business tourism proposition. The establishment of MyCEB really provided ammunition to grow the business tourism industry. As a result, we are in a much more competitive position regionally and internationally.

The growth in customised mobile and digital solutions for the meetings and events industry has changed dramatically as well. There is now a greater emphasis on hi-tech convenience and technology



integration – technology that is not only used by meeting planners as a service tool for delegates, but by the delegates themselves to engage with content providers at the events they are attending.

Unfortunately, the tough economic climate over the last few years has also led to a trend among many venues to discount, which in turn has affected the quality of products and service standards offered. Maintaining our world-class standards in the face of price pressures has created a real point of difference between us and our competitors. We still need to remain vigilant with regard to trends as we continue to focus on providing quality value-added experiences to our clients.

What do you see as challenges for this year in the meetings and conventions business?

The economic climate will continue to contribute to a tough business tourism environment. Events have become a lot leaner and meaner and as such we need to be even more creative in our offerings by providing innovative products that offer more value for less. Fortunately for the centre, Malaysia's unique selling

propositions such as value-for-money destination, direct air access from most major cities around the world, a safe and stable political climate and established industry supply chain boost our attractiveness in the regional and international marketplace.

Another challenge that we increasingly face in the local market is business opportunities with very short lead times and the lack of flexibility when it comes to dates. Our team is working hard on strategies to address this challenge, so keep an eye out for more information on this.

Which geographic markets do you see as key for the centre in the years ahead and why?

The global economic realities make for a challenging business outlook all round. But the relatively new untapped markets with large populations in Asia such as India and China provide an opportunity for the centre in the years ahead. We also continue to invest in more established markets such as Europe and North America as the focus of associations in these markets are on growing their client and membership base in developing countries.

That said, the centre has always practiced a very targeted and consistent marketing approach and our investment will remain focused on maintaining a presence in all previous key markets through relevant industry forums and trade events.

What are key trends facing the MICE sector, both locally and globally?

There is a stronger focus on connecting business opportunities to relevant industry sectors and emerging economic and trade investment opportunities. Another important trend is enhanced collaboration between destination, suppliers and associations. We are fortunate that we can take advantage of this through our Team Malaysia collaboration, where we work cohesively with our partners to attract international events to the country. Other trends to be mindful of include the growing importance of sustainable and eco-friendly practices; an increasing demand for special dietary requirements and healthy food and beverage options; a greater emphasis on hi-tech convenience and technology integration and flexible function space options that are tailored to clients' events.



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Almost 2,000 delegates from 38 countries converged in Queensland's tropical north for the **Australian Tourism Exchange** in May. For the first time in its 35-year history, the annual travel trade show was held in Cairns, which plays home to the Great Barrier Reef, one of the seven wonders of the natural world. Photos by Paige Lee Pei Qi



Nine MICE managers from Singapore journeyed to **South Korea** where they had a taste of various destination highlights in Jeju, Busan and Seoul. The fam trip in April was organised by Korea Tourism Organization and Jeju Convention Bureau, with support from Singapore Airlines and Hyatt Hotels & Resorts.



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What's next?

High-tech centres – technology takes centrestage in *TTGmice* July, as we spotlight convention centres in Asia that have recently invested in new technology features to boost delegate experience. The issue will also check out **Japan, Macau, New Zealand** and **Egypt** for updates on their business event performance and latest products.

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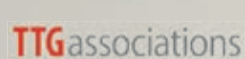


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