

July 2014

# TTGmice

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

Okinawa steps up efforts to court MICE

New Zealand awakens

Greenview's Eric Ricaute talks about sustainable exhibitions

## Technology power-up

*TTGmice* spotlights a selection of convention centres in Asia that have recently invested in technology improvements to enhance event delivery and delegate experience





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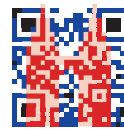


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# Getting ahead with technology

For as long as I've been a journalist, and that has been eight glorious years, I always get a little anxious whenever it is time to file stories back to the news desk from conferences or tradeshows at hotels or convention centres. And that anxiety is caused by Wi-Fi not being offered on site or fully-occupied Internet kiosks at the media centres and business centres.

Sometimes, Wi-Fi is offered but it comes with an hourly fee, which is annoying when I only need a few minutes of access to send an email.

And yet when Wi-Fi is complimentary, connection speed slows to a crawl due to multiple users at the same time.

Surely at this time and age when everyone has to stay connected for work or pleasure, access to free, fast and reliable Internet connection must be a given right!

Hence, I am always delighted whenever I hear of convention centres or business hotels investing in technologies that allow large numbers of users to simultaneously access free Wi-Fi on premises. A few convention centres in Asia read the future rightly years ago and moved earlier than others in offering complimentary and stable Wi-Fi connections to event delegates and centre visitors. The Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, for example, made Wi-Fi complimentary to all since 2005.

More convention centres have joined the bandwagon since, such as the Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre which became the first centre in Australia to offer free Wi-Fi access to all visitors in 2011, MAX Atria @ Singapore EXPO which did so in 2012, the revamped Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre in 2013, and most recently in May, IMPACT Muang Thong Thani in Bangkok.

That is good progress, and I hope more venues in Asia will see the benefits of offering free and stable Wi-Fi connection to event delegates and centre visitors.

But with rapid technology advancement, consumer expectations are on the rise and convention centres have to assess the viability of available new innovations that can enhance event delivery and delegate experience.

In this month's cover feature, *Technology power-up* (page 17-21), we look at a selection of convention centres in Asia that have in the past year invested in technology improvements.

My favourite has got to be the software that allows event organisers to sit comfortably at the desk with centre technicians, push a couple of buttons to place stage, furniture, lights and decor, and see a three-dimensional representation of their event space. This technology is already being offered by Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre, while Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre is now accessing the feasibility of adopting this marvel.

I cannot wait to see more technology innovations at convention centres in this region.

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Convention centres in Asia have invested in technology improvements to enhance event delivery and delegate experience. *TTGmice* spotlights a selection of those that have recently powered up

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Unrest in Egypt has taken the shine out of the mighty land of the pharaohs, but local tourism authorities and sellers are not giving up. By Greg Lowe

# TTGmice

[www.ttgmicem.com](http://www.ttgmicem.com)

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# Where imagination takes flight

## Be enchanted at Sentosa's brand-new night attraction

The newest addition to Sentosa's exciting array of attractions is the first of its kind in the world, and certainly does not disappoint.

Since June this year, *Wings of Time* has begun to amaze its audience, immersing crowds in an other-worldly experience perfected by the picturesque scenery of Siloso Beach.

With *Wings of Time*'s unique 10-metre backdrop, its stage is literally set for a breathtaking evening worthy of its status as the world's first and only permanent night entertainment attraction built in the sea.

The newly-constructed backdrop comprises nine massive triangular structures, all of which are mounted individually with meticulous calibration and planning. These one-of-a-kind "triangles" had been individually shipped by barge, then installed in the sea, which took more than a week.

During the performance, the entire backdrop is illuminated by six 3D projectors,

creating stunning panoramic vistas. This is only a fraction of the attraction's arsenal of multimedia effects. Over 180 pieces of equipment are used, including coloured lasers and water fountains, all of which work in perfect harmony to conjure an unforgettable spectacle for its audience.

*Wings of Time* isn't only a technical and structural marvel. In fact, Sentosa placed its audience at centre-stage during the conceptualisation of this brand-new offering by identifying audience engagement as a key focus of the attraction.

20 talented local and overseas artistes are rigorously trained not only in vocals and acting, but also in their skills with audience engagement.

Prepare to be amazed by this magical journey at Singapore's premier island resort getaway.

*Daily ticketed shows at 7.40pm and 8.40pm along Siloso Beach. Premium seats are available at S\$23 per person, while standard seats are at S\$18 (standard rate), and S\$15 (for local residents).*

*Advance tickets are available at [store.sentosa.com.sg](http://store.sentosa.com.sg). For more information, visit [www.sentosa.com.sg](http://www.sentosa.com.sg) or call 1800-SENTOSA (736 8672).*



The completed backdrop, set against the picturesque Siloso Beach.



Technicians carefully securing each portion of the backdrop.

### Building Wings of Time: At A Glance

1

*Wings of Time* is the first and only permanent night attraction in the world set in the sea.

25  
minutes

The show's duration - and the preferred show length for both local and overseas guests.

150  
people

The size of the entire team that put *Wings of Time* together, from conceptualisation to construction.

20  
trained  
artistes

Although audiences only see two main characters, these artistes undergo rigorous training.

135  
hours

Amount of training each cast member undergoes in vocals, acting, and audience engagement.

\$10  
million

The total cost of production and special effects of the show.

We love



# Brighter hopes for shark conservation

Singapore's integrated resort, Marina Bay Sands (MBS), is the latest to join the bandwagon of tourism players to throw their support behind shark conservation and responsible seafood consumption.

It has taken shark fins off the menus of restaurants it owns and operates, and will no longer offer it at business events held at Sands Expo and Convention Centre.

The initiative, which was piloted in October 2013, is aligned to the integrated resort's global sustainability strategy – Sands Eco360° which drives the stewardship of responsible business operations in the areas of green buildings, environmentally responsible operations, green meetings and sustainability education and outreach.

MBS' business event clients can choose from the Green Harvest Menu that features ingredients sourced locally to reduce food miles. Additionally, selected seafood served at business events as well as restaurants owned and operated by the resort are sourced from suppliers that fish or farm responsibly.

The integrated resort will also work with its tenants to encourage sustainable practices, including recycling, reducing food waste and removing shark fins from their menus.

## Hyatt Place debuts in Asia with Shenzhen hotel

Hyatt Hotels and Resorts has launched its first Hyatt Place hotel in Asia-Pacific in Shenzhen, China.

Hyatt Place Shenzhen Dongmen is located near the Shenzhen Dongmen Shopping District and a short distance from the Luohu business district, offering easy access from the airport and train station.

The Hyatt Place brand aims to meet the needs of both business and leisure travellers with its service concept, modern design and amenities including free Wi-Fi and 24-hour food offerings.

The hotel boasts 144 rooms, free Wi-Fi throughout the hotel, free hot breakfasts, a 24-hour gym, free public computers with Internet access, and more than 110m<sup>2</sup> of high-tech meeting space.

F&B choices at the hotel extend to a market serving food round the clock; Coffee to Cocktails Bar featuring specialty coffees, premium house beverages and cocktails; and Gallery Kitchen for sit-down lunch and dinner, dishing up local fare as well as Western food.

## Quirky meeting concept takes root at Shangri-La's Boracay resort

Shangri-La's Boracay Resort & Spa has unveiled *Sunglasses at Work Meet by Design*, a destination meeting concept combining corporate meetings with social event experiences.

It is a set of customised ideas and set ups that transforms the usual boardroom sessions, team bonding activities, special events and other corporate requirements into a fun and memorable affair, explained director of events Melissa Santiago.

Examples of this include holding corporate meetings in a Treehouse Villa rather than in a meeting room, coffee breaks paired with a quick massage, arcade games at the Entertainment Centre, or beach golf, etc. Attendees can take up greener causes through coral reef planting or beach clean-ups.

General manager Amit Oberoi said *Sunglasses at Work Meet by Design* does not necessarily entail additional cost to corporate clients as the 12.5ha resort already has the activities, facilities and space for "bleasure".

The resort is mainly a leisure destination with little MICE business but the new meeting concept would encourage more corporations to come to the island destination, as the experience cannot be replicated in a city setting. – **Rosa Ocampo**

Meet in a Treehouse Villa instead



## MAS tightens checked baggage rules

Malaysia Airlines (MAS) now allows passengers to check in a maximum of two pieces of baggage within the 30-, 40- and 50kg free baggage allowance for travel on economy, business and first class respectively.

Guests travelling economy class are limited to one piece of cabin baggage up to a maximum of 7kg, while first and business class passengers are allowed two pieces of cabin baggage with a maximum weight of 7kg each.

New rates also apply for excess baggage charges: RM45 (US\$14) per 5kg block of excess weight for flights within Peninsula Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, and RM55 for flights crossing between the peninsula and Sabah or Sarawak.

For international flights, fees for excess baggage vary from RM70 within ASEAN; RM100 for South Asia and Greater China; RM115 for North Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the Middle East; and RM170 for Europe.

These revisions apply to all tickets on both domestic and international MAS flights, including MASwings. It, however, does not cover codeshare flights operated by other airlines.

Enrich and Oneworld members are entitled to the additional baggage allowance according to their membership status.

## AirAsia X, Air Busan join hands for Jeju flights

Longhaul low-cost carrier, AirAsia X, has signed a commercial marketing agreement with Air Busan, offering passengers connecting flights to Jeju Island from Busan.

Azran Osman-Rani, CEO of AirAsia X, said: "This collaboration would further strengthen our commitment to South Korea from Kuala Lumpur, and provide our guests greater connectivity between Busan and Jeju Island."

He added: "Our flights to Busan, which started in July 2013, have recorded strong growth with an average of 88 per cent passenger load to date. With this commercial agreement, we hope to further boost traffic growth between South Korea and the ASEAN region."



© AIRBUS S.A.S 2008  
Photo by erm company/PMASCLT

## It's now New World Millennium Hong Kong

The New World Millennium Hong Kong Hotel debuts this month following the rebranding of the Hotel Nikko Hongkong.

A collaboration between New World Hotels and Millennium & Copthorne Hotels, the hotel's rebranding will include a phased HK\$120 million (US\$15.5 million) renovation of the 464-room harbourfront hotel. It will remain in operation while undergoing the enhancements.

Located on Mody Road in Tsim Sha Tsui East, the hotel features 464 guestrooms and suites, with seven dining options including all-day dining, specialty restaurants and lobby lounge.

Meeting spaces include a grand ballroom and 10 meeting rooms, while recreational facilities include a health club and a rooftop pool.

## Tokyo offers new support

Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau last month refreshed its subvention programmes for planners who hold their events in the Japanese capital.

Corporate groups with at least 50 attendees staying for a minimum of two nights in Tokyo, but are still choosing additional destinations, are entitled to rewards based on a tiered system according to group size.

Delegates within a group of 50 will receive a giveaway per person, while groups of 200 or more will receive a gift, choice of party entertainment from ninjas to *awaodori* dance performances and welcome parties at Tokyo's airports.

Groups consisting of 500 or more attendees will receive the same benefits but with an extra choice between a traditional *noh* performance or a pop culture one.

The event must be held in Tokyo by March 31, 2015 and cannot be affiliated with religious or political agendas.

The second subvention programme is for key decision makers of events with more than 500 delegates planning to stay two or more nights in Tokyo, for a site visit in the city.

The CVB's support extends to three decision makers who will have their airfare and accommodation sponsored. The site visit must be completed by March 31, 2015 and the event held before March 31, 2016.

Full terms and conditions are available at [www.businesseventstokyo.org/special-offer-for-corporate-events](http://www.businesseventstokyo.org/special-offer-for-corporate-events).



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**2014/2015 INDONESIA MICE TOP AGENT AWARDS PROGRAM (TAAP)**

Program Period: 2 June 2014 to 15 January 2015

Eligible for MICE agents in Indonesia with Meeting & Incentive groups arriving in Hong Kong during the program period

Prizes		
Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
Top Number of Passengers	Top Number of Groups	Top Best New Comers
2 Winning Agents	2 Winning Agents	2 Winning Agents
Awards Gala Dinner and Fam Trip in Hong Kong to be won!		

### How to Register:

For MICE Agents with Meeting & Incentive (M&I) groups going to Hong Kong, please visit this link below and download the Top Agent Awards Program (TAAP) application form.

<http://www.partnet.hk.com/mice/topagent/indo/form.pdf>

Please submit the application form by email to Indonesia Representatives of Hong Kong Tourism Board.

To provide an unparalleled experience for visitors, Hong Kong Tourism Board and its partners have teamed up to offer a host of specially devised privileges. The Hong Kong Rewards Privilege Program is offered to groups of 20 or more staying for a minimum of two consecutive nights in Hong Kong.

For more information, please visit :

<http://www.partnet.hk.com/mice/topagent/indo/index.html>

Or contact Hong Kong Tourism Board :

Tel : +6221 2907 9802

Email : [jktwwo@hkcb.com](mailto:jktwwo@hkcb.com)

## Best Western opens in Phnom Penh

Best Western International has secured a second property in Cambodia, having taken over the management of a hotel now branded the Best Western River Palace Hotel, Phnom Penh.

The 59-key hotel is situated on the banks of the Tonle Sap River.

Glenn de Souza, vice president of international operations for Asia and Middle East, Best Western International, said: "This exciting city is fast becoming a regional hub for business and leisure travel, and the position of the Best Western River Palace Hotel means we are now at the very heart of Phnom Penh's growth.

"Combined with our existing hotel in Siem Reap, this opening also means Best Western is now present Cambodia's two leading destinations," he added.

Best Western River Palace Hotel's meeting space and VIP rooms provide options for gatherings of between 12 and 60 people. Business travellers are also supported by a modern business centre.

Other facilities at the hotel include two F&B outlets, a fitness centre and a spa offering Cambodia's only Turkish hammam.



## Wings of Time takes flight

Sentosa Island's new multimedia night show, *Wings of Time*, kicked off on June 17 and promises to wow with a range of effects from robotic water fountains to pyrotechnics.

*Wings of Time* tells the tale of two teenagers, Rachel and Felix, who help a bird-like creature, Shahbaz, find its way home through time and space.

French events company ECA2 was brought in to work on the project. CEO Jean-Christophe Canizares said of the challenges involved: "We are developing a night extravaganza designed to awe audiences every single day. That is first and foremost a technical challenge to take into account the sea water, heat and humidity. The second is the challenge of creating an immersive experience with a wow factor, and that comes from the music, story and choreography of effects and talents."

Shows run daily at 19.40 and 20.40 along Siloso Beach. Premium seats are priced at S\$23 (US\$18) while standard seats cost S\$18, and S\$15 for local residents.

*Wings of Time* replaces *Songs of the Sea*, which ended in May after a seven-year run.



## HOT DEALS



### Hilton Singapore

Planners can redeem extra incentives for more guestrooms booked at Hilton Singapore under the hotel's *Book More for More Rewards* promotion.

The hotel will dish out incentives according to a tiered booking system, granting planners their choice of perks from a selection of seven for a minimum booking of 20 room nights.

Choices of rewards include: one welcome cocktail each for all paid delegates; one free room night for every 40 paid room nights; two free upgrades to the next room category and Executive Floor benefits, depending on availability; free Internet access in meeting rooms; 15 per cent off daily delegate rates; one free weekend stay in a Deluxe Room for two, including breakfast; upgraded coffee break items for the duration of the event, with one additional item for a half-day meeting package and two for a full-day package.

Booking up to 49 room nights entitles planners to two perks, 79 to three, 109 to four, 159 to five, and those who book more than 160 will receive all benefits.

Event organisers must confirm their events between July 1 and August 31, 2014 for events held from July 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015 in order to qualify for the promotion.

For more information, visit [www.singapore.hilton.com/specialoffers](http://www.singapore.hilton.com/specialoffers).

### Renaissance Bangkok Ratchaprasong

Renaissance Bangkok Ratchaprasong is charging 14 baht (US\$0.40) for every other attendee after the first 10 paid delegates, at

meetings held within the five-star hotel.

The deal is valid for new bookings made between now and September 30, 2014.

The hotel has a full-service business centre, production equipment, computers, printers, audiovisual equipment, two-way radios and stages, along with the services of skilled technicians, dedicated event managers, security personnel, decorators, electricians and photographers. Professional culinary staff can also cater meals to meet the specific needs of any gathering.

For more information on the 14-baht package and other deals, call (66) 2125 5060 or visit [renaissancebangkok.com](http://renaissancebangkok.com).

### The Nam Hai

Hoi An's The Nam Hai is offering *The Nam Hai Meeting* package that combines seasonal room rates and meeting arrangements.

Priced at US\$85+ per person, *The Nam Hai Full Day Meeting Package* includes meeting room set-up, free-flow coffee/tea during the meeting, two coffee breaks and one set lunch. The price is for use of a single meeting room and does not include breakout rooms.

Bundled benefits under the *Season of Opportunity* and *Season of High Demand* sets are: accommodation in a one-bedroom villa, a one-time group round-trip airport transfer, daily buffet breakfast at The Restaurant for up to two people per villa, free Internet access in the room, free non-alcoholic beverages in the minibar, and free accommodation for the organiser during the official dates of the event, including breakfast for one person.

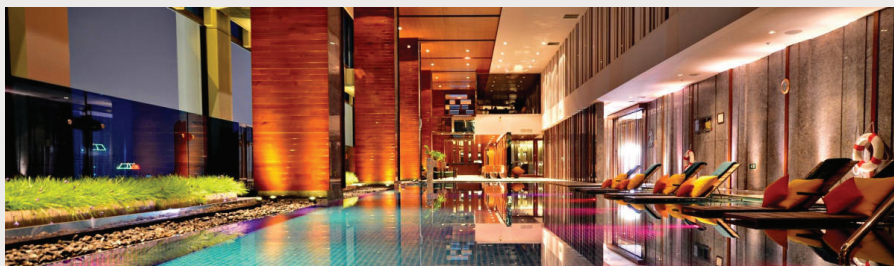
During the *Season of Opportunity* that runs from September 1 to December 20, 2014, rooms go at US\$380+ per night.

For the *Season of High Demand* between July 1 to August 31, 2014 and January 11 to March 31, 2015, the price is US\$420+.

Bookings must be for a minimum of 10 villas and two nights.

Rates are subject to service charge and taxes totalling 15.5 per cent.

For bookings, call (84-8) 3825 6000.





# Thailand's MICE industry urges action from NTOs

**By Greg Lowe and Marianne Carandang**  
MICE specialists are calling on relevant authorities to do more to restore confidence in Thailand as a meetings destination after the country's recent coup d'etat devastated the sector.

Incentive travel has been most affected and although the previously nationwide curfew has – at press time – been eased in 10 key tourist destinations including Phuket, Pattaya and Koh Samui, trade sources are reporting cancellation rates as high as 50 per cent with new bookings falling off the cliff.

Maricel Delfin, sales representative for Bangkok-based tour operator Trikaya which deals with Philippine businesses, said: "When the coup took place, our clients disappeared."

Delfin observed that martial law itself was not a main worry. "What clients are worried about is if the airport in Bangkok will close."

Stephen McEvoy, managing director of Asia World Enterprise, called on the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) to take substantive measures to restore confidence in the nation.

"With past disasters TCEB has always come up with an initiative to market the destination," he said. "This normally involves a major familiarisation trip which

brings over top buyers from around the world... It really works. We get to do what we do best and show that the destination is safe."

Thanwa Phongpreeda, product manager at Discovery Holidays, said the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) needs to do more to promote the country as a MICE destination to complement efforts made by TCEB.

He said: "When I travel overseas I'm shocked to discover that many buyers still don't see Thailand as a MICE destination. They know about Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, but they still don't know about us. TAT must do more."

TCEB has a number of ongoing promotions targeting the MICE market, but currently has no plans to hold an ad hoc familiarisation trip. Its major corporate and media event, Connections + , has also been postponed from mid-year to October.

What the MICE bureau is doing to remedy the situation, according to Vichaya Soonthomsaratoon, director for meetings, incentives, and conventions department, is to prepare Letters of Assurance to explain the country's political situation to planners' prospective clients and coordinate with tourism and police authorities to assist affected groups.

## { Talking numbers }



**The spot Seoul occupies in UIA's 2013 International Meetings Statistics Report's ranking of the world's top meetings cities, released in June. It finally climbed a spot after holding fifth position for three consecutive years. The South Korean capital scored the ranking by hosting 242 UIA qualified international congresses in 2013**

# Penang CVB to get off the ground by end of this year

Penang is likely to set up a state convention bureau by the end of 2014, but this is subject to the hiring of a consultant to start work in August on its structure and funding.

If all goes well, this will be almost two years since the Penang chief minister, Lim Guan Eng, mooted the idea in January 2013.

The convention bureau is to be known as Penang International Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PICEB).

Plans now hinge on the approval of the chief minister and the board of directors of Penang Global Tourism to hire a consultant who will be tasked with drawing up a structure and a sustainable funding model for the bureau to finance its team as well as marketing and promotions, and to support the travel trade in bidding for

business events to Penang.

The state government will not provide financial assistance to the bureau but will support it by other means.

Ooi Geok Ling, managing director of Penang Global Tourism, said the delay in setting up the bureau was because the pro-tem committee, comprising local private players in the MICE industry, and the government could not agree on a sustainable funding model for PICEB.

"The hotel room levy in Penang will be taken under consideration for the funding structure of PICEB," said Ooi.

Since June 1, the state government has begun collecting RM2 (US\$0.62) levy per room, per night on hotels rated three stars and below, while a RM3 levy is charged on four- and five-star hotels. – **S Puvaneswary**



**The number of new meetings secured recently by Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, Malaysia for 2014 to 2016. These events are expected to see more than 10,000 delegates in attendance. In 2013 the venue hosted 1,565 events**

## Dubai paves new way in association development

By Shekhar Niyogi

The Dubai Association Centre (DAC), a joint initiative of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) and Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC), has been established to facilitate the formation of international professional and business associations in the emirate.

Associations established within the DAC will be able to apply for residency visas for their employees, open a local bank account, offer services and products to the regional market, attend monthly networking events, and access key government stakeholders through the



**Helal Saeed:**  
beneficial for science  
development

three founding organisations.

A DAC licence will also enable associations to open an office at the DWTC's Sheikh Rashid Tower and utilise the venue's facilities.

Commenting on the move to establish DAC, Helal Saeed Al Marri, DTCM director general and head of DWTC, said: "We aim to ensure that doing business in Dubai is made as easy as possible and to grow Dubai into an international hub for associations. DAC promises to offer a professional and supportive environment in which worldwide associations can base their headquarters. DAC will foster the development of scientific knowledge and professional education in the emirate."

## Australia gets more business arrivals from Singapore

Singapore is sending more business travellers to Australia, according to statistics provided by Tourism Australia's (TA) office in Singapore.

TA's general manager for South/Southeast Asia & Gulf Countries, Karyn Kent, told *TTGmice* that overall business arrivals from the Lion City for 2013 increased two per cent as compared with 2012. Out of total business arrivals, conference and meeting arrivals rose nine per cent.

Holiday arrivals, which included incentives, FITs and leisure groups, rose significantly by 20 per cent year-on-year for the last 12 months up to March 2014, Kent added.

"Singapore is our fifth largest market in the world, while Malaysia ranks seventh and Indonesia, 12<sup>th</sup>. We are seeing a lot of potential for incentive business from these three markets," she said.



Phillip Island

AJE/123RF.com

Kent added that the strong performance of the Singapore market – incredible for its relative size – is a result of more low-cost flights from the city as well as repeat visits.

Singaporeans are also "responding well" to the Australian food and wine campaign launched last July, she said, which now has an added focus through the *Restaurant Australia* campaign launched early May this year.

Singapore-based Chan Brothers MICE & Travel's account manager, Alvin Valencia, said: "About 80 per cent of our outbound MICE business pertain to incentive trips of 50 to 60 pax, mainly from the electronics, engineering and F&B industries.

"For trips to Australia, the Gold Coast and Perth are the most popular, although we have observed an increasing number of enquiries for Melbourne as well. Melbourne's Phillip Island and Sovereign Hill are interesting incentive options for nature parks and hands-on gold-mining experience respectively."

Meanwhile, Melbourne continues to draw business events from the region, with the city's convention venues well booked out up to 2018, according to Edward Kwek, regional sales director South Asia of Melbourne Convention Bureau.

– Kathy Neo

### { In brief }

#### Hua Hin to welcome new water park

Vana Nava Hua Hin Jungle water park will debut in Hua Hin come end-October, offering Thailand's first Abyss slide, a surf shack with a surf simulator, a 1,600m<sup>2</sup> wave pool, a multi-level aqua course, a 345m lazy river, an events plaza and other facilities. The water park can be used as a corporate teambuilding and events venue, with the Tree Top Lounge and VIP Event and Meeting rooms available for private rental.

The one billion baht (US\$30.7 million) integrated development is split into three phases, with the water park marked for the first phase while an InterContinental Hotels Group property and a 400-room residential condominium are slated for the second.



#### In search of the best itinerary

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) and Thai Airways International (THAI) have issued an online challenge to trip planners and business travellers to come up with the best pre- and/or post-tour itineraries.

The Itinerary Contest will run from May to August this year and entries must include agenda items, destinations and recreational activities. Based on the viability and desirability of the entries, five itineraries will be chosen to compete in the final round via voting on social media. The creator of the itinerary with the most votes will win two THAI air tickets and boutique accommodation in Thailand.

For more information, visit [www.businesseventsthailand.com/itinerarycontest](http://www.businesseventsthailand.com/itinerarycontest).

#### TTM Plus could be WTM Thailand next year

Rumours are abound that Thailand Travel Mart (TTM) Plus could be rebranded as World Travel Market (WTM) Thailand. The move hinges on a deal being brokered between Reed Travel Exhibitions and the Tourism Authority of Thailand, which organises the tradeshow. An official from the NTO told *TTGmice* that negotiations with WTM were ongoing but that no final agreement had been reached.

Speculation arose when questionnaires were circulated at TTM Plus last month. Exhibitors were asked if they thought changing the annual event to WTM Thailand would be a positive move, while buyers were queried if they would object to changes in the event's current format, although there was no mention of either WTM or Reed Travel Exhibitions.

#### Bali to have sports stadium, trade centre

A trade centre and sports stadium is on the agenda of Bali's government, in a bid to diversify the destination's offerings beyond nature and culture. Feasibility studies are being conducted for the two projects.

## Reliance builds AMC division

By Raini Hamdi

Reliance Conventions & Events Malaysia has started to branch into the association management company (AMC) business with Malaysian Oil & Gas Services Council as its first client.

General manager KC Fu said many associations in Malaysia are “maturing” and have to focus on strategy than on day-to-day management in order to add value to the organisation.



**Fu: easing the burden of associations**

He said: “Membership in associations is dwindling and the younger members do not want an archaic association structure. A lot of young medical doctors, for example, are visionary and dare to speak up. An old-school association is not appealing for them. Older members are becoming more receptive to the forces of change; they know if they can’t attract the younger members, their association will face a natural death.

“In terms of our AMC services, we don’t get into these strategic aspects, but aim to take away the administrative and non-critical workload so that the association is free to focus on strategy.”

Among the services offered in its two-year contract with Malaysian Oil &

Gas Services Council are, managing the association’s membership database, automating billing of membership fees and renewals, and website content and social media management. In a profit-sharing model with the council, Reliance is reengineering the website so that its content will engage anyone seeking information on the oil and gas industry. The wider audience will then enable Reliance and the association to create advertising opportunities in the portal, thus giving the council a new revenue stream, said Reliance’s director of operations, Rahul Bharadwaj.

“By appointing us, they save money as there is no longer the need to hire 10 to 20 administrators to run the association, they have a new revenue stream and they have the opportunity to build better content to share with their members as well as to attract a newer crowd.”

However, Fu said the PCO business is actually more lucrative than the AMC business. “That said, if you are working so closely with an association, you have the first right of refusal for managing its conferences or events. An AMC is like an extended arm of the association – we would know the people, the culture, the politics, etc, so it is easier to manage the expectations, unlike a PCO who comes in from the cold. By the time it understands the association, it’s close to conference time.”

## More Japanese firms outsourcing travel management

Instead of managing their own travel procurement internally, an increasing number of Japanese companies are outsourcing the function, observed the Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE).

Speaking to *TTGmice* in an interview, ACTE regional director for Asia, Benson Tang, said: “Japanese firms usually have their own travel agency license, for instance Hitachi Travel and Sony Travel, as they consider corporate travel a function of human resource. In recent years, however, we have seen more Japanese firms switching to third-party travel agencies due to cost.”

The association’s executive director, Greeley Koch, observed that Japanese companies are searching for more cost-effective ways to manage travel.

“They are looking at everything, from online booking tools, expense support and payment providers in Japan,” Koch said.

Tang believes that the shift in travel procurement and management style means more opportunities for travel management companies (TMCs) looking to grow their customer network and depth of services in Japan. “TMCs can expect (greater demand) for business travel consultation. As many TMCs are multinational, experts around the world can be drawn to Japan market (to provide consultation services),” he said.

In response to this new trend, ACTE has increased its focus on Japan and aims to provide platforms for members to share best practices in travel management. In the last six months it has held two forums that saw industry experts debating issues such as the pros and cons of outsourcing travel agency operation. ACTE hosted its first executive forum in Tokyo in May, an event that drew over 80 attendees.

– Prudence Lui

{ Advertorial }



**ONE MINUTE**  
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### IT&CM India 2014 Buyer Showcase

Over 350 buyers have registered their interest for IT&CM India 2014. Here’s an insight on their motivation for attending.

#### India is a huge potential market

for my incentives, special interest tours and holidays sourcing needs. I look forward to IT&CM India as it provides me with the platform to gain access and knowledge to these regions so I can offer trips and incentives to my clients according to their interests.

Travel Office & Poland MICE Jaworski, Poland  
Jerzy Jaworski, Managing Director

India is one of the top four countries in the world for MICE and incentive programs. My experience with IT&CM shows has always been great. The show is well organised, and there are a good number of upscale suppliers and vendors. When I attend this trade show, I meet serious and dependable suppliers.

airsafety Equipment Inc, United States of America  
Captain Rajan Shital, President & CEO

#### India is growing as a destination for congresses and meetings

and we can see that it is increasingly popular as a MICE destination overall. Attending IT&CM India gives me the opportunity to network with Indian hotel suppliers from other regions, and I can share the knowledge I garner with other HelmsBriscoe associates.

HelmsBriscoe, India  
Vinita Kripalani, Director – Global Accounts



Register your interest to participate this August at [www.itcmindia.com](http://www.itcmindia.com) or scan this QR code.

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# Mobile paves the way for future business events

By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

Event organisers who leverage mobile will reap rewards in an industry that has traditionally been a slow adopter of such technology, pointed out participants at The Americas Incentive, Business Travel & Meetings Exhibition (AIBTM) last month.

Hailing mobile as an “extremely important” trend in the meetings and events industry, Steve MacKenzie, vice president of global channels at etouches, urged event organisers to increase attendee engagement through smartphone apps.

“Events have a lifespan of several months, not just a few days,” he said. “Let attendees start talking before the event starts.”

MacKenzie also singled out hybrid event solutions – simultaneous offering of face-to-face and virtual experiences – as especially beneficial amid current challenging times of budget cuts and travel restrictions.

“Hybrid options are becoming popular to offer onsite and a virtual piece of the event,” he said, citing streaming videos and Twitter live-feed walls as examples.

Adam Laufman, sales executive at CrowdCompass by Cvent, also encouraged event planners to adopt native

apps over web apps to enhance the user experience.

“Major players prefer native apps – think Apple, Google and Facebook. Native platforms are more secure, deliver a better performance on all devices and allow full access to back-end systems.”

Sallie Coventry, portfolio director – IBTM global events portfolio, Reed Travel Exhibitions, shared that the company has “invested in technology as a portfolio over the last 12 months”, including a multi-event app for all its shows and a new hosted buyer technology platform that enables greater flexibility and enhanced meet-and-match experience for show attendees.

Likewise, Seo-Ha Lee, CEO of Busan-based I-Convention, revealed that the convention company uses apps to provide attendees with information on the exhibition and destination, offering different languages of English, Korean, Chinese and Japanese.

Looking ahead, wearable technology like Google Glass or devices such as iPhone 5 and Samsung Galaxy Gear are expected to become more commonplace and shape tradeshow technology, Laufman posited. “We have no idea what we will see in 2015 or 2016.”

## AIBTM reinvents tradeshow format

The Americas Incentive, Business Travel & Meetings Exhibition (AIBTM) will take on a new name and show format to become an exclusive, invitation-only event come 2015.

To be rebranded as IBTM America, the 2015 show will feature a unique turnkey, plug-and-play solution where a 2.4m by 2.4m standard pod will be provided to exhibitors on arrival, reducing exhibiting hassles and removing additional costs associated with set-up or tear-down, freight

or drayage. A flat, all-inclusive price of US\$9,500 will be charged for each modular booth design.

The new format is a result of consultation and feedback from the industry, according to Michael Lyons, exhibition director of AIBTM at Reed Travel Exhibitions. He said: “Exhibitors have told us that it’s getting more expensive to come to a show because the booths and spaces are expensive... (and they) only have so much budget.” – **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

## IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific to introduce new elements this year

Trade interest in IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2014 remains strong, with the event seen as an opportunity to restore confidence in Thailand’s MICE and corporate travel sectors affected by the country’s political crisis.

Speaking at the event’s preview on June 12 in Bangkok, Darren Ng, managing director of TTG Asia Media, said current demand from the industry is robust, and the show expected to outperform last year’s.

“There has been some impact from the political situation (in Thailand), but we’re pleased to see support from a lot of our exhibitors from last year. We’ve already sold more than 1,000m<sup>2</sup> of space to NTOs and CVBs, and our sign-up rate is better than the same time last year,” said Ng.

TTG Events and key partner Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) are hopeful many of Thailand’s current problems affecting the trade will be resolved by the time the event is held from September 20 to October 2.

Nopparat Maythaveekulchai, TCEB president, said he is confident the tradeshow would top last year’s attendance of 1,300 delegates.

A number of new initiatives will be implemented this year. TCEB is sponsoring a hosted buyers’ lounge for scheduled networking events and coffee breaks. It will also be arranging Bangkok city tours and post-event fam trips to Chiang Rai and Phuket.

“These will offer new creative programmes, so buyers can experience something really new and innovative in Thailand,” said Vichaya Soonthornsaratoon, director of meetings, incentives & conventions, TCEB.

The associations and corporate day will feature a larger educational component to attract more buyers to the event, said Ng. Alliances are being strengthened with other trade associations, such as IMEX and SITE.

“We are also expanding our post-IT&CMA tour to include another country, probably Cambodia, to help promote Thailand as a hub for accessing the region,” he added. “We will also schedule trips to secondary Thai cities to support TCEB’s MICE Cities programme.”

Last year’s event saw 70 per cent of buyers concluding business deals totalling US\$45 million. – **Greg Lowe**

### { 2014 Calendar }

**August 19-21**

IT&CM India  
Delhi, India

**September 17-19**

PATA Travel Mart  
Phnom Penh,  
Cambodia

**September 30  
- October 2**

IT&CM Asia  
Bangkok, Thailand

**October 29-31**

ITB Asia  
Singapore

# Philippines bids for Asian Golf Tourism Convention

**MANILA** The Association for Inbound Golf Tourism Philippines (AIGTP) will bid to host the Asian Golf Tourism Convention (AGTC) in 2016, president Connie Mamaril said.

As a prelude to the Philippines' bid to host AGTC 2016, Mamaril said a golf fam tour for media and tour operators will be held from October 5 to 9 in Manila and Boracay.

AIGTP was formed in June last year to sell the Philippines as destination to golf aficionados.

"With over 80 golf courses all over the Philippines and home to some of Asia's finest golfing enclaves, we have a lot to offer," said Mamaril.

The association has partnered Tourism Promotions Board and local governments to drum up marketing activities to bring in golfers from abroad, including the recent golf video on AIGTP's website.

Mamaril said AIGTP is also lining up a Golf Festival in Cavite (date to be confirmed) while making its presence known to the International Association of Golf Tour Operators.

"AIGTP's mission is to unify all sectors in the golf tourism industry for the purpose of generating sustainable growth of golf tourism in the Philippines," she said.



Fairways & Bluewater Newcastle, Boracay

AIGTP has 24 members from golf courses, golf tour operators, resorts and hotels, golf magazines and golf accessories distributors, five of which are affiliated with IAGTO, which has an estimated 500 members.

The 2015 convention was awarded to Indonesia. – **Rosa Ocampo**

## Public health experts pick Melbourne

**MELBOURNE** The capital city of Victoria will host the 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Public Health in 2017, to take place at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Held every three to four years by the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA), the congress will draw more than 2,000 public health researchers, academics, scientists, educators and policy makers to Melbourne over the course of five days.

Louise Asher, minister for tourism and major events, commented: "The 2017 Congress holds a special significance as it will coincide with the Federation's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and it is expected to inject approximately A\$11.2 million (US\$10.4 million) into the state's economy."

Melbourne Convention Bureau CEO, Karen Bolinger, said: "Our collaborative approach to this bid, working alongside our local bidding partner – the Public Health Association of Australia – and the state government, was key to our success and I would specifically like to thank the minister (for health and ageing, David Davis) for meeting personally with WFPHA."



## CDATF launches Wuhan edition

**WUHAN** Reed Huabai Exhibitions and the China Commerce Association for General Merchandise will launch the first China Daily-Use Article Trade Fair (CDATF) in Wuhan, as part of Reed's strategy to boost its presence in China's second-tier cities.

Previously exclusive to Shanghai, the inaugural Wuhan edition will be held from November 6 – 8, 2014 at Wuhan International Expo Center. The show will draw more than 10,000 trade visitors as well as buyers including representatives of major department stores in Hubei province, and will focus on products such as kitchenware and gardening products.

From its location in Wuhan, Central China, the tradeshow is also geographically placed to tap the markets of nine surrounding provinces – Hunan, Jiangxi, Henan, Sichuan, Shaanxi, Guizhou, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Hubei.

CDATF Wuhan is Reed Exhibitions Greater China's (parent company of Reed Huabai Exhibitions) 10<sup>th</sup> show in its Gift & Homeware cluster to be held this year.

The 108<sup>th</sup> CDATF is scheduled to be held in Shanghai at the end of July.

Bolinger credited Melbourne's expertise and reputation in the fields of science and medicine as a "major drawcard" for such international institutions as the WFPHA.

Melbourne's latest win over cities such as London and Barcelona comes a few months after the city was picked as host for the International Hepato-Biliary Pancreatic Association World Congress in 2020.

The city hosted a third of Australia's medical and scientific conferences last year, and continues to bolster its position as a global centre of public health with the 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Public Health win.



Yenchai/123RF.com

# Army daze

Political safety, not issues of accessibility or pricing, is the MICE industry's chief liability today, as the swift impact of Thailand's latest military intervention shows.

By **Raini Hamdi**

When the Thai army invoked martial law on May 20, followed by a military coup two days later, many Thai hoteliers, DMCs and PCOs, described the move as being “actually good” in as far as its intention to restore peace and order in the country, which has been embroiled in a political stand-off for seven months, goes.

They were at pains to explain there is nothing sinister about a coup in Thailand – after all it's the country's 19<sup>th</sup> – that Bangkok is open, its people going about working, dining, shopping as before. Thai sellers interviewed at IMEX in Frankfurt the day martial law was imposed – the same day the show opened – said they were not surprised at all, although they thought it might be imposed a bit later.

Buyers, on the other hand, said they were shocked.

Clearly there was a gap between how Thai industry members and buyers perceive a military intervention in Thailand. The former sees it as a measure towards certainty. The latter sees it as anything but certain, and uncertainty is the added pressure they can do without.

An Australian buyer who pleaded anonymity asked why shouldn't she divert a 100-pax incentive she was planning for Bangkok/Phuket in March 2015, a move that would give her peace-of-mind, rather than wait two to three months “for this to be over” – her DMC's opinion, but her own heart believes that's uncertain?

“We can divert now as, although planning has started, nothing has been signed. I'm about to confirm it but I'm

really hesitant now. It's far less stressful (to divert now) than being faced with the ups-and-downs of waiting two months before deciding – too hard. It's probably best to move now,” she said.

Before the news of military intervention, she was also looking at Thailand for events towards the year-end and 2015. “But now I would not feel comfortable selling it to my clients. If something (unto-ward) happens, they would say, you knew it was a problem, why did you recommend it? It would reflect badly on me,” she explained.

Similarly, UK-based International Data Links Society (IDLS) was looking at Thailand for its conference next year, but communication secretary and director, Emma Jane Taylor, who visited Bangkok last August, said: “For us, due to the current situation, we won't come to Thailand because a lot of our exhibitors and delegates get nervous about it. We had our conference in Athens in 2012 and because of the riots there, we lost a lot of delegates and exhibitors. I know they are not the same countries. But we would still delay going to Thailand, we'll probably look at it for 2016.”

Asia, not just Thailand, lost a congress. Thailand would have been the first Asian country to host the IDLS, usually held over three days with between 400 and 600 pax. But the 2015 event would now be held outside Asia as “the other options in the region are quite expensive”, said Taylor.

The “loss of opportunities” as a result of the latest military intervention was what saddened Oriental Events' execu-

tive director Suwat Jirahswakedilok, who came to IMEX with high hopes of future bookings, only to have them dashed right on the first day of the show, when Thai suppliers like him had to convince buyers why they should keep to existing plans – let alone talk of future bookings – as a result of the announcement of martial law.

“The announcement of martial law only made it worse. We’re the appointed agency for the Federation of International Pharmaceutical Congress where we’re expecting some 4,000 to 5,000 pax end-August. We provide the transportation, offsite dinner, pre- and post-conference programme, etc. Though it’s not cancelled, they’ve expressed concern.

“It’s the loss of (business) opportunities for the future that I am sad about. Who’s going to come to Thailand in 2015, 2016, 2017?”

He added: “The Thai conflict is not resolved easily. It has been going on since last November and there have been some casualties on both sides. The rich people who are involved in tourism say they ‘can’t stand it anymore’. But what about the little taxi driver, who is also impacted by it? These are the people who are really suffering.”

Suwat said the best-case scenario is that business will return earliest in the first quarter of 2015, but if the political situation turns ugly as in Syria or Ukraine, “then we’re dead”, he said.

“I have been in the industry for 25 years. I’ve never seen Thailand getting this kind of bad impression,” he said.

“This industry is too sensitive. It’s no longer just about giving good pricing and service. Buyers have a lot of choices. If one destination is down, there is always another to go to.”

Industry suppliers in neighbouring destinations such as Malaysia and Indonesia attest to an immediate spike in enquiries at IMEX from buyers considering to divert their business from Thailand. Jakarta Convention & Exhibition Bureau’s (JCEB) executive director/CEO Indra Sukirno, said it brought back memories of the People Power Revolution in the Philippines in the ’80s, which saw a sudden influx of meetings scheduled for the Philippines in Jakarta. “At the time, Thailand did not have the capacity to take in the last-minute changes. Today, sad though we are for our friends in Thailand, we find ourselves

**“I would go to Thailand, I would bring people there. In fact ASEAN must go to Thailand. We understand each other, we know Thailand would not hurt any tourist.”**

#### **Anthony Wong**

Group managing director,  
Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel



## At a glance

Thailand’s top 5 European MICE markets

	NOW	THEN
1	UK	UK
2	Russia	Germany
3	France	France
4	Germany	Switzerland
5	Poland	Italy

Source: Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau; first-half fiscal year 2014 (October 2013-March 2014)

unable sometimes to pick up last-minute business as the domestic business is enough to fill up existing space,” said Sukirno.

However, new and bigger venues are opening in Jakarta, she said.

Joining JCEB at IMEX for the first time were three venues, Balai Sidang Jakarta Convention Center; Jakarta International Expo, which is adding another 30,000m<sup>2</sup> to its current 35,000m<sup>2</sup>; and the new Indonesia International Exhibition and Convention Center offering a space of 100,000m<sup>2</sup>.

Similarly, Anthony Wong, group managing director of Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel, said there had been “a surge” of enquiries at IMEX from buyers when news of the martial law broke – never mind the coup two days later. “It’s a reality today that political safety, not accessibility, is the key. Look at the Crimea incident for example; the Europeans are boycotting Russia, the Russians are avoiding Europe in favour of South-east Asia – business can shift not just from one country to a neighbouring country but from one continent to another. Accessibility is not an issue because of the number of flights today. And that’s one reason why PCOs are seeing shorter booking

**“The rich people who are involved in tourism say they ‘can’t stand it anymore’. But what about the little taxi driver, who is also impacted by it? These are the people who are really suffering.”**

**Suwat Jirahswakedilok**, Executive director, Oriental Events

lead times than ever – the whole world has become unpredictable,” said Wong.

He added: “I would go to Thailand, I would bring people there. In fact ASEAN must go to Thailand. We understand each other, we know Thailand would not hurt any tourist. I just feel sad that it’s the small vendors who are impacted, not the big boys who have deep pockets.”

Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB)’s figures for the first half of its 2014 fiscal year (October 2013-March 2014), reflect shifts in European markets to Thailand.

Russia has replaced Germany as its number two European MICE market. Switzerland and Italy have dropped out of the top five, while Poland is now one of the top five MICE markets (see chart).

Incentives were the worst hit from October 2013 to March 2014, registering a decline of 30 per cent. Conventions were up 14 per cent and exhibitions 12 per cent during the period. Overall, Thailand suffered a 3.4 per cent shrinkage of the MICE market for the six months ending March 2014.

TCEB is targeting a lower number of MICE visitors in fiscal 2014, 987,000, compared with 1,013,502 in fiscal 2013. TCEB president Nopparat Maythaveekulchai, in a show of confidence, told *TTGmice* that the bureau does not intend to revise the target further downwards as a result of the latest military intervention and will stick to its goal of 987,000 visitors but higher-spending ones.

“This is the perfect opportunity to consider Thailand,” he said. “Apart from Bangkok, there are so many other choices.”

To attract quality meetings, he said TCEB is fostering industry-wide acceptance of new ISO standards for energy management, event sustainability, food safety, MICE security and business continuity. The bureau has also developed a Thailand MICE Venue Standard and National Skills Standard for the MICE industry.

At the same time, it is incentivising planners to consider Thailand through new MICE reward schemes, including Meetings Bonus, Conventions Bonus and Business Up 2 U (exhibitions).



## STJobs HR Summit 2014

Flexible spaces, latest event technology and a clever dessert concept that encourages busier traffic in the exhibition hall provide additional appeal for this leading human resource event, writes **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

**Organiser**  
HRM Asia

**Client**  
HRM Asia

**Venue**  
Suntec Singapore Convention  
& Exhibition Centre

**Dates**  
28 & 29 April, 2014

**No. of Participants**  
4,172

**Challenges**  
Five distinct conference streams were held next to a dynamic exhibition area and overlapping sound projections must be avoided; delegates must be encouraged to spend time exploring the exhibition area

**Result**  
The summit achieved a record number of attendees; a new “C-Suite Stream” for VIP delegates was launched; a unique Dessert Safari concept in the exhibition area successfully drew delegates to explore the space and network with sellers

Over two days in April this year, human resource (HR) professionals gathered at STJobs HR Summit to address the most pressing issues facing their sector.

The event, said to be the busiest and best summit thus far, featured its first-ever “C-suite stream” which saw top managements and HR gurus discuss obstacles encountered by chief decision-makers.

According to Arun Madhok, CEO of Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre, the host venue of the summit, a “cohesive yet highly personalised experience for delegates, sponsors and exhibitors” at the high-level meeting was made possible by its “customisable space, cutting edge technology and impeccable service”.

The C-level gathering was held in the comfort of a Suntec Summit Room.

Suntec Singapore’s spacious concourse, which has floor-to-ceiling windows that rise four storeys high, served as a lunch venue for delegates.

Meanwhile, Suntec Singapore’s 12,000m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition halls on level four were used to host the summit’s exhibition section, and to create three furnished and carpeted conference rooms for more than 1,200 delegates, a plenary hall for 1,800 delegates, and two lunch break areas with buffet lines.

Using the latest in exhibition and conference lighting and movable soundproof walls, Suntec Singapore created special-

ised areas where delegates were able to immerse themselves in their activities without being disturbed by other simultaneous sessions – this was critical as there were five conference streams taking place next a busy exhibition.

The venue’s culinary team pulled out all stops to provide delegates a memorable dining experience. Besides sumptuous lunch buffets and tea breaks, delegates were treated to a Dessert Safari comprising 27 bite-sized local, traditional and international delicacies spread across nine stations around the exhibition area. Each station had a chef serving up doughnuts, cupcakes, chocolate mousse cones and glutinous rice balls, among others, to the delight of everyone.

The Dessert Safari concept was designed to draw delegates into the exhibition space after lunch and to create an additional incentive for delegates to circulate around the hall and check out the exhibitors, explained Madhok.

As delegates went around the hall in search of their favourite desserts, they encountered various exhibitors and many were seen chatting with sellers and other attendees while they waited for their turn at the dessert stations.

Madhok said: “The Dessert Safari was a big hit with delegates, who devised their own strategies for getting the most out of the delicious spread. Regardless of the strategy, it definitely gave everyone something to talk about.”





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# Celebration of Sales Excellence

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort surpasses past events' success with a unique dinner to reward top-performing partners, writes **Prudence Lui**

Inaugurated in 2011, Hong Kong Disneyland Resort's *Celebration of Sales Excellence* event aims to reward valued travel agency partners with an evening of extraordinary experiences, underscoring its commitment to partners and providing them with a better understanding of its brand values and service capabilities.

What set this year's event apart from the previous years' was a range of refreshing ideas for partners who have experienced the Magical World of Disney events before. Sales and distribution marketing vice president, Terruce Wang, said: "For the first time, Adventureland was chosen as the venue to symbolise the many adventure-filled journeys we have shared with our partners. This theme was also in line with that of the new hotel planned by the Resort, offering guests an immersive and Disney resort-style experience dedicated to the spirit of exploration."

The event's immense success in the last two years had certainly raised the bar for the planning team. Coming up with and executing a number of creative ideas all at once was a challenge, said Wang.

He added: "We formed a task force comprising members from sales and distribution, marketing, entertainment, park operations and F&B departments and kicked off the discussion last October."

The queuing area outside Theater in the Wild was turned into a cocktail and dinner venue. Creative décor and music, coupled with the provision of straw safari hats and animal print scarves to guests set the mood for adventure and exploration.

"The Theater in the Wild queuing area had never been used as a dinner venue. Besides fully transforming the area into a safari camp within two hours so as not

to disrupt park visitors' experience in the daytime, the team had to work out the logistics, from power supply and venue decoration to background music."

Another innovative idea was an exclusive show, *Adventures Behind the Scenes*, which offered story-telling between award presentations followed by backstage staff showcasing safety measures for fire settings behind the show *Festival of the Lion King*. The overall atmosphere heightened when some in the audience donned costumes and danced with the performers.

Wang added: "There were live cooking stations where the chefs interacted with guests by introducing the creative ideas behind specific dishes. The extensive buffet spread also featured favourite dishes from around the world. Earlier, even the invitation to guests was uniquely contained in a mini treasure chest. At the end of the event a log book with photographs taken at the event as well as a telescope were given to guests as souvenirs."

As the venue was outdoors, the team also had a contingency plan in case of rain. The alternative venue Royal Banquet Hall was on stand-by, as were umbrellas for guests.

With 26 top-performing partners honoured, the event proved a great success, drawing the attendance of over a hundred top leaders of the Resort's closest trade partners as well as positive feedback.

Shun Tak-China Travel Ship Management commercial division director, Alcuin Li, commented: "What's special tonight is the chance to enjoy some superb performances while sharing the joy of the award winners. I would definitely recommend the delicious food too. The Disney Cast also made us feel really welcome!"

**Organiser**

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort

**Date**

March 28, 2014

**Venue**

Hong Kong Disneyland

**Number of participants**

Over 100 travel consultants from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan

**Objective**

To recognise and reward valued travel industry partners for their outstanding support and achievements of the past year

**Challenge**

Coming up with creative ideas different from those of past two years'

# Technology power-up

Convention centres in Asia have invested in technology improvements to enhance event delivery and delegate experience. *TTGmice* spotlights a selection of those that have recently powered up



# Convention venues



## Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre

**Profile** Opened in 1996, the Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre (MCEC) offers a multi-functional plenary hall, 52 meeting rooms and 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of pillar-less exhibition space. It is also linked to the Hilton Melbourne South Wharf via a private walkway.

**Technology power-up** A number of technology investments were made



### What makes Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre a high-tech venue?



“We are currently the only convention centre in the Asia-Pacific region that has installed an end-to-end digital signal path in all our event spaces (excluding the Exhibition Bays), to deliver crystal clear, pixel perfect reproduction of customer content to all display and recording devices over an extensive fibre optic network. This infrastructure allows us to provide the latest in digital technology, ‘bring your own’ device capability and an even better user experience for customers.”

– Michael Walsh, director of technology operations, Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre



in 2013, among them new portable high-definition ultra-slim digital totem signs that provide extra branding and directional signage for events and attendees; improved multimedia systems; Live View capability which allows the customer to view multiple video streams of their event rooms on a single screen from anywhere within their licensed event area; new audio consoles; on-site rigging solutions; an advanced slide advance system that allows the conference presenter to simultaneously control his PowerPoint slide shows via multiple computers using a fast handheld wireless device; and Visualisation Studio which enables event organisers to work

side-by-side with MCEC’s technology team to design, create and view a virtual three-dimensional representation of their event spaces.

This year, MCEC unveiled a new brand, *Imagine*, and a tagline, *Technology that brings your events to life*, to better market its event technology prowess.

**Charges** Costs vary depending on the feature or service. However, MCEC promises competitive pricing as it has an in-house technology department. Visualisation Studio is offered free of charge to organisers who book a venue in MCEC. – Karen Yue

## China National Convention Center

**Profile** Opened in November 2009, the China National Convention Center (CNCC) in Beijing is purpose-built for conventions and exhibitions. It offers 40,000m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space, 23,000m<sup>2</sup> of meeting and function space including a plenary hall, a divisible ballroom and 100 breakout rooms arranged in suites, and numerous support areas around the venue.

**Technology power-up** New to the centre is the CNCC Virtual Tour, an online tool that offers a panoramic view and video simulation of its interior and exterior. It uses a variety of videos and photograph-based media supported by sound effects, music, narration and text. Other benefits offered by CNCC Virtual Tour are access to venue guide, floor plans, location map and surrounding support areas.

CNCC Virtual Tour not only acts as a promotional tool for the venue, it also makes it convenient for the event organiser to take a quick look at the centre

before coming down for a detailed site inspection.

**Charges** This is offered free on CNCC’s website.– Paige Lee Pei Qi



### What makes China National Convention Center a high-tech venue?



“Recognising guests’ constant need to be connected, CNCC already provides free Wi-Fi throughout the venue and also in the

adjacent CNCC Grand Hotel. However, the speed can easily be increased on request for larger bandwidth as needed for individual event situations, for example for presentation or movie downloads, but charges apply according to the level required.”

– Jenny Salsbury, senior director, international, China National Convention Center



## Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

**Profile** Opened in June 2005, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre is Malaysia's premier and most technologically advanced facility with 22,659m<sup>2</sup> of flexible function space on a site within the iconic Kuala Lumpur City Centre.



**What new technology would you like to equip Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre with in the near future, and does such a technology exist today?**



"To have the best simulation software; one that is powerful and user-friendly, to help clients visualise their event set-up – from

booth design to lighting, furnishing, décor options and much more. This will ease their planning process. The tool will also be a value-add from us.

An example is an advanced interactive 3D graphics software that can be viewed on an iPad.

While the technology exists and has been adopted by some international venues, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre still needs to assess the feasibility of such an investment before proceeding further."

– Alan Pryor, general manager, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre



### Technology power-up

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre recently invested RM7.5 million (US\$2.3 million) in four IT infrastructure projects which are scheduled for completion this August. They include upgrades to the data centre backbone infrastructure, introduction of a digital walkie talkie system, implementation of an Internet Protocol Closed-Circuit Television system and improvements to the virtualised server environment for the data centre.

Two other projects are also slated for launch in 2015, one being the Automated Speaker Preparation Room System – iSpeak and the other, Interactive Mobile Mapping App.

While the current speaker preparation room support system sees materials being uploaded manually to the presentation server for dissemination to the respective room/hall via the venue's LAN, work is

now being done with an international software designer to fully automate this procedure. The new software, known as iSpeak, will also allow presenters to upload, review, adjust and rehearse their presentation in real time. When completed, iSpeak will be the first of its kind in Malaysia.

The other technology innovation is the Interactive Mobile Mapping App, which is being produced by the venue's own technology department with Google partners. It will enable clients to locate their whereabouts within the venue and serve as a path-finder and informative tool during events.

**Charges** As both iSpeak and the Interactive Mobile Mapping App are in the development phase, costs to event organisers/delegates have yet to be finalised. – S Puvanewary



Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

## Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

**Profile** Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) opened in 1988 to offer 91,500m<sup>2</sup> of rentable space for exhibitions, conferences, meetings, corporate functions, entertainment and hospitality events.

Located on a prime waterfront site in Wanchai, HKCEC is recognised as an iconic landmark in Hong Kong.

Much convenience is offered to event organisers and delegates, as the centre is linked to two five-star hotels and is within walking distance to

nearly 6,000 hotel rooms.

**Technology power-up** There has been continuous facility upgrade to HKCEC. Wi-Fi has been made complimentary since 2005, and the system has been continually upgraded since then. Its latest Wi-Fi upgrade came at the end of 2013, enabling up to 5,000 concurrent users to enjoy free-of-charge connections.

HKCEC has also installed additional Access Points to further improve reception. This is an on-going project and the venue will continue to monitor usage, users' comments and technology development for continued improvement.

Today, HKCEC's Wi-Fi access covers all exhibition halls and meeting rooms, including foyers of these spaces, all public



areas and the centre's seven restaurants.

**Charges** Wi-Fi access is free. – Prudence Lui

# Convention venues

## AsiaWorld-Expo

**Profile** Opened in December 2005, AsiaWorld-Expo in Hong Kong offers over 70,000m<sup>2</sup> of rentable space. Its purpose-built arena, which can seat 14,000 pax, is Hong Kong's largest and most versatile indoor space of its kind.

**Technology power-up** With the emergence of cloud-based delivery models, such as Software as a Service (SaaS) and Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), real-time uploading of large amounts of data such as financial information or retail transaction details to a repository accessible to numerous users is now possible. To accommodate this requirement, AsiaWorld-Expo has equipped itself with high-speed Internet capability that comes with a built-in resilience system.

AsiaWorld-Expo also works with local telecom providers to provide seamless data connectivity for the growing number of 3G and 4G smartphone users.

**Charges** AsiaWorld-Expo offers com-



**What new technology would you like to equip AsiaWorld-Expo with in the near future, and does such a technology exist today?**



"Indoor positioning has created a buzz in the location-based service arena. Although different technologies exist in the market, none is comparable to outdoor GPS (Global Positioning System). We are still waiting for a breakthrough in its accuracy. Once this technology matures, it will provide valuable information for delegates such as directional guidance and personalised promotion. From the venue's perspective, the availability of such information could attract more event organisers and visitors."

– Richard Lam, head of ICT, AsiaWorld-Expo Management

petitive and tailor-made packages for users. – Prudence Lui

## IMPACT Muang Thong Thani

**Profile** Opened in 1991, IMPACT is one of the region's largest MICE facilities with more than 140,000m<sup>2</sup> of usable in-door space. Located in Bangkok's north, the complex's facilities include IMPACT Challenger, three halls which can be combined to form a 60,000m<sup>2</sup> column-free space; IMPACT Exhibition Center, six function rooms with a combined space of 47,000m<sup>2</sup>; and IMPACT Arena, a 11,000-seat concert hall. Novotel Bangkok IMPACT connects with the centre by way of a skybridge. The complex underwent its last



set of renovations from 2012 to 2013.

**Technology power-up** In May, IMPACT invested 30 million baht (US\$1 million) in a new Wi-Fi service. Visitors can now connect to the 4Mbps @IMPACT Free Wi-Fi network for an hour each day. Those wanting longer access with a faster connection speed can opt for True Wi-Fi Maximum, which has a maximum bandwidth of 12Mbps. Three choices of prepaid Internet cards are available from the Business Center. The facility plans to launch the 200Mbps IMPACT Premium Wi-Fi service in the near future.

**Charges** Wi-Fi is free for the first hour of usage per day. Quicker connections cost 50 baht for 24 hours, 90 baht for seven days and 150 baht for a month. – Greg Lowe

**What new technology would you like to equip IMPACT with in the near future, and does such a technology exist today?**



"A visitor tracking system that could help our event clients to improve visitor flow and carry out targeted marketing activities to increase traffic to a specific area on the show floor. Technologies for this are available today through RFID, mobile phones, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth." – Paul Kanjanapas, managing director, IMPACT Exhibition Management

## Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre

**Profile** Since opening in 1995, Suntec Singapore has hosted more than 18,000 events including some of the world's largest exhibitions and conventions. It reopened its doors in June 2013 following a S\$184 million (US\$147 million) modernisation programme, and now boasts a modernised façade including a three-storey interactive digital wall, and amenities such as free Wi-Fi throughout its premises. The centre sits in the Central Business District and offers 42,000m<sup>2</sup> of customisable space.

**Technology power-up** The recent renovation integrated a high degree of advanced technology. Its free high-speed, high-density Wi-Fi, which can accommodate up to 6,000 simultaneous devices anywhere in the venue, is the star offering. The system is entirely location agnostic, which means that connection speed will not slow down even if all 6,000 people were to connect from the same location in the building. Likewise, users can move around the centre without having to reconnect.

The modern Wi-Fi operation is also used to deliver other services throughout the centre. For example, it is used to update digital room signage and control room lighting, air conditioning and other environmental settings to deliver a better overall experience for clients and delegates.

**Charges** Free. – Paige Lee Pei Qi



**What makes Suntec Singapore a high-tech venue?**



"We have the best tech toys on the market at the moment and are always on the lookout for new, emerging technologies. Our fundamental infrastructure is robust. We have built the data backbone and distribution systems to be capable of accommodating and adapting to new technologies." – Arun Madhok, CEO, Suntec Singapore

## Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center

**Profile** Located in Bali's high-end enclave, Nusa Dua, the Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center (BNDCC) offers a convention hall that can be split into five smaller rooms, 17 fully equipped meeting rooms with a spacious foyer, the 1,758m<sup>2</sup> Singaraja Hall, a VIP room, a pre-function lobby, a business centre and outdoor venues.

BNDCC completed the construction of its second building in 2013.

**Technology power-up** At end of 2013, BNDCC invested US\$300,000 in a new digital signage system. It was done in response to clients' need to efficiently communicate event schedules/changes or meeting room information to participants in real time.

Some 38 LCD monitors were mounted outside each meeting room and eight movable LCD monitors were displayed in lobby areas. All information displayed on the LCD monitors are controlled from a central server, and information can be broadcasted instantly. Clients can choose to have a customised design/artwork for their displays.

**Charges** Free. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

## SMX Convention Centre, Manila

**Profile** Opened in November 2007, the SMX Convention Centre Manila is the Philippines' most modern and largest private meeting facility with 46,647m<sup>2</sup> of space. Facilities include four purpose-built halls, five function rooms, 14 meeting rooms, and a briefing room with elevated cinema seating for 50. Additional spaces are available in the pre-function lobbies on the ground and second floors.

By end-2015, a Conrad hotel will open behind the centre.

**Technology power-up** The centre recently launched SMX I-Connect, an event registration system that will generate QR codes on delegate badges which can be used by show organisers to track

attendance and to enable the exchange of business information between exhibitors and trade buyers at shows.. The customisable software also offers online programme guide, reporting and exhibitor lead retrieval which clients can access on their personal mobile devices.

**Charges** SMX I-Connect has three price options ranging from 100,000 pesos (US\$2,244) to 260,000 pesos, depending on the requirements of the event organiser. – **Rosa Ocampo**



**What new technology would you like to equip SMX Convention Centre, Manila with in the near future?**



"Plans include touch-screen interactive digital directory for event schedules and room assignments, LEDs (screens), and WiFi and audio system upgrades. We are also adding more digital cameras to our CCTV network for better security monitoring, and upgrading our Event CRM and booking systems to be mobile compatible. Our website will also soon be mobile responsive."

– **Dexter Deyto, vice president/general manager, SMX Convention Centre, Manila**



## Lavasa International Convention Centre

**Profile** Lavasa International Convention Centre (LICC), established in 2010, is the first purpose-built convention facility in Pune, India. The venue is managed by global hotel giant, Accor, and is designed to host meetings, conferences, incentives, exhibitions and social functions with 15 to 1,500 guests. It offers 18 event spaces, including eight convention halls, a board room and a business centre.

**Technology power-up** Recent technology upgrades include the Live Webcasting and 3D Projection Mapping capabilities which, although are widely used in developed destinations, are still at a nascent stage in India.

Webcasting enables media files to

be broadcasted to a target audience either over the Internet or Intranet. With this technology, events can be covered and streamed live online to a wider audience. Large-scale webcasts can also be conducted on multiple networks like LAN, WAN, VPN and V-SAT.

LICC's 3D Projection Mapping, also known as video mapping, is a technology used to turn objects, often irregularly shaped, into a display surface for video projection. These objects may be complex industrial landscapes, such as buildings, or actual physical objects such as cars. The video can be combined with, or triggered by, audio to create an audiovisual narrative to enhance viewer's experience.

Both technologies are gaining much attention among LICC's clients, especially those who are organising specialised conferences and high-end product launches that require high quality real



**What makes Lavasa International Convention Centre a high-tech venue?**



"Currently LICC stands tall in terms of service standards, facility and technology offering. (It can) meet expectations and delight our esteemed clientele each time they choose LICC."

– **Anand Ganesan, general manager, Lavasa International Convention Centre**



life experiences in a virtual environment.

**Charges** Cost varies on a case-by-case basis. – **Rohit Kaul**



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Shuri Castle is among Okinawa's heritage draws

## Stepping up good efforts

Okinawa is enhancing MICE capabilities, air access and destination awareness to draw events from beyond its key markets. By **Kathy Neo**

Although weathered all at once by the global economic downturn, H1N1 pandemic and strong Japanese yen in 2009, Okinawa's tourism has since proven resilient. According to the Okinawa prefectural government, the island registers an annual average of six million tourists per year, with 80 per cent being repeat tourists. Last year, the industry even reached a record high of about 6.4 million visitors in total.

While domestic tourists from mainland Japan still form the bulk of yearly arrivals, the numbers are shrinking as a result of the country's ageing population, according to the Okinawa Convention & Visitors Bureau (OCVB).

Conversely, international arrivals have seen a steady increase over the

years, from 109,000 in 2003 to 382,000 in 2012, followed by a sharp rise to 550,800 in 2013.

Thus encouraged, the island is targeting to receive 750,000 international tourists this year. Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea are currently the major foreign source markets, due largely to their proximity as well as the availability of regular direct flights.

On the MICE front, OCVB supervisor for MICE marketing, Koji Niimoto, told *TTGmice* that apart from the main source markets, the bureau is also seeking to lure more traffic from Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Europe, adding that at the moment, the convention business is contributed mainly by mainland Japan, while incentive groups hail from overseas.

Taiwan has been the biggest incen-

tive market due to its close proximity to Okinawa – only about an hour's convenient flight away. Indeed, the number of overseas applications for OCVB's incentive support for the financial year ending March 2014 saw the highest number from Taiwan (43), followed by Thailand (18), South Korea (14), China (five) and Malaysia (one).

To accommodate an expanding MICE demand and attract more international events, OCVB is looking to construction a major convention venue with capacity for as many as 20,000 people at once. Niimoto revealed that discussions and research are ongoing for a suitable location to build the venue, with a final decision expected in the next year or so.

Currently the largest convention space in the prefecture is the Okinawa Convention Center (OCC), which offers a maximum seating capacity of 5,000 people in its biggest event space. There are three other convention venues, namely the Bankokushinryokan, Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University, and Okinawa Jichikaikan.

The 27-year-old OCC most recently carried out a massive repair work to its theatre hall following a typhoon that shattered the space's glass wall, a spectacular stage backdrop that brings in panoramic views of the ocean. Also subject to nature's mercy are several of the centre's conference spaces, which also boast a feature glass wall



with an ocean or garden view, a unique offering that has been drawing event organisers from the region and the wedding market from mainland Japan.

Nevertheless, to lure more business, OCC MICE coordinator, Naomi Nakaza, told *TTGmice* the centre has been offering special rates to event organisers, such as 20-70 per cent less for international events with more than 10 attendees, and 10 per cent less for the rental of all OCC facilities for large-scale events. The discount policy will continue, Nakaza added, albeit the higher consumption tax implemented since the country's new financial year in April, but minor

adjustments to the qualifying criteria can be expected. She is upbeat that the adjustments will not impact OCC's business.

Meanwhile, OCVB is also hosting familiarisation trips for the international trade to raise awareness for the island's offerings. In March this year, it hosted international media representatives for site inspections of Naha Airport's brand new international terminal, convention centres, wedding venues etc, as well as for experiencing pre-/post-meeting options including whale watching, fishing, diving and spa, among others.

Come September, OCVB will hold a seminar in Singapore to connect some

60 local buyers with Japanese travel agencies, hotels and incentive houses. The bureau has yet to confirm the venue and exact date of the event at press time.

Greater connectivity is being planned as well, specifically to enable direct flights from regional markets such as Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Most recently, an MoU was signed on March 25 between Singapore Changi Airport and Okinawa Prefecture for the commencement of direct flights from Singapore in the near future. Through the MoU, the prefectural government will this year focus on promoting tourism traffic from South-east Asia, Australia, India



“Language is a key problem. OCVB currently subsidises up to 50 per cent of the cost of language courses for staff of private companies. We also need more English-Japanese signs on the roads, and we will propose this to the prefectural government.”

**Sen Tamaki**  
 Manager for overseas marketing  
 Okinawa Convention and Visitors Bureau (OCVB)

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and other regions via Singapore.

When asked how Okinawa intends to stand out as an incentive destination, Niimoto said: "We have our own unique culture that is different from that of mainland Japan (due to historical influences). We offer a different type of Japanese culture to the world. To top this off, we are known for our people's hospitality, which transcends the language barrier."

Indeed, the results of a satisfaction survey for foreign tourists conducted by OCVB in 2013 showed the lowest percentage (5.8) of respondents who felt Okinawa's hospitality was unremarkable, against other indicators. But when compared against the highest percentage (20.6) indicating guidance signs/markings as unremarkable, it does leave room for wonder if hospitality truly "transcends the language barrier".

Sen Tamaki, manager for overseas marketing at Okinawa Convention & Visitors Bureau, admits that the island continues to face inadequacies in multi-lingual skills, land transportation and Wi-Fi access.

"Language is a key problem," acknowledged Tamaki. "OCVB currently subsidises up to 50 per cent of the cost of language courses for staff of private companies. A list of qualified language teachers and service training instructors is planned for release this year for the companies' choice. We also need more English-Japanese signs on the roads, and we will propose this to the prefectural government."

As for land transportation, Tamaki said taxis in Okinawa are expensive, while the public bus network is complicated even to the locals.

"We hope to have a subway system in the future, but this will be a major project that takes time, the quickest being 10 to 15 years for the commencement of construction," he explained.

In response to a rising number of complaints about the lack of free Wi-Fi service in public areas, he said OCVB provides financial support to hotels and small enterprises to install the necessary equipment.

Additionally, research is ongoing for star-rating Okinawa's hotels to bring them in line with international practice, he revealed.

Meanwhile, two major hotel projects are expected to complete this year, namely the 238-key Hotel Orion Motobu Resort & Spa and 346-room Hilton Okinawa Chatan, in July and September respectively.

## Need to know



### In pursuit of Moby-Dick

Okinawa may not be renowned for whale watching, but it is possible to obtain this experience here if one gets the season right, which is the period from December to March. Groups can depart from Naha city or Onna Village and engage in this breath-taking activity for three hours in a boat that takes 17 to 60 people at one time. Cost is 3,800 yen (US\$37) to 4,500 yen per person; reservation is necessary with Okinawa Tour Island (<http://option.okitour.net/special/whalewatching/>).

### Naha Airport



### Brand new terminals greet air, cruise passengers

Naha Airport opened a brand new international terminal in February this year in response to increasing international traffic. The new four-storey terminal spanning 23,700m<sup>2</sup> is almost four times bigger than the previous one, featuring 20 check-in counters, two F&B outlets, two souvenir shops and an observation deck on the top floor.

Meanwhile, the new Naha Cruise Terminal, opened in April, can accommodate larger vessels with its longer 340m berth and water depth of 10m. It spans about 4,500m<sup>2</sup> over two floors, including a rooftop observation deck. About 130,000 cruise arrivals are targeted for the new financial year, according to OCVB.

### A home to stay

Yomitan Village ([www.ti-da33.com](http://www.ti-da33.com)) offers the Mim-paku homestay programme for a maximum of 350 people, each house accommodating four. Participants get to experience the local folklife through farming, cooking and handicraft-making activities as well as *sanshin* guitar and *ryuku* traditional dance performances. Charges are from 12,000 yen per person per day, inclusive of Okinawan breakfast and dinner. For more information or reservation, contact Chiharu Tamaki of Sky Tourists Service at [sky1194@churamura.com](mailto:sky1194@churamura.com) and (098) 958-1193.

### Angling fun

Fishing is hardly a boring activity, especially if done in groups. Divide into teams to compete for the most number of fish caught, chat and crack some jokes while waiting for the target to be hooked, and cheer in unison when someone has finally made a catch. Available all year round, Marine Palette (<http://brc.marinepalette.com/>) offers three- and six-hour trips out to sea for small groups of up to eight people in each boat, complete with a fisherman who teaches how to attach the bait and reel in the catch. Charges are from 5,000 yen and reservation is necessary. Choose from three departure venues: Naha city, Yomitan Village or Onna Village.

### Dine, cruise and enjoy the sunset

Enjoy a 'rocking' good company dinner post-meeting on board a small ship that can accommodate up to 180 people each time in its restaurant. Local cruise company Westmarine (<http://www.westmarine.co.jp>) offers a cruise dinner as well as one at sunset, both lasting about one hour 45 minutes. Western fare is served, including salad, main course, dessert and beverage. Charges are from 3,900 yen per person. From April to September, departure times from Naha Port are 17.45 and 20.15 for sunset cruise and dinner cruise respectively; from October to March, departure times are 17.00 and 19.45 respectively.



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## Ideas Two-night meet-and-bond programme

**Day 1** Arrive at Naha Airport's new international terminal, which opened in February this year.

Check into the MICE-friendly Loisir Hotel & Spa Tower Naha, and have a short rest before heading out to the Southeast Botanical Gardens for some rejuvenating greenery. Find over 1,300 plant types here, as well as fruit and herb gardens. There is also a large pond, the surroundings of which are dotted by colourful flowers and palm trees. Electric

trams are available for a guided tour of the spacious grounds, as are guided walking tours which offer a closer look at the flora.

At 17.00, depart from Naha Port for a sunset cruise dinner on board a small ship owned by local company Westmarine. Eat, drink and be merry from the Western fare offered, while waiting to take in the beautiful changing colours of nature outside the window as the sun slowly sets.

head back on land for some retail therapy at the Okinawa Outlet Mall Ashibinaa, a beautiful architecture of eclectic ancient Greek, contemporary and native Okinawan elements. Find discontinued or sample products from more than 100 popular brands here – especially European brands – which are reasonably priced and of good quality.

If you are not too keen to shop, remove your shoes and stroll along the beach, which is just a minute's walk from the mall, feeling its soft-salt sand and the Okinawan sea breeze.

After dinner, enjoy a session of Loisir Hotel's renowned in-house onsen at the spa to chase away the fatigue of the day.

**Day 2** After breakfast at the hotel and a half day of meetings, head out to Onna Village for departure out to sea in a whale-watching boat. Bring along a poncho or windbreaker though, or risk getting wet and catching a cold as the open-deck boat speeds through the waters. Although much depends on your luck as well, the best months to sight the lovely sea creatures are from December to March.

After the three-hour trip out at sea,

**Day 3** Before departing from Naha Airport, check out its two souvenir shops featuring Okinawan glassware and jewellery, among other things.

**Southeast Botanical Gardens**



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1400 – 1500hrs   Forum 3 <b>Benefits of Attracting International Meetings to India</b>

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# Loisir Hotel & Spa Tower Naha



### FACT FILE

**Maximum number of pax for meetings**  
1,000

**Maximum number of pax for banquets**  
600

#### Recent events held

- 13<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Solid Oxide Fuel Cells welcome party for 100 pax and reception for 477 pax, October 2013
- Joint Annual Symposium of the Vacuum Society of Japan and the Surface Science Society of Japan welcome party, reception and dinner for 100 pax, November 2013
- Worldwide Japanese Automobile Group awards ceremony for 30 pax, January 2014
- International pharmaceutical firm, catering for 1,200 pax (along with other hotels at the Southeast Botanical Gardens), March 2014

### VERDICT



**Kathy Neo**

The hotel scores with its comfortable environment, ample MICE facilities and thoughtful service, but it could be friendlier for English-speaking guests.

This hotel boasts Naha city's highest bed capacity and one of the few natural hot springs in Okinawa. It comprises two buildings, with the main Loisir Hotel building constructed in 1993 and the Loisir Spa Tower added in 2009 in response to increased numbers of visitors to the city.

Naha Airport, a duty-free mall and four golf courses are about seven, 14 and 40 minutes away by car respectively.

**Rooms** The hotel offers two- to four-star categories of rooms to suit different budgets. The Loisir Hotel building offers 417 rooms while the high-end Spa Tower has 89.

I was checked into a room with a balcony in the 12-storey Spa Tower. Designed with cheerful colours as well as motifs reflecting Okinawa's ocean, flowers and sun, my spacious City View Superior Twin room provided the usual amenities business travellers will appreciate, such as a comfortable bed, work desk, flat-screen TV, mini bar, safe and hair dryer. Trouser press or an iron can be requested for free.

With the free Wi-Fi (for all guests), I was able to check some emails but not for long, as the desk and bedside reading lamps somehow did not offer bright-enough lighting.

Spa Tower guests are entitled to complimentary use of the hot spring at its Churaspa on the second floor, which opens from 14.00 to as late as 23.00 (there is also a Loisir Spa at the Loisir Hotel building). Pity I could not make it in time for this luxury offer during my hasty

one-night stay, but a relaxing soak in the bathtub, which was separate from the toilet and wash basin, sufficed.

**Meeting facilities** The hotel is regarded as one of Naha's MICE-friendly accommodation providers.

While the Spa Tower offers a medium-size banquet hall on the third floor for up to 250 pax in theatre setting, the Loisir Hotel building offers lots more across its first, second, third and 12<sup>th</sup> floors. It houses 10 banquet halls, the largest of which accommodates up to 900 pax (theatre), the smallest, up to 20 (round-table); one event hall for 300 (theatre); three private rooms for 12 to 40 (depending on the set-up), and one Japanese-style room for up to 40 (round-table). Five of these spaces have built-in audiovisual equipment, while the rest can easily have the equipment set up on demand.

**F&B** Five F&B outlets are gathered inside the Loisir Hotel building: Fontaine offers buffet meals for up to 150 pax; Izumitei, Japanese and Chinese cuisines for 106 pax; Papillon, BBQ at the poolside and garden for 125; Sirene, French cuisine for 71; and Planete, light food, drinks and piano music for 64.

Breakfast at the spacious Fontaine restaurant on the first floor is exclusive for Spa Tower guests. It offers a good spread of the usual Western fare such as toast, bacon and eggs, and salad, as well as Okinawan dishes.

Sirene only operates for private parties, which require reservation at least three days in advance.

# More room for events

Macau's slew of new hotel developments promises more non-gaming facilities, with several plotting good meeting spaces, discovers **Prudence Lui**



City of Dreams will boast a new hotel tower designed by celebrated architect, Zaha Hadid

Two years have passed since the last time Macau celebrated a massive injection of new hotel rooms through the opening of the 6,000-key Sands Cotai Central integrated resort.

But from the end of this year, Macau's tourism players can once again relive that joy with the bumper crop of new integrated resorts expected to come online. According to Macau's Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau, 16 hotels are under construction and 27 hotel proposals are being evaluated. These projects are expected to add an estimated 25,600

rooms to the destination that is popular with both leisure and business event travellers.

Of the 16 hotels in construction, nine are on the Macau Peninsula and they will add 1,030 rooms to the destination. Taipa will welcome two new-builds with 1,060 rooms.

However, it is Cotai that will provide the bulk of new rooms through five new hotels bearing 7,500 keys. New properties coming up include MGM Cotai, The Parisian, Macao Studio City and SJM Casino Resort & Theme Park.

MGM Cotai, occupying a 71,883m<sup>2</sup> site, will boast some 1,600 rooms once it is completed in early-2016. More than 85 per cent of the hotel's gross floor area is dedicated to non-gaming offerings such as event and banquet spaces, restaurants, retail, spa and entertainment.

Also coming online in 2016 is Wynn Palace, an integrated resort with 1,700 rooms, meeting spaces, a performance lake, a casino, a spa, retail offerings, and F&B outlets.

Meanwhile, the existing Galaxy Macau integrated resort, which houses Banyan Tree Macau, Hotel Okura Macau and Galaxy Hotel, is embarking on its phase two expansion. Targeting completion in mid-2015, the extension will feature The Ritz-Carlton's first all-suite hotel and the world's largest JW Marriott, as well as meeting facilities for more than 2,000 guests, and more than 45 restaurants, cafes, bars and lounges.

Galaxy Macau will begin construction of phases three and four as early as late-2014.

City of Dreams is another existing integrated resort to go on an expansion blitz. Its developer, Melco Crown Entertainment, has revealed the design of the property's fifth hotel tower, a masterpiece of renowned architect Zaha Hadid. The visually stunning, 40-floor hotel will offer some 780 rooms, suites and villas that promise to exceed five-star standards when it opens in 2017.

Melco Crown Entertainment is also developing Macao Studio City, a

cinematically-themed integrated resort with retail, gaming and 2,000 luxurious rooms and suites.

Sociedade de Jogos de Macau (SJM), which owns Grand Lisboa Hotel and Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16, is also taking its presence beyond the Macau Peninsula by building the Lisboa Palace in Cotai. More than 90 per cent of the total site will be used for non-gaming facilities such as 2,000 hotel rooms spread over The Lisboa Palace Hotel, Palazzo Versace Macau and another fashion-branded luxury hotel.

Transformation is also taking place at Macau Fisherman's Wharf. A redevelopment and expansion exercise will give it a 445-key Harbourview Hotel (opening 2Q2014), 229-room Legend Palace Hotel (2Q2015) and 270-room Legendale Hotel (2Q2016).

Commenting on the wave of new hotels, MGM Macau executive director of sales & guest service/hotel operations, Irene Wong, said: "Competition will intensify but we expect demand to remain strong. The transportation infrastructure of Macau will be significantly improved by 2016 (through the new Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, expansion of the Macau International Airport, and additions of new facilities at the border gates), and that will attract even more regional travellers to Macau.

"From the hotel perspective, we will dedicate our resources to developing non-gaming offerings to diversify our client base."

Welcoming the slew of hotel developments is SmallWorld Experience executive director, Bruno Simoes, who is often faced with the difficulty of securing more than 50 rooms from a single hotel for his meeting clients, as most hotels give accommodation priority to their gaming and leisure guests.

"However, these upcoming new developments will have meeting facilities, and that is a positive sign for (event planners)," Simoes said.

# A magnet for mega business events

This September alone The Venetian Macao will play host to two massive events that will each draw more than 10,000 attendees. One will be the HERBALIFE Active World Team University 2014, an annual training event for the company's distributors in Asia-Pacific, while the other is the Jeunesse Expo Annual World Conference.

The integrated resort's spokesperson told *TTGmice* that the Cotai Expo halls will be used for arrivals and departures, while Cotai Arena will be used for the main event. Meeting rooms at the property will support the rest of the event requirements for smaller gatherings.

All rooms across The Venetian Macao and Sands Cotai Central will be utilised to accommodate the delegates.

The spokesperson said: "We are equipped to handle multiple events of (such scale) every month. This is what we were designed to do as an integrated resort."

The spokesperson noted that more organisations, from companies to associations, are now hosting large-scale events.

"Organisers understand that with the number of hotel rooms (and event spaces) we have, they can hold their event, along with arrival and departure from Macau, all under one roof. It is hard to find such a venue, especially one that provides such level of service anywhere in the world, so the more of such events we do, the more the word gets out to other markets," said the spokesperson.

Simon Leung, general manager, Macau MICE Travel of Shun Tak Travel Services, has observed a leap in the size of events coming into Macau.

He said: "More mega events are happening in Macau these days. In the past, we would see groups of 3,000 pax. Today, that has grown to 10,000 to 20,000, with most annual conferences going to The Venetian Macao."

And the future is bright for Macau in Leung's point of view. "I foresee more of such large-scale events when new hotels and integrated resorts are completed in the next few years," he added.

However, Darren Chuckry, client services, executive director of Uniplan Hong Kong, thinks that Macau has

yet to achieve its full potential as a destination for mega events.

According to Chuckry, Uniplan Hong Kong's largest event in the destination was the three-day G2E Asia global gaming expo last year, which drew 6,500 professional visitors and 130 exhibitors from around the world.

"(But) I believe that the completion of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and new developments in Cotai will definitely heighten interest in Macau as a host city for mega events," said Chuckry.

He added: "Still, the city needs improvement in two areas to sustain the growth of its mega events industry – it has to improve (access to Macau) and allow for more flexible hiring of crew members. Currently most organisers and visitors choose to fly into Hong Kong then take the ferry to Macau. Organisers are also required to hire only local crew members to support their events.

"Diversifying the variety of entertainment options and lifestyle destinations in the city would play a critical role in establishing Macau as a world-class entertainment hub in its own right." – **Prudence Lui**



## A new environment to rest and recharge

The Spa at Wynn, located within Wynn Macau, has unveiled a new look to offer guests a sense of "lightness and openness" right from the moment they enter. The soothing effect is a result of caramel and cream carpets, refreshed limed oak woodwork and exquisite lanterns.

Complementing the new look is a new 90-minute signature Silk & Cashmere Awakening treatment, which includes a purifying exfoliation and a light massage using warm silk gloves, followed by a deeper full-body massage using warmed lotus oil, and a luxurious application of a cashmere-infused silky body wrap. The treatment concludes with a rare and refined body cream of lotus flower extract and shea butter for an illuminated glow.

## Explore Macau on your own

Business event travellers to Macau who are planning to extend their stay and explore the destination at their own pace can now rely on the new Macao Cultural and Creative Map and complementing mobile app.

Designed to guide tourists to Macau's cultural and creative spaces, the first edition of the map covers the destination's seven parishes, introducing each with text and animations. Additional information on World Heritage sites, museums and bus routes are also available. Location services on the mobile app help guide users to even more products and activities.

The Macao Cultural and Creative Map is distributed at 158 locations across Hong Kong and Macau, including immigration checkpoints, museums, hotels, travel agencies, cultural and creative entities, etc.

For more information, visit [www.macaucultural.com](http://www.macaucultural.com).

## Top eats at Sofitel

Sofitel Macau At Ponte 16 has launched Le Chinois Cantonese Restaurant on its top floor, allowing guests to not only feast on delicacies created by chef Ho Wah but also take in the sights of Macau's inner harbour.

Chef Ho Wah brings almost four decades of culinary experience to Le Chinois, promising outstanding Cantonese cuisine that are presented creatively. Apart from seasonal specialties, the menu also features dim sum, organic specialty teas, rare artisanal teas and an extensive collection of wines.





photo/238f.com

# Destination: New Zealand

Mount Cook, in New Zealand's South Island, is home to breathtaking landscapes and the kiwi spirit of adventure

## New Zealand awakens

The island country long loved by adventure seekers and nature lovers is starting to stir and it has MICE high on its agenda. By **Mimi Hudoyo**

New Zealand has received a heftier tourism budget of NZ\$158 million (US\$133.9 million) for the next four years, following the government's decision last year to focus on courting high value visitors, including business event delegates. Of this sum, NZ\$34 million will go towards promoting and supporting international business events in the destination, with particular emphasis on attracting shows and delegates from the US, Asia and Australia.

The fund will also be used to promote existing and upcoming convention centres across New Zealand.

According to the country's new Tourism 2025 framework, a private sector initiative led by Tourism Industry Association of New Zealand

(TIA), more convention centres will be developed in Auckland, Queenstown, Wellington and Christchurch.

The focus of Tourism 2025 is on achieving greater value rather than visitor numbers, pointed out TIA chairman Grant Lilly.

"We will grow volume, but we will grow value even faster," said Lilly, adding that business events not only generate greater tourism spend but also take place during low and shoulder seasons.

Money will also be allotted to a new global marketing campaign which will, among other activities, see more manpower being placed in key international markets to build relationships with important business event decision-makers.

Kevin Bowler, Tourism New Zea-

land's chief executive, said: "Earlier we had two dedicated people (to look after the market), now we have 13 working in New Zealand and markets such as Australia, the US and China."

In China, Tourism New Zealand has a team to develop both conference and incentive markets. Tourism New Zealand's general manager Asia, David Craig, expects investments in the Chinese conference market to bear fruit once the new convention centres in Auckland, Christchurch, Queenstown and Wellington are open for business come 2017 and 2018.

Tourism New Zealand's courtship of South-east Asian markets is led by a business events manager based in Singapore. While the tourism bureau pursues the incentive market in Malaysia, Thailand and India, its attention in Singapore is on the convention and conference segment.

Mischa Mannix-Opie, the bureau's regional manager for South and South-east Asia, said: "We are building relationships with key corporate travel agencies, event management companies and PCOs (in Singapore) to educate them on how New Zealand can deliver great business events. We will then work closely with these partners to assist them in pitching New Zealand as their next conference or incentive destination.



“We also aim to undertake advertising to the corporate travel trade and direct to corporate companies, and are already working directly with some companies to showcase what New Zealand has to offer.”

Unlike most of its competitor destinations, New Zealand does not offer a subvention programme. Instead, it relies on its brand, *100% Beyond Convention*, and value proposition.

Mannix-Opie explained: “For example, for Auckland, we emphasise how easy it is to get from the hotel to the venue and from the venue to the coast for outdoor experiences. Beyond the conference rooms there are a lot to offer nearby, which means more time is spent on activities and not on the road.”

She added that incentive groups heading out from Auckland to Rotorua, for example, can enjoy a wide variety of activities and attractions such as Waitomo Cave and the Hobbiton Movie Set. More ideas can be found on [www.bussinessevents.newzealand.com](http://www.bussinessevents.newzealand.com).

Destination Rotorua Marketing spokesperson, Jenha White, said the destination has done well in tourism and many local operators are keen to cater to corporate groups by incorporating a teambuilding element to their product or by offering theme event options.

Rotorua’s Agrodome, which has for over 40 years attracted visitors to its popular Farm Show, a performance that introduces the audience to sheep breeds, shearing demonstrations and sheep auction, and is loved for its other activities such as NZ Farm Experience and Dog Trials, has expanded its reach to corporate groups.

The sprawling farmland offers a variety of event venues, from The Dome, where the Farm Show is hosted, to the rustic Hutchings Barn to The Shearing Shed for smaller groups. It also conducts teambuilding challenges and provides entertainment options, catering and theming services.

Event planners who pick the Agrodome can have their delegates “herded” from buses into The Dome by excited huntaway dogs for a fast-paced pre-dinner show, or choose an intimate dinner at The Shearing Museum with a short version of the Farm Show as entertainment.

At Te Puia, New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, just five minutes from central Rotorua, corporate groups can learn about the Maori culture and native flora and fauna, enjoy Maori cuisine and explore a natural geothermal valley.

A complete Rāukura package is available for groups that desire an in-depth cultural encounter. It includes a personalised guided tour, nature walk, cooking in a geothermal spring, traditional Maori lunch, cultural performances and other activities.

For some of New Zealand’s tourism players, Asia is a market of interest.

Last March Te Puia hosted a gala dinner for a 350-pax TPC China incentive group. The programme included a traditional welcome ceremony and cultural performances with guest participation.

Te Puia general manager – sales and marketing, Kiri Atkinson-Crean, told *TTGmice* that Asia is an important market for the attraction, and two sales directors are hired to manage the region, with one taking charge of Japan and South Korea, and the other for the rest of Asia.

Atkinson-Crean said: “We reach out to the region by working with a couple of inbound operators. We had a group of 300 people from Malaysia last year, and a couple of bookings for later this year from South-east Asia.”

The Hermitage Hotel at Aoraki Mount Cook National Park, which is popular among leisure travellers from Singapore, Japan, South Korea and China, has started seeing corporate business from Asia.

The hotel’s sales & marketing manager, Megan Calder, said: “We recently had a 100-pax conference

group from Singapore, which combined meeting, star-gazing and other activities.”

Recent improvements in air access from Asia have been a boon for New Zealand’s tourism sellers.

Last January, Singapore Airlines and Air New Zealand agreed to form an alliance that will enable the Singapore flag carrier to debut services to New Zealand, and Air New Zealand to reopen the Auckland-Singapore route.

Christopher Luxon, CEO of Air New Zealand, said: “The alliance will boost capacity between the two countries by up to 30 per cent. We are currently waiting for approval from the New Zealand government and are looking at starting operations in December.”

Malaysia Airlines is another carrier that plays a role in boosting air access from Asia, Mannix-Opie pointed out. In end-March, the carrier changed its seasonal service out of Kuala Lumpur to a daily flight.

Qantas, too, is facilitating greater travel to New Zealand through its one-stop flights out of Asia. It runs daily flights from Bangkok, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore to Australia, and also four weekly flights from Jakarta and Manila to Australia. In these markets, Qantas offers one-stop flights through three Australian gateways – Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney – to four cities in New Zealand, namely Auckland, Christchurch, Queenstown and Wellington.

Stephen Thompson, executive manager international sales, told *TTGmice* in an interview: “With year-round daily connections to New Zealand and an ongoing close relationship with Tourism New Zealand, Qantas is always proud to promote New Zealand as a destination from Singapore and elsewhere in Asia.”

As part of its sustained efforts to promote New Zealand as a destination, Qantas offers regular support to the travel trade in the promotion of FIT and group travel, and hosts media familiarisation trips.



“Last year, we had a group of 400 people from India, something we would not think we would get from this market because there was no direct flight, but the proposition was so compelling in the leisure space that it worked for an incentive programme.”

**Mischa Mannix-Opie**

Tourism New Zealand, regional manager South & South-east Asia



Transport your incentive winners or meeting delegates to the mythical world of the hobbits at Hobbiton Movie Set in New Zealand's Matamata

## Movie magic

The film industry has contributed more than NZ\$3 billion (US\$2.6 billion) each year to New Zealand's economy over the last two years, according to Statistics New Zealand's 2012/2013 Screen Industry Survey. The tourism sector is benefiting from this silver screen boom, as New Zealand's famous 'filmscapes' of Middle-earth, the fictional universe of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* movies, have played a key role in luring travellers to its shores.

Tourism New Zealand's chief executive, Kevin Bowler, said the October-December 2013 *International Visitor Survey* found that 14 per cent of holiday arrivals were drawn to New Zealand by *The Hobbit* trilogy.

The same survey also found that 13 per cent of international visitors between January and September 2013 had a Hobbit experience, such as a visit to film sites or the Hobbiton Movie Set near Matamata.

Illustrating the surge in interest from movie fans, Bowler said: "A decade ago in 2004, following the release of the final film in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, that figure was only six per cent. We have seen record numbers visiting Matamata and Hobbiton this past summer (2013), (with) tours for around 40 tourists (being run) every 10 minutes."

Hobbiton Movie Set Tours owner/director Russell Alexander said visi-

tors to the site of The Shire – home of the hobbits in both trilogies – had increased from 130,000 in the period of June 2012-2013 to 230,000 in the period of March 2013-2014.

The growing interest is a result of tourism stakeholders' creative efforts in leveraging the popular movies to promote New Zealand.

Offering examples, Air New Zealand's CEO Christopher Luxon said the airline dished out a hobbit-themed onboard safety video, *An Unexpected Briefing*, which attracted more than 10 million views on Youtube and 1.4 million views on Youku in China while Tourism New Zealand came up with the 100% *Middle Earth*, 100% *New Zealand* promotional campaign last year.

As the movies were filmed in various destinations across New Zealand, such as Matamata, Wellington, Okahune and Sutherland Falls (Fiordland National Park), tourism specialists have been able to package and sell an array of fun itineraries for both leisure tourists and corporate groups.

Alexander revealed that interest from incentive groups has been strong. "We get many incentive groups and theme events (with) 350 to 500 people here (at the Hobbiton Movie Set)," he said.

Besides being a tourist attraction, the Hobbiton Movie Set is equipped

for corporate gatherings.

Green Dragon Inn, where hobbits gathered for drinks and merry-making in the films, has been replicated at the attraction and serves lunch during operating hours. Once the movie set is closed to the public, Green Dragon Inn is available for private hire and can host sit-down dinners for 80 pax or up to 150 for standing receptions.

The Party Marque, where Bilbo Baggins hosted his 'eleventy-first' birthday party in the first instalment of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, can seat up to 220 guests.

Another venue option is The Shires Rest Café & Function Centre, which offers two meeting rooms for 60 and 100 people each, or up to 160 pax when combined.

When *TTGmice* visited Hobbiton Movie Set in May, a new venue for 300 pax was being built towards a June opening.

Wellington Rover Tours, the first company to create *The Lord of the Rings* movie set tour in 2002, has also seen greater interest from incentive clients. Managing director Scott Courtney said incentive groups typically desire tailor-made programmes that combine visits to film sites with film studios, or with other Wellington tour products.

For corporate event planners who desire a programme that goes beyond visiting film sites and studios, Weta Workshop in Wellington makes an attractive option. The company is best known for its design and effects work on films including *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* trilogies, *King Kong*, *Avatar*, *Elysium* and *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*.

Weta Workshop general manager, David Wilks, told *TTGmice*: "We opened up part of the studio to visitors. Workshop technicians who have worked on different films guide groups (maximum 20 people per group) on a 45-minute tour and tell stories on how props are made, how the design process works, etc.

"We also tailor tours for conference and incentive groups. We can offer behind-the-scenes sculpture-making demonstrations and have designers talk about their work, or other activities that interest groups."

For larger corporate groups of 150 or more, Weta Workshop can work with The Roxy Cinema and Coco at The Roxy restaurant, located a mere two-minute drive away, for off-site functions and catering. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

## Ideas Half-day Maori culture tour in Auckland

After your morning meetings in Auckland city centre and lunch at your hotel, drive west-ward through Titirangi, which means 'fringe of heaven' in Maori language. Titirangi has many lovely cafes and bakeries, making it a popular rest-and-relax destination for locals over the weekends.

From Titirangi, journey on to Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, a beautiful native rainforest that has been made famous by many movies. A brief stop at the Arataki Visitor Centre will provide more information on this natural attraction as well as track maps. Splendid views of the Manukau Harbour and part of the Waitakere Ranges can also be enjoyed from the Arataki Visitor

Centre.

Spend the next 45 minutes to explore the Kitekite track, which takes visitors to waterfalls, streams, pools and beautiful native bush.

Next, explore another natural wonder of Auckland – the rugged west coast beaches where the Tasman Sea's mighty surf crashes onto vast black-sand beaches. Several beaches are available here – Piha, Bethells, Muriwai, Whatipu and Karekare – and each draws its own following of fans. Piha beach, for instance, is popular with experienced surfers and people looking to have a leisurely picnic and stroll.

There will be enough time to take in the majestic scenery and to learn about the indigenous flora and fauna



that inhabit this area. Many native plants are used extensively by the Maori community for medicinal purposes and guides will be on hand to point out those that are most useful.

**Piha beach attracts courageous surfers as well as those who prefer a picnic or stroll**

*Itinerary provided by TIME Unlimited Tours. Visit [www.newzealandtours.travel](http://www.newzealandtours.travel) for more information.*



### After-dark adventures

Rotorua Canopy Tours, which specialises in zipline tours of New Zealand's native forest canopy, has launched an activity that takes place at dusk and runs through the night.

*Creatures of the Night* invites travellers to see and hear forest inhabitants that appear at night, such as the Weta group of insect species, Morepork native owls, glow worms and native bats.

The new after-dark tour is conducted on a platform that rises 22m above the forest floor, placing participants high up in the night sky, just under a blanket of stars. The experience is heightened by a flight down the 220m zipline in the dark.

*Creatures of the Night* is good for a group of up to eight people. Each group is accompanied by two professional guides.

Contact [hello@canopytours.co.nz](mailto:hello@canopytours.co.nz) for more information.

### More sea access to Hauraki islands now

From this month Explore Group will provide daily departures from Auckland's harbour to the islands of the Hauraki Gulf on its new *Discovery 5* powercat boat.

The new service will transport travellers to the islands of Rangitoto, Motutapu and Wiheke, and offers options for day return trips and longer stays.

### Pub crawls with a twist

The Big Foody Food Tour, which specialises in showcasing New Zealand through activities that tantalises participants' taste-buds, has introduced *Big Beer Tour*. The 2.5-hour walking tour highlights some of Auckland City's historical pubs by combining craft beer tasting, a visit to a local brewery and a peek into the history of the city. Visit [www.thebigfoody.com](http://www.thebigfoody.com) for other tour ideas.

### Roll in the mud

Hells Gate Geothermal Park and Mud Spa, Rotorua is offering a new Mud Pit interactive teambuilding activity that promises to test the strength, agility and wit of participants.

Teams can engage in a mud tug-of-war competition or deal with Hells Gate's silky fine geothermal mud, which is a lot like quicksand, during a mud volleyball game.

After all the action, participants can unwind with a relaxing soak in the attraction's sulphur mineral pools before digging into a hearty meal.

For greater indulgence, planners can set aside time for participants to enjoy a soothing massage or mud therapy.

The programme is available for pre-booked groups of six to 60.

Visit [www.hellsgate.co.nz](http://www.hellsgate.co.nz) for more information.

### Cruise down Lake Rotoiti

A growing demand for tailor-made experiences for corporate groups has prompted Pure Cruise to debut flexible package options with the company's 53-foot luxury yacht *Tiua*.

Catering for intimate groups of four to 30 guests, Pure Cruise's private corporate yachting option offers a unique environment for meetings and celebratory functions on board the yacht, while sailing down Lake Rotoiti, in Rotorua. A soak at the secluded Manupirua Thermal Hot Springs can be included in the package. The private lake-edge geothermal pools are accessible only by boat.

The cruise can be paired with a meeting in Rotorua city, as a dawn-breaking breakfast cruise or a relaxing evening cruise with cocktail or full dinner.

Visit [www.purecruise.co.nz](http://www.purecruise.co.nz) for details.





Egypt's spectacular history and ancient landmarks add value to business events; the Great Sphinx of Giza pictured above

# Investing in the future

Unrest in Egypt has taken the shine out of the mighty land of the pharaohs, but local tourism authorities and sellers are not giving up. By **Greg Lowe**

It is indisputable that Egypt's rich culture and history provide an exceptional setting for incentive planners who can choose from an impressive range of products and activities such as visiting the Great Pyramid of Giza, cruising down the Nile or opting for some beachside relaxation at the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh.

The country has clear aspirations for tapping these resources and putting its meetings industry well and truly on the global map. It is unfortunate, then, that political turmoil and a fragile security situation has rendered Egypt a no-go destination for many corporate travellers, especially in the

light of a bomb attack on a tourist bus which killed three South Koreans in February and a suicide bombing near Sharm el-Sheikh in early May.

"It is really sad to say that outbound to Egypt has come to a standstill," said Alicia Seah, marketing communications director at Dynasty Travel, an outbound specialist in Singapore.

"Prior to these current political and security issues, Dynasty Travel was taking at least 1,200 to 1,500 travellers to Egypt annually. (The problem is) especially (true) for MICE. No company will send their employees to any part of world deemed a high risk - Egypt is already considered a

'write-off'," Seah added.

The downturns in both business and leisure travel have hit Egypt hard, especially given the number of people who rely on tourism to make their living. However, the fallout is not only dampening revenue and costing jobs, it is also hampering the local industry's capacity to service MICE groups effectively, said Karim ElMinabawy, president of Emeco Travel, one of the country's leading DMCs.

"This is a major problem," he said. "The lack of business and specifically the lower MICE traffic means labour is losing its talent and experience."

There is an upside to this part of the story, however. Egypt's Ministry

of Tourism is transforming the current quiet time into an opportunity for the destination to up its game. A few months ago it sponsored and organised training programmes to develop MICE-related skills for all staff at hotels, which could ill-afford to foot the bill themselves given the low revenue they have faced for the past few years.

“The plan is to ensure Egypt’s standard of service is back to normal when business is expected to return after the election which should take place this coming fall,” said ElMinabawy.

Currently there are no official statistics on MICE arrivals and spending. Overall international visitor numbers are, however, tracked and the decline has been severe. Arrivals fell 28.9 per cent year-on-year to 642,197 in January 2014, according to data from the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics.

Again, authorities and the private sector are taking measures to address these issues. Egypt Tourism Authority formed its first ever MICE department in 2012. The country won the Event category in the ITB-Cinema Award 2014 at ITB Berlin for its *Incentives made by where it all begins* video. Egypt is also planning to make Sharm el-Sheikh its first-ever green city.

The destination has also had some success in encouraging major associations to hold at least one key event in the country, with SITE Executive Summit 2013 and Euromic Annual General 2014 as two recent examples.

Other initiatives to lure back travellers include subsidising charter flights to resorts on the Red Sea, such as Sharm el-Sheikh, Hurghada and Marsa Alam, as well as El Alamein on the Mediterranean coast. Direct flights from Paris, London and Istanbul to Luxor, Hurghada and Sharm el-Sheikh started on March 1, enabling groups to bypass Cairo and head straight to key destinations.

Marwa Al Ashkar, director of marketing for Accor in Egypt, said combining these and other collaborative efforts, including social media campaigns and live video streams from Sharm el-Sheikh and Hurghada, are helping to restore the country’s reputation.

“Business groups are the main MICE contributor for Accor hotels in Egypt,” she said. “This year, with the political scene gradually stabilising, we’re expecting promising developments from other markets, in particular Asia.”

## Need to know



### In Agatha’s footsteps

Fans of Agatha Christie will clamour for the opportunity to meet and stay at The Old Cataract Aswan Egypt, where the grande dame of whodunits penned her classic *Death on the Nile*, which was also filmed at the property. Ideal for executive groups, the luxury hotel, built by Thomas Cook in 1899, features five small meeting rooms suitable for groups of 40 to 55. High tea on the terrace overlooking the Nile and the ancient ruins of Elephantine Island is another option and a suitable shore activity for river cruise groups. Visit [www.sofitel-legend.com/aswan](http://www.sofitel-legend.com/aswan) for details.

### Go on an adventure

Energetic and adventurous incentive and teambuilding programmes can be planned around Ras Abo Gallum National Park, a protected area and safe haven for Bedouin culture.

A jeep safari can be arranged, as well as a Bedouin lunch, camel rides, snorkelling at the Blue Hole – a 130m deep submarine sinkhole – and a walk around Dahab bazaar to round off the day. These activities are suitable for most people but group members need to be prepared for some exertion.

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

### Cruise down the Nile

Nile cruises are one of the most popular ways of exploring Egypt’s ancient past. *Dahabiyas*, traditional sailing boats and also the name of King Farouk’s own vessel which he used to travel between Luxor and Aswan, provide a more luxurious and relaxing way to soak up the surroundings of the Nile Valley than the larger diesel-powered cruisers.

The eight-berth luxury boat tours are an ideal post-conference option or incentive for smaller groups who have already visited Cairo.

Approach Emeco Travel arrangements. Visit [www.emeco.com](http://www.emeco.com) for details.

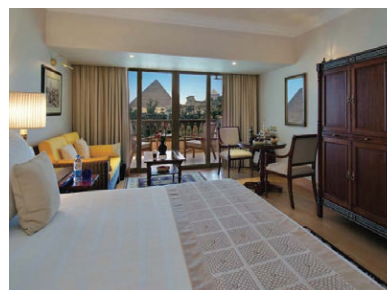
### Dynastic dining

Groups wanting an impressive backdrop to their event can hold their gala dinner at the temples of Luxor or Karnak in Luxor, the ancient city of Thebes, or other nearby locations such as the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut, near the Valley of the Kings. Factors such as group size and weather conditions will determine the choice of temple and events can only be held in the external areas, but the experience will doubtlessly be unforgettable given the history of these structures.

### Regal meetings

Mena House Hotel, a former royal hunting lodge built in 1869 that was developed into an opulent palace-like property, affords staggering views of the pyramids at Giza which are located just 700m away. The hotel features 40 acres of gardens and plenty of locations for gala dinners and events. The terrace provides an exceptional view of the pyramids, making it ideal for a sunset reception with cocktails and canapes. Mena House Hotel also offers 1,890m<sup>2</sup> of events space, including six private banquet rooms with a maximum capacity of 520 pax, and three boardrooms.

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



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Media Affiliates



Contributing Media





Freddie Coleman



Duncan Gray



William Lum



Germaine Lim

## Australia

**Richard Howarth** has been appointed general manager, sales, marketing & entertainment at Sydney's **The Star** to lead an experienced team of entertainment, tourism and hospitality professionals. Howarth has held senior roles within some of Australia's most renowned companies including Sportingbet Group Australia (now William Hill UK), Telstra and The Coca-Cola Company.

## China

Hospitality veteran **Louis Liu** is now general manager of **Crowne Plaza Resort Xishuangbanna**. Liu is joined by **Jennifer Gu** who has been appointed director of sales & marketing. Gu brings with her more than 20 years of sales and marketing experience in China's hospitality industry.

## Hong Kong

**Dorsett Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong** has appointed **Carlos Wong** director of sales & marketing. Wong brings with him over 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, playing roles in hotel companies such as Marriott, Hyatt and the Ritz-Carlton. Prior to this appointment, Wong was with Hong Kong SkyCity Marriott Hotel.

## Malaysia

**Doubletree by Hilton Johor**

**Bahru** has named **Freddie Coleman** as director of operations and **Amarinder Sadana** as director of business development. Coleman brings more than 20 years of hotel management experience with him and was previously director of operations and director of food & beverage at Thistle Johor Bahru. Sadana has over 11 years of international hospitality experience and has worked with hospitality giants such as Starwood Hotels & Resorts and InterContinental Hotels Group.

## Singapore

**Marina Mandarin Singapore** has picked **Duncan Gray** as its new resident manager. Gray brings with him over 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry and has held key positions in several properties across countries such as China, India, the UK and Turkey. Prior to this appointment, he was executive assistant manager, F&B with Starwood Hotels at The Westin Bund Center, Shanghai, China.

**Reto K Klauser** has been appointed the vice president and general manager of **Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore** and will also oversee Shangri-La Apartments and Shangri-La Residences. An industry veteran with more than 20 years of hospitality experience, Klauser held a similar position at Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur before his latest appointment.

**SingEx Holdings** has ap-

pointed **Germaine Lim** director in CEO's Office, who will establish and drive sales and sponsorship infrastructure for SingEx's portfolio of trade events. Joining **SingEx Exhibitions**, another arm within the company, is **Adrian Sng** who takes up the role of director (projects management), and **Gwen Ng** who is made deputy director (projects management).

**William Lum** has joined **Furama RiverFront, Singapore** as executive chef. Lum has over 30 years of global culinary experience across various renowned hotels, restaurants and country clubs, and had participated in the World Chinese Culinary Contest in Taipei, the Food & Hotel Asia in Singapore and the Le Salon Culinare in Australia.

## Thailand

**Tamara Kobiolke** has joined **The Westin Siray Bay Resort & Spa, Phuket** as director of sales & marketing. She was last director of sales and marketing at Hotel Missoni Edinburgh.

## UAE

**InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG)** has made **Michael Martin** general manager of **InterContinental Dubai Marina** (opening 4Q2014) and regional general manager of the United Arab Emirates. Martin has more



Michael Martin



Abhijit Ghosh

than 30 years' experience in the hospitality industry, 22 of which were spent with IHG.

## Vietnam

**Abhijit Ghosh** has made a comeback at Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas with his appointment as resort manager of **Six Senses Ninh Van Bay, Nha Trang**. Most recently Hilton Hotels & Resorts' director of operations in India, Ghosh served seven years with Six Senses at Six Senses Samui, Thailand, Evason Ma'in, Jordan and the former Soneva Gili in the Maldives.



## Waste not

Eric Ricaute, founder & CEO, Greenview, Singapore, and his director of sustainable events, Cara Unterkofler, tell **Raini Hamdi** how exhibitors can be green yet remain engaging and attractive

**If there is one thing you want to get off your chest about how 'un-green' meetings are, what would you say?**

**Eric** Most of the impact of meetings, specifically trade shows, conventions and exhibitions, is the amount of material used and the resulting waste generated from the exhibit hall floor.

You can put in a great recycling programme to have attendees recycle and help minimise waste in F&B, but that is usually only a fraction of the total waste generated from the show. The largest contributor to waste is generally the set-up and breakdown of exhibits and exhibitor materials. This is especially 'un-green' when exhibitors are accustomed to

building an exhibit for a show, then just leaving it there to be disposed, and doing this for every show.

**But why are exhibitors not thinking about this?**

**Cara** The "waste" from meetings and events is a result of extremely tight timelines and turnaround times, a lack of planning and a lack of awareness of what is actually happening.

It only takes watching what is being dumped into the landfill compactor at the end of a large expo show to realise there is a massive inefficiency occurring in the name of being "efficient" (i.e. quick) – tons of wasted materials from carpet to furniture to food.

Like every other industry

and sustainability challenge, it takes creative problem-solving, leadership, analysis and creating new partnerships to change the way things are done, but we're all already spread so thin by our daily responsibilities that it seems impossible to do so. So we just push on down the road of inefficiency. The biggest waste in meetings and events is that people aren't more curious and dedicated to breaking this unrewarding cycle.

**Have you ever measured the amount of waste from a trade show or exhibition?**

**Eric** Yes, we do measure this for most of our clients' shows. The amount varies depending on the type of show – lots of waste from samples given out to attendees at food shows, for example, while scientific shows only have high-priced chemical lab equipment to display and reuse their booths/showcases each year so the show floor has very little waste.

**So if I'm an exhibitor and I really need to attract people to my stand, how can I balance the need to be attractive and the need to be sustainable?**

**Eric** This will depend on what specifically you are promoting. I would say the most important first step is to make sure your giveaway swag is consistent with the message or impression you'd like to give. We've seen companies promoting their green or sustainable services, yet give away those little foam squeeze balls which just end up in the trash and are likely to use chemicals and materials of concern. Also, how many people really take all those brochures and keep them forever? Most of them don't even get taken home; they get left in the hotel room. I'm guilty of this myself. So why not have a QR code or link where people can just go online and get information, than printing?

Other than that, just make sure you can turn off your lights and equipment at your booth at night.

**But aren't giveaways what attract people?**

**Cara** More and more, people are looking for experiences, not stuff. Instead of giveaways, offer experiences – analyse their handwriting, let them play ping pong, let them experience being halogrammed into a meeting. They will learn from the experience and associate it with your brand more than the swag they leave behind.

There is no rule that says a sustainable booth can't be an engaging one – we're just back to the status quo and efficiency challenge we were at before. It takes thoughtfulness and mindfulness, but is completely possible and likely rewarding in the end, as the ideal is to have a booth that generates business and supports your tradeshow objectives, but one that hopefully you can reuse, get your money's worth and be proud of as a brand.

When it comes to sustainability, companies are competing to be clever. May the best companies win. And they will.

**Have you seen any best practices from a really smart exhibitor somewhere?**

**Eric** The smart ones are the simple ones – they avoid the overuse of promotional collateral and cheap giveaways, turn off their lights and figure out how to divert the waste generated from the exhibit set-up and breakdown.

**Cara** I've seen really large booths being constructed more like modular homes that come together again and again, instead of being constructed like a house and then left behind or trashed. These booths don't need to be painted, instead employ magnetic panels or fabrics that can be used over and over.

**I recall last year Marina Bay Sands at ITB Asia built a stand that could be dismantled and re-used. But I don't see this as a trend. Do you think it will come?**

**Eric** It depends on where the incentive lies. Right now if it's cheaper to build a booth and



just leave it at the show for someone else to dispose of, then the exhibitors have no incentive.

The venue can incentivise by making exhibitors – or indirectly through their decorators – take financial responsibility for the disposing of materials appropriately. The organiser can also incentivise or influence the case by highlighting those exhibitors that have taken some type of green commitment that the organiser has established.

There are trade-offs obviously. Shipping large exhibits across the world all the time can have a larger environmental impact potentially, and making exhibitors take back all materials just so they can throw them away in another country isn't really going to solve the problem. But it's more important right now that we get everyone in the industry just thinking about these things, as more solutions and even business opportunities to address them will emerge.

**Cara** Yes, also, corporate responsibility is a trend that is here to stay – it just hasn't fully trickled down to events yet. Increasingly companies are going to be casting their sustainability net wider and eventually, events will become a point of distinction like the other facets, i.e., supply chain, community-giving, where their coffee comes from, etc.

### Do we need tradeshow and exhibitions at all in today's Internet world?

**Eric** Yes definitely. The value of face-to-face meetings has been studied and proven. People want to see the products themselves, because you can't touch, smell or really see with your own eyes products through the Internet.

More importantly, trade shows are actually the most efficient way of doing business. Imagine all the flights, hotels, travel, etc, that would have to occur for you to meet up with dozens or hundreds of people individually otherwise. By getting everyone together, you also get a scale of streamlining the impacts, with

the potential to address them all at once. Plus, tradeshow and exhibitions are more fun than video chats.

### Ten years from now, tradeshow will look like...

**Eric** They will look the same at the core, but have different bells and whistles. Much more will be done with mobile devices, gamification, virtual attendance, 3D holograms and hopefully a lot less wasteful registration booths and tradeshow floors, and they will be much more global in attendance and location. But at the heart, it's still a bunch of people getting together.

Most interesting will be an increase in types of shows. Already we're seeing exhibitions and conferences for so many types of products and services that either didn't exist a decade ago or were really small. This is true of the technology sector, but also all the products and services pertaining to sustainability.

**Cara** Technology is going to play a huge part in meetings and events in (a) allowing people to participate that otherwise would not be able to and (b) connecting people before, during and after the event. Before you get there you will know through an app exactly who will be there and your Linked In profile will suggest and match meetings with others in your business. During the event, instead of needing to see name badges and the colours that indicate suppliers, wholesalers, retailers, etc, perhaps a google glass will show exactly who you are already connected with via social media and something about that person – he loves the Red Sox and just won a big game last night – so you can start a conversation with him. Presentations will all be available digitally so you can create notes, share and keep them for later. It's all about conversations and the technology will keep you connected after the event. But the technology only fosters the human connections that are the magic and power of face-to-face meetings.



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## What some exhibitors do to cut waste

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

"We no longer want to freely distribute our brochures to any trade visitors because it is expensive and wasteful if they are not serious buyers. So we actually keep these booklets at the back of our booth and only if they are serious and really need them then we will pass the booklets to them. Since the past two years, I no longer bring copies in bulk to tradeshow. For example (at the recent IT&CM China in Shanghai), I only brought up 20 copies of our Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas booklet. Normally if buyers request for a copy, I will send them the e-version but of course if they want a hard copy, I will give them one. This not only translates to cost savings but helps save our environment.

Our wall panels are also entirely reusable so we will recycle them for subsequent tradeshow. We no longer throw them away after every exhibition."

### Tommy Lai

Area director of sales & marketing (China)  
Minor Hotel Group, Thailand

"We used to print a worldwide directory of hotels for our sales staff as part of the marketing kit for the clients but we realised that it is not practical for most of the buyers because they are normally interested in only a particular region or country, and not necessarily the whole world.

So over the last few years we decided to do away with the directory. Instead we print brochures and leaflets according to countries which makes it lighter for our staff to carry around and give to buyers too. Also our sales kits are moving towards the e-version because many people are comfortable with using iPads."

### Scarlett Sun

Assistant marketing director (international)  
Millennium & Copthorne Hotels, Singapore

# Gallery

More than 260 tourism buyers, including business event planners, from around the world had a taste of what New Zealand has to offer at this year's **TRENZ** in Auckland. Photos by Mimi Hudoyo



Held in Singapore last month, the **Tourism Australia's Business Events Southeast Asia Showcase** brought together MICE sellers from Down Under and local incentive planners.

It was a gathering of great minds at the **IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific Preview Reception** on June 10 in Bangkok. Attendees included local MICE buyers and convention bureau officials.



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**Top incentive ideas** – Looking for hot ideas to reward your best performers? *TTGmice* August's cover feature on top incentive ideas from around the world should inspire you. The issue will also spotlight **India, Indonesia, Singapore** and **the UAE** and show you what's brewing in their business events sector.

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