

September 2014

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Penang is moving on up

Gold Coast's sporting
ambitions are on track

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challenges in a rosy market today



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TTGmice, endorsed by the Asian
Association of Convention and Visitors
Bureaus, is published by TTG Asia
Media Pte Ltd, and is mailed free-of-charge on written
request to readers Asia-wide who meet a set of
predetermined terms and conditions. Annual airmail
subscription charges are US\$70 (Asia) and US\$90
(elsewhere). All rights reserved. No part of this publi-
cation may be reproduced in whole or in part without
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MCI (P) 040/08/2014, KDN
PPS1140/09/2012(022844), ISSN 0218-849X
Printed by Times Printers Pte Ltd
16 Tuas Avenue 5, Singapore 639340

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Forty Years, As Strong As Ever



Karen Yue
Group editor

An invaluable recognition

It was about this time last year when the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) wrote to us with great news – *TTGmice's* cover story in the July 2012 issue had won the 2013 PATA Gold Award's Travel Journalism – Business Article Award. To say we were delighted then is an understatement.

So imagine the extent of jubilation my team and I felt when we received PATA's letter again this year. *TTGmice's* cover story in the November 2013 issue, *Team on board*, had been given the same honour. The 10-page feature, which comprised a main article penned by senior editor Raini Hamdi and sidebars written by *TTGmice's* regional network of editors and journalists, shone the spotlight on how mega cruise ships with an amazing array of recreational facilities and event spaces are expanding the corporate teambuilding programme options available to creators and planners.

This win brings to four the number of PATA Gold Awards the magazine has garnered to-date, which makes a great reason for us to break out a bottle of champagne!

Oh wait, make that two bottles because this recognition has come at a brilliant time – TTG Asia Media, the parent company of *TTGmice*, is celebrating its 40th anniversary and what an exquisite birthday gift this award makes.

On a serious note though, the team at *TTGmice* is ever grateful for such awards as they are proof that the magazine's editorial direction is right and editorial standards have not faltered over time.

We thank you, readers, for always sharing your thoughts on current industry matters and ideas on the kind of content you would like to see in the magazine. It is you who ensure *TTGmice* stays relevant and useful to your business.

Please continue to talk to us and make *TTGmice* yours.



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Association meetings are on the rise in Hong Kong but industry players say stronger trade collaboration can speed up growth, writes Prudence Lui

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The Gold Coast is a strong contender for sports-related meetings and events, backed by its diverse attractions and new facilities.

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

TTGmice

www.ttgmmice.com

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We love



Kaleidoscope eyes, anyone?

Trick and treat your eyes at the Trick Eye Museum Singapore at Resorts World Sentosa, which opened in June this year as the first overseas branch of South Korea's popular attraction of the same name.

Home to 90 optical illusions and amazing sculptures housed within 800m², the Trick Eye Museum invites visitors to participate in fantastical feats and dive into new worlds, from levitation to sky-diving without the altophobia to transforming into a mermaid.

The works, which includes Edvard Munch's iconic painting *The Scream*, are divided into six themed zones, with three pieces specially commissioned to pay homage to host country Singapore.

Haven for the camera trigger-happy, the riot of colour and mind-blowing optical illusions will leave family and incentive travellers alike giggling all the way through the museum – we did, and we loved it! Just remember to leave all shame at the door.

The museum's artists regularly do touch-ups on the artworks and new art works will be introduced every few months to refresh its offerings.

For a more surreal take on events, the Trick Eye Museum Singapore can be booked out completely for private events before 10.00 or after 21.00. Special arrangements can be made for groups that visit during regular operating hours.

The Park Lane Jakarta joins Worldhotels network

Business travellers and meeting planners who use the Worldhotels network of independent hotels now have a new option in Jakarta.

The luxury 280-room Park Lane Jakarta, conveniently located next to the Golden Triangle central business district, is popular with seasoned corporate warriors.

It offers a variety of meeting spaces including a new banquet room, ParkLane 8, which faces the lagoon-style pool and comes with a sheltered terrace.

Dining options at the hotel include Café One, The Bakery, and the recently revamped RIVA Grill Bar and Terrace which can seat 34 guests indoors and 14 outdoors. A 10-seat private room is available.

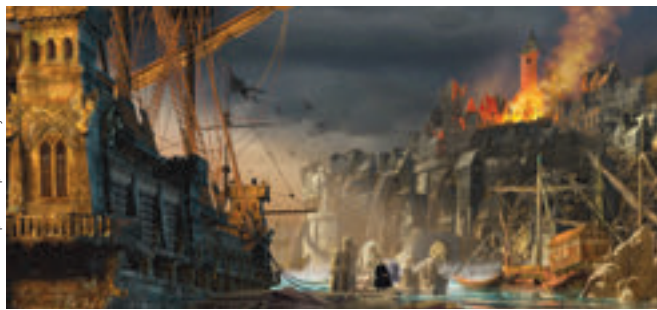
Etihad Airways connects Abu Dhabi with Rome

The national airline of the UAE has commenced non-stop daily flights between Abu Dhabi and Rome, using an Airbus A330-200 aircraft in a two-class configuration that features 22 Business Class seats and 240 Economy Class seats.

The service will depart Abu Dhabi at 02.40 and arrive in Rome at 07.10, and take off from the Italian capital at 12.00 to land in Abu Dhabi at 19.55.

Commenting on the new service, the carrier's president and CEO, James Hogan, said: "Italy is a very important market for Etihad Airways and we are delighted to establish a second gateway here, after Milan Malpensa.

"Demand from business and leisure travellers has been incredibly strong on this new route, strengthened by the convenient onward connections we offer in both directions, either with Etihad Airways' own flights or through our extensive network of codeshare and alliance partners."



Camera, lights, action!

Companies looking for unique incentive and teambuilding experiences now have the option to make movie stars out of their delegates.

Lifestyle travel consultant John B Sutherland has launched a movie-themed experience in Asia, which comes complete with props and distinguished Hollywood art directors and producers. Clients can have their top achievers and employees star as pirates in a swashbuckling treasure hunt, recreate a favourite scene from a book or movie, or act out their own life stories, among other creative possibilities.

Similar to pre-movie planning, the client first submits a literary or visual narrative which will act as a script listing the specific points the experience should have. Once the client approves the script, the design process starts and a 2D or 3D form will be presented before completing the story. The design process takes a minimum of two to three weeks for approval.

Budgets start at around US\$300,000.

For more information, contact john@johnbsutherland.com.

New lease of life for The Blue Mansion

Hospitality and restaurant group Samadhi Retreats has signed a long-term management agreement to brand and manage The Blue Mansion, A Cheong Fatt Tze Legacy.

The boutique hotel is one of three heritage buildings in Penang, Malaysia to have won awards from UNESCO. It was built by renowned Chinese tycoon Cheong Fatt Tze just before the turn of the 20th century.

Under the helm of Samadhi Retreats, The Blue Mansion's 18 rooms have been restored to reflect the tycoon's opulent lifestyle. Each room is individually themed and furnished with luxurious amenities alongside precious heirlooms from the family's private collection.

A new addition to The Blue Mansion is the Cheong Fatt Tze Restaurant, serving modern Cantonese cuisine. Other facilities include a swimming pool surrounded by Chinese gardens, and a Samadhi Spa.

The Blue Mansion will be the group's third property in Malaysia after Japamala Resort Tioman Island, a 13-chalet jungle-luxe resort that opened in 2004, and Villa Samadhi, a 21-room urban retreat in Kuala Lumpur that opened in 2011.



Hilton Brisbane flaunts new, high-tech ballroom

Hilton Brisbane, in collaboration with its on-site audiovisual partner Staging Connections, has completed a major upgrade of its Grand Ballroom's audiovisual systems.

At the heart of the upgrade is the transition to a cutting edge digital fibre infrastructure, which offers a superior level of brightness and clarity of images via ultra-sharp projection. The brand new audiovisual infrastructure complements the recently installed full high definition Christie projectors and 16:9 motorised screens.

In addition, the Grand Ballroom's lighting system has been centralised, with the installation of a world-class touch screen control pad to manage the recently added 48 computerised ceiling fixtures and digital audio consoles.

The upgrades will reduce the venue's environmental footprint and technology complexity.

The Grand Ballroom, located on level five of the hotel, offers one of the largest event spaces in Brisbane's central business district and can accommodate up to 600 guests for banquets and 1,100 for cocktail events.



{ Advertorial }



ONE MINUTE
with IT&CM Events

Educational Sessions Set As the Highlight of IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2014

What kind of education programme can we expect from IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2014?

IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2014 features a comprehensive educational component, open to all registered delegates. Flagging off with our keynote session by Bert van Walbeek, Managing Director of The Winning Edge, on the connection between talent and risk management, the event will also see an expanded Association Day, spanning two days, and Corporate Performance Forums on 1st and 2nd October respectively.

Taking place concurrently, CTW Asia-Pacific, a conference event for Corporate Travel Professionals that is also co-located with IT&CMA, will play a pivotal role in benefiting Corporate Travel Professionals in envisioning tomorrow's travel management.

How has the educational component grown?

This year, we have new big-name associations coming on board as our partners for the event – ACTE and MPI. Through their specialized industry knowledge and expert speakers spanning from Association to Corporate representatives, our delegates can be assured of hard-hitting, customised educational content that answer your burning questions.

Why should you attend?

Expert speakers, well-versed with the unique landscape of the Asia-Pacific association and corporate performance market segments, will cover pertinent issues, as well as expert advice on tackling the challenges of the Asia-Pacific market.

Educational topics prepared for Association executives will provide attendees with an in-depth understanding of association management. Besides that, incentive travel driven topics will be discussed at the Corporate Performance Forums. 8 customised topics are also dedicated to CTW Asia-Pacific's corporate travel attendees.

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New tower, name for Hyatt Regency Incheon

The Hyatt Regency Incheon, South Korea was rebranded Grand Hyatt Incheon on September 1 and now boasts expanded meeting space with the opening of its new West Tower – just in time to welcome the participants of the 17th Asian Games.

Ratnesh Verma, senior vice president, real estate and development, Asia Pacific, Hyatt Hotels & Resorts, said: “The hotel, including the addition of a new tower, further solidifies our brand presence in this key gateway market.

“With its dramatic meeting facilities, large number of rooms and its proximity to the airport, the expanded hotel offers a unique destination within Asia that is attractive to meeting and group business. We continue to remain committed to South Korea as a strategic market with its robust economy and a renewed attraction both as a business and leisure destination.”

The 522-key hotel is minutes away from Incheon International Airport, and offers 500 more rooms with the launch of the West Tower that connects to the East Tower via a sky bridge. The West Tower boasts residence-style rooms with kitchens for long staying guests, a 1,250m² Grand Ballroom and multi-dimensional event venues, an all-day dining Grand Café serving Western and Asian cuisines, the Swell Lounge, two swimming pools and a children's play zone.

Meanwhile, extensive renovations are scheduled to take place in phases at the East Tower over the next 18 months.



Heaven on Hayman gets a facelift

Following an extensive revamp, the 160-key One&Only Hayman Island has reopened in Australia's Great Barrier Reef with an all-suite Pool Wing, rooms and suites with ocean/lagoon views, beach villas and penthouses.

For corporate groups, the luxury property offers its own Entertainment Centre, an ideal venue for large seminar-style meetings with 10 to 300 guests. It comes with a fully-equipped stage, high ceiling, excellent audiovisual facilities, natural light and views over One&Only Hayman Beach. The Entertainment Centre is split-level and can be divided into two separate rooms.

One&Only Hayman Island also welcomes teambuilding and incentive groups, offering a variety of watersport activities and corporate challenges, as well as an array of indulgent recreational and dining experiences that are tailored for top achievers.

Other facilities at One&Only Hayman Island include dining destinations, a spa, a fitness centre, an adult-only pool, family pool and children's beach area, making it perfect for accompanying families.



HOT DEALS



Four Points by Sheraton Brisbane

The new Four Points by Sheraton Brisbane is offering a number of perks for corporate events and social celebrations booked by September 30, 2014 and held by December 30, 2014.

Event planners will enjoy double complimentary rooms, double upgrades, triple Star-points and 10 per cent off delegate rates.

Room rates start from A\$230 (US\$217) per night, and a minimum of 10 room nights must be booked to qualify for this offer.

For more information on the hotel, visit www.starwoodhotels.com. To book, email fourpoints.brisbane@fourpoints.com.

The Sanchaya Bintan

The Sanchaya Bintan is rolling out full- and half-day meeting packages as part of its opening celebrations.

The luxury colonial estate's Full Day Meeting Package is priced at US\$110 per person, based on a minimum of 10 persons with at least a full-day room rental of US\$1,100. It includes full-day use of the Dahlia function room, conference set up, audiovisual equipment, two themed coffee breaks, lunch, stationery, and still or sparkling water bottled on the estate.

A Half Day Meeting Package costs US\$95 per person, based on a minimum of 10 persons with a minimum half-day room rental of US\$950. This covers half-day use of the Dahlia function room (09.00 to 13.00 or 13.00 to 17.00), conference set up, audiovisual equipment, one themed coffee break, lunch, stationery, and still or sparkling water bottled on the estate.

Packages are valid till June 30, 2015.

The Sanchaya, which offers 21 villas and nine suites, can also be bought out for exclusive use.

Contact Kris Marthin at sales@thesanchaya.com.

Sandy Beach Non Nuoc Resort Da Nang Vietnam

Centara Hotels & Resorts' Sandy Beach Non Nuoc Resort Da Nang Vietnam has launched

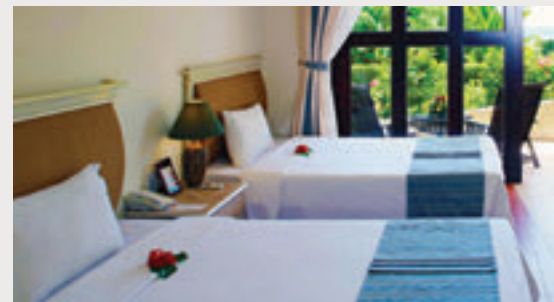
a meeting package that comes with accommodation, priced at 3.4 million Vietnamese dong (US\$160) net per person for a twin-share Superior Room and 3.8 million Vietnamese dong net per person for a twin-share Garden View Bungalow.

The package includes daily breakfast, complimentary upgrade to a higher room category for VIPs, morning and afternoon coffee break, choice of set menu or buffet lunch (minimum 30 pax for buffet) with one drink, use of a meeting room, audiovisual equipment, stationery, mints and bottles of mineral water.

Also offered to meeting groups is a choice of a tour to Hoi An and My Son Holy Land, or Ngu Hanh Son and Linh Ung Pagoda for the Superior room option, and to Hoi An or My Son Holy Land or Ba Na Mountain and Hue for the Garden View Bungalow package.

Terms and conditions apply.

For more information, contact cdv@chr.co.th.





The Village

Dining in a restaurant that resembles a village house set over a lake, provides planners a chance to create lasting impressions for their guests, writes **S Puvaneswary**

What sets The Village at Pullman Putrajaya Lakeside apart from other restaurants is its location – it is right over the stunning Putrajaya Lake and built on stilts. The view it provides is particularly attractive, as diners can see large stretches of the lake and the brightly lit Wawasan Putrajaya bridge in the distance. And if you are at the restaurant before 19.00, you can catch the sunset.

The Village has a semi open concept, with no walls to block the gentle breeze that blows from over the lake. There is a high attap roof, more to shelter diners from the rain than the sun, as the restaurant opens for business only after 18.30. To supplement the natural breeze are several ceiling fans.

To me, the restaurant's architecture resembles a typical Malay village house.

MICE application

The Village offers an air-conditioned private dining room with glass walls that let in unhindered views of the lake. This space is just perfect for private functions and can easily take 40 guests in a banquet setting. The hotel can provide portable projectors and screens for events held here.

Just outside this private dining room is a large open deck

which works well for cocktail parties. If privacy is what the planner desires, then it is privacy he shall get, as this deck is quite secluded from the main dining area.

I can picture men and women chilling out on this deck, sipping champagne or their preferred drink, after a long day of meetings and presentations.

The Village can also accommodate larger groups of 200 people or more in its the main dining area. This space has a cosy ambience, complete with wooden chairs and tables that are commonly found in many Malaysian homes, and lush potted plants.

If you fear the attack of mosquitoes in this al fresco venue, fear not. Blue-tint fluorescent lighting installed throughout the restaurant helps to keep bothersome bugs away.

F&B concept

The Village specialises in a mixture of Malaysian, Asian, Mediterranean and western cuisine.

Come every Friday and Saturday, a seafood barbecue takes over and guests are invited to stay on after their meal for refreshing mocktails and cocktails at the stylish bar.

On other days, planners can

choose from an extensive a la carte menu, or tailor one to suit their guests' dietary requirements.

This restaurant serves the best masala braised lamb shank I have ever tasted, while the gratin lobster on *perik* sauce and stir-fried vegetables is to die for. I ended the evening with an excellent tiramisu.

Although The Village has a pork-free menu, there are no restrictions on alcohol consumption.

Service and ambience

It is Malaysian hospitality at its best at The Village. The service staff are attentive and the young sous chef, Ahmad Zaidi Abd Razak, is most entertaining. He amused us with personal anecdotes and regaled us with stories of his teenager years, of how he loved to ride his bike, but after it got stolen he took up cooking to pass time. And that was how he ended up becoming a chef and loving his career ever since.



With soft music playing in the background, chef Ahmad Zaidi's stories and that evening's perfect weather, I wished good times would never end.

Contacts

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62200 Putrajaya.
Email: reservation@pullman-putrajaya.com; website: www.pullmanputrajaya.com

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Chiba gets extra funds to fuel MICE promotions

By Karen Yue

An additional 50 million yen (US\$493,412) has been added to Chiba Convention Bureau and International Center's (CCB-IC) 2014 budget, bringing its spending power this year to 250 million yen, in an effort to boost its sales and destination promotion capabilities.

In an email interview with *TTGmice*, Takeo Katsura, director of convention division with CCB-IC, explained that the bureau does not usually enjoy a yearly budget increment, and the booster fund was a result of Chiba Prefecture's renewed focus on the business events industry.

"Chiba Prefecture (wants to) take advantage of the opportunity presented by the national government's goal to increase the number of overseas visitors to 20 million per year by 2020 and Tokyo's successful bid for the 2020 Summer Olympics," said Katsura.

"Chiba Prefecture is in a good position to take advantage of this opportunity because it is right next to Tokyo, is home to Japan's main international airport (Narita International Airport) and has the Makuhari Messe Convention Complex."

CCB-IC has since established a new international business development office and hired two staff to seek out new business leads. The convention bureau will also be expanding its activities beyond participation at international trade conventions to include more destination marketing shows around Asia and sales trips with the prefecture governor.



Makuhari Messe Convention Complex is among Chiba's available MICE facilities

Some of the market outreach activities planned for this year include a seminar in Taiwan this October which will coincide with the Top Sales Tour led by the prefecture governor. Come January 2015, CCB-IC will organise a seminar at PCMA Convening Leaders in Chicago.

CCB-IC has raised its sales target by 40 per cent and hopes to win enough event bids this year to drive an additional 6.7 billion yen into the local economy. While association meetings will remain the focus of CCB-IC, Katsura said opportunities in corporate meetings and incentives, especially from South-east Asia, will be sought out.

Chiba Prefecture, which ranks 294th on ICCA's list of global meetings cities and 10th in Japan on UIA's charts this year, already welcomes a number of notable international events. Some of them include the 1,200-pax Asia Pacific Physics Conference in July 2013 and the 1,200-pax JASCA 50th Anniversary Conference IUAES Inter-Congress 2014 in May.

Major events to proceed in Thailand

As a signal of returning confidence in Thailand's MICE sector, major international conferences and events scheduled to take place in Thailand from 2H2014 to 2015 will go ahead as planned even as Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) bags 15 new wins.

Among these include the 74th FIP World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences 2014, which will draw 2,000 attendees; the Harmony World Puppet Carnival in Bangkok for 30,000 attendees in November; and the Unicity Global Convention, to welcome more than 50,000 guests in October.

Nopparat Maythaveekulchai, president of TCEB, remarked: "Stability is a key consideration for MICE travellers, and the confidence shown by international organisers is proof-positive that Thailand is again ready to host MICE events of any size and scale."

"We look forward to extending our famous warm Thai hospitality and world-class MICE services to 157,930 high-quality business travellers during the final quarter of the 2014 fiscal year."

TCEB revised its forecast for Thailand's MICE industry this year, predicting 87.2 billion baht (US\$2.7 billion) in revenue and 888,210 MICE travellers.

Do your bit for children in need

IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific will be making a *Shoebbox of Love* with necessities such as toiletries, clothing, stationery and toys, and giving it to Camillian Home, a registered non-profit children's charity operating on behalf of the St. Camillus Foundation of Thailand.

The home was founded by Father Giovanni Contarin, an Italian Priest who has done extensive work for the poor in Thailand since 1987. It works with children who are living with disabilities, some of whom have been orphaned or abandoned, and some of whom are also living with HIV/AIDS. Children are brought up and taught values based on their own beliefs and cultural backgrounds.

To contribute to this cause, contact itcma@ttgasia.com or the home directly at www.camillianhomelatkrabang.org.

{ Talking numbers }

2.5

The projected increase in cost per attendee, per day at meetings and events held next year in the Asia Pacific region, according to the 2015 Global Travel Price Outlook by Carlson Wagonlit Travel and the GBTA Foundation

0.75

The projected increase in group size at meetings and events held next year in the region, driven by Asia-Pacific's solid economic growth which encourages organisations to invest in such activities, said the same study

Indian MICE agents form association for power

By Shekhar Niyogi

An association aimed at bringing together various Indian MICE industry players and plugging the market's information gap was formed this month.

The Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA) counts about 50 MICE and business travel suppliers across India as members, and will embark on training sessions, roadshows, advertising, tradeshow and joint promotions.

Jagdeep Bhagat, founder member and coordinator branding, NIMA, said: "NIMA will create a dynamic news stream of world-wide information about MICE-related

events to allow access to its members, who can plan their bids and participation well in advance."

He added: "So far, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Catalunya Convention Bureau, Catalan Tourist Board and Cyprus Convention Bureau have agreed to be destination partners of NIMA."

NIMA advisor Rajesh Sethi said: "We will bring into play the importance of MICE organisations in Tier Two and Three cities, where rapid growth is evident."

The new association is expected to help MICE companies bid for events.



Sethi: catalyst for MICE growth beyond state capitals

TTGmice strikes gold again

For the second year consecutively, TTGmice has been awarded a PATA Gold Award for Travel Journalism-Industry Business Article.

The article, *Team on Board*, ran as a cover story in the November 2013 of the publication.

With mega cruise ships spouting facilities unimaginable before – from rock-climbing walls and sports courts to ice-skating rinks and zip lines – teambuilding on board has become a new phenomenon. In the main article, Raini Hamdi dived into why teambuilding occurs more effortless at sea, how the hassle-free and all-inclusive nature of cruising makes it attractive for more Asian meeting plan-

ners to hold their events on board and how cruise companies, for which the meetings market is an important component to fill up huge capacities, are doing just about everything to fish for the business.

The article also carried sidebars looking at the pros and cons of teambuilding at sea and corporates' opinions about it, filed by Mimi Hudoyo, S. Puvaneswary, Paige Lee Pei Qi, Rosa Ocampo, Prudence Lui and Shekhar Niyogi.

TTGmice's cover story on green meetings also won a PATA Gold

Award last year. This latest win brings to four the number of gold awards the magazine has amassed to-date.



{ In brief }

Setia City venue eyes regional business

Less than two years since it first opened its doors, Setia City Convention Centre is expanding its focus from the domestic market to regional business.

The convention centre, launched in 2012 but opened to public bookings only last year, has an inventory consisting of a pillar-less ballroom for 180 tables, eight meeting rooms, three VIP rooms, and three AV rooms that can double up as interpretation booths.

Convention centre head, Francis Teo, said the convention centre is working with DMCs, PCOs, and event management companies to attract more regional business. It has so far confirmed three regional meetings, of which two will be held this month, namely the 1,500-pax AIA Regional Life Planners Congress, and 500-pax GD Express regional conference.

CWT To Go gets its game on

Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) will integrate a score-keeping functionality to its mobile app CWT To Go in order to encourage corporate travellers to adhere to company travel policy.

Travel Gamification is a game-style loyalty scheme for companies in which employees earn points for compliance and track their position on the company's gamification leader board. Each company's Travel Gamification programme is customised to the client's needs.

Joel Wartgow, senior director, CWT Solutions Group, Americas, said the scheme will help travel managers "to positively reinforce behaviour compliant with their travel programme".

France speeds up visa process for Indians

France will issue visas to Indian travellers within 48 hours of application starting from January 1, 2015, announced its foreign minister Laurent Fabius in Mumbai.

Travellers will no longer have to wait seven days for their visas, and the move is the latest attempt to enhance France's image as a travel destination to Indian citizens.

France will also open visa application centres throughout India, beginning one for Kochi in July.

Meanwhile travel app Chalo Paris or Go Paris will be launched in September catering to the needs of the Indian traveller and containing information such as the location of Indian restaurants and prices in rupees, with more Indian languages to be added over time.

Swiss-Garden expands residence portfolio

Malaysia-based Swiss-Garden International will add two serviced residences to its collection by the end of this year, in line with its aim to incorporate such apartment products into its portfolio since 2010.

The Swiss-Garden Hotel & Residences Malacca will offer 306 hotel rooms, 463 serviced apartment units, a grand ballroom for 800 pax, and six multifunctional rooms, among other facilities, while the other, Swiss-Garden Resort Residences Sungai Karang in Kuantan, will offer 264 rooms, including 88 studio suites and 176 two-bedroom suites. The latter will cater well to the large community of oil and gas, and shipping firms in the city.

{ 2014 Calendar }

September 17-19

PATA Travel Mart
Phnom Penh,
Cambodia

September 30 - October 2

IT&CM Asia
Bangkok, Thailand

October 29-31

ITB Asia
Singapore

November 1-5

53rd ICCA Congress
Antalya, Turkey

China powers regional exhibitions growth

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

Exhibitions are migrating from the West to the East, with China lauded as the driving force behind the region's growing appeal to organisers.

According to the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI), the net space sold at Asian trade fairs jumped 6.6 per cent in 2013 to more than 17 million square metres, registering its strongest growth since 2008 – of which more than 55 per cent was sold in China.

The space sold in Asia was approximately eight million square metres in 2004.

Edward Liu, group managing director of Conference & Exhibition Management Services, who organises at least five exhibitions in China every year, said: "There is no limit to growth in China and you can see that every city is pumping millions of dollars to build exhibition centres. Currently, China has 106 venues and 4.9 mil-

lion square metres worth of space, which represents almost 70 per cent of the total capacity available in the region."

Liu, who is also past president of the Asian Federation of Exhibition & Convention Associations, expects the new National (Shanghai) Center for Exhibition & Convention – featuring 403,500 square metres of gross indoor space to make it Asia's largest exhibition venue – will transform Shanghai.

Sharing similar sentiments, UFI Asia Pacific regional manager and BSG managing director, Mark Cochrane, said: "That remarkable track record of growth

(in Asia) looks highly likely to continue with the new mega venue opening in Shanghai this year and additional space becoming available in key high-growth markets such as Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Taipei in the next one to two years."

Liu added that current economic discontinuities and uncertainties in Europe

and the US are also driving MICE organisers to Asia.

"China and India especially will attract these global organisers and events with their huge population and immense economic development and potential," he explained.

Meanwhile, Liu believes that South-east Asia will shine even brighter with the advent of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2015, which will form a "new battleground" for foreign organisers.

"The challenge with exhibitions is, unlike meetings and (other) events, they are more market-driven than destination-driven," he said. "This means that they are often anchored in a destination because they meet the market demand, and they do not rotate to other locations."

As such, Singapore may be at a disadvantage due to its smaller population, Liu opined. However, with AEC 2015, small countries can leverage South-east Asia's audience of 600 million to better promote themselves.



Liu: Huge hardware investment in China

Suntec Singapore to engage event clients through industry forums

The first Healthcare Meetings Forum Asia, held on August 1 at Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre, will be the first of several in-depth industry forums that the venue intends to run as part of its move to connect with decision-makers from various industries and to better understand meetings-related issues impacting these clients.

Suntec Singapore's CEO, Arun Madhok, said each forum would be dedicated to a specific industry and offered free to all attendees.

"The next few forums will likely follow the same approach taken with the Healthcare Meetings Forum Asia. While Suntec Singapore took the lead in pulling the conference together, it was done in cooperation with various partners, such as Zibrant and Compliant Venues, and sponsors," said Madhok.

"Just like Healthcare Meetings Forum Asia, future forums will feature highly interactive sessions that encourage a deep exchange of knowl-

edge. We will continue to keep these forums intimate; an audience of 80 to 100 pax is just right for good dialogue."

The Healthcare Meetings Forum Asia was attended by some 80 top-level representatives from medical and healthcare societies and companies, as well as meeting planners who specialise in this sector.

"We want to engage our event clients in a fresh way that goes beyond just a site inspection," said Madhok. "When they come here for an industry forum, they gain firsthand experience of our hardware and service. More importantly, though, is that these forums will help us (the Suntec Singapore team) gain more insights to the event needs of specific industries." – **Karen Yue**



IT&CM Asia 2014's keynote to discuss talent and crisis management

Today's challenging macroenvironment has made it an even tougher task for travel industry professionals to handle crises that may emerge from disruptive technology, natural disasters, civil unrest and transportation accidents.

Whatever the difficulty, equipping every individual to positively manage their circumstances and outcomes, not only boosts staff confidence, but enables the organisation and industry to ride out these challenges and come away stronger than before, insists Bert van Walbeek, managing director of The Winning Edge.

Van Walbeek, a respected veteran in the hospitality and tourism industry, will address the issues of talent management and risk/crisis management at this year's IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2014 Keynote. Catch him on September 30, from 16.10 to 17.10 at the World Ballroom, Centara Grand at CentralWorld, Bangkok.



Van Walbeek will speak at the event's keynote



HANGZHOU,

EXTRAORDINARY DESTINATION FOR INCENTIVE

Keeping the golden rules of MICE industry - Tourism resources, transportation network, facilities, services, business culture, incentive programmes and government support in mind, Hangzhou has it all covered for all business event organisers, moving into the list of MICE professionals as the next MICE destination. With everything covered for business, Hangzhou adds in fun into the successful business events equation.

HERE'S A PEEK INTO SOME UNIQUELY HANGZHOU EXPERIENCES:

NEED FOR SPEED?

F2 International Go Karts Hangzhou

Positioned as Asia's Number One and World's Number Two indoor Go Kart venue, this might just race your event or incentive travel to participants' top memorable list.



TRAVEL BACK IN TIME?

Peony Pavilion

Visit the Number 1 mansion of late Qing Dynasty in Jiangnan. Walk through hundreds of red wood lanterns, explore gardens of the Yangtze Delta and listen to the soft and watery tune of Kunqu Opera. Let pavilions and pagodas give you a glimpse of the Qing Dynasty.



INVIGORATE YOUR TASTE BUD, REJUVENATE YOUR MIND AND SOUL

Guangxingtang Medical Care

These days, food and wine tasting are common. But, how about medical food tasting?

The long-history traditional Chinese medicine is one of the pillars of Chinese culture. These unique traditional Chinese medical culture and healthcare related activities, such as medicinal food and tea tasting, acupuncture, massage or foot massage, allow you understand the crux of traditional Chinese medicine.



TEA AT ITS BEST



Tea picking at Longjing Village

It's a commodity, but it is exceptional when you pick the tea leaves yourself. With guidance from the professional tea picker, visitors get a chance to pick their own tea leaves. It's always fun with some friendly competition, therefore the professional tea picker will pick the best disciple who mastered the art of tea picking within 20 minutes. Aside that, there will also be a special tea ceremony arranged in a drafted pavilion on the top of stunning Longjing Hill, where visitors get to learn more about tea and its nutrient values,

enjoy the show while sipping on freshly brewed authentic West Lake Longjing Tea and have the breath-taking views captured with their lens.

LIVE ALIKE LOCAL OF HANGZHOU

Chenghuang Pavilion, Wushan Hill

The key to a leisure life in Hangzhou is to kick-start your day by heading to Chenghuang Pavilion in Wushan Hill to have Hangzhou snacks such as Congbaohui, a unique kind of pancake with fried bread stick and spring onions, for breakfast there. After breakfast, put on the vantage ropes and learn some Taichi routine to addresses the key components of fitness — muscle strength, flexibility and balance. Visitors will find themselves immersed in the local harmonious and relaxing morning scene at the morning market with many local people strolling with their birds or practicing their voices.



GATHER IN XIXI WETLAND PARK AND FORGE AHEAD

Amazing Race in Xixi Wetland Park

Drawing inspiration from American reality TV show, "Amazing Race", participants are divided into groups to search through the 4-hour route for exploration sites at different sections. Groups will find themselves strengthening group cohesion while they have fun experiencing the unique Xixi Wetland. An award ceremony for the winning team and dinner party for all can be arranged according to the client's requests.

Hangzhou Tourism Commission promotes Hangzhou Incentive Travel Planner's Guide, which provides information on all kinds of Hangzhou Incentive travel products, including team building events as mentioned above, China traditional culture, citizen lifestyle, and gala dinner, etc. For more information, please visit www.micehangzhou.com

Tips to Hangzhou, the capital and largest city Zhejiang Province in Eastern China

TRANSPORT: Direct flight connections with 19 major cities including Singapore and Hong Kong via Hangzhou Xiaoshan International Airport.

ACCOMMODATION: 240 well-developed hotels with supporting facilities as well as 6 professional exhibition venues for all kinds of business events.

SUPPORT: First association in MICE industry in China - Hangzhou MICE Association, set up by Hangzhou Tourism Promotion Sector of Hangzhou Tourism Commission to assist on all aspects of business events planning.

SEASONS: 4 distinct seasons throughout the year with summer temperature ranging 25-34°C offers picturesque greenery and golden fall with osmanthus flowers blooming in delightful weather.

Adelaide wins over global engineering deans conference

ADELAIDE The Adelaide Convention Bureau and the University of Adelaide has succeeded in their joint bid for the hosting rights of the 2015 Global Engineering Deans Council (GEDC) Conference.

Hailed as the world's most important annual engineering research conference, the event will count engineering deans from top engineering schools, universities and colleges across the globe among its attendees. There will be representation from renowned institutions such as University of Notre Dame and Carnegie Mellon University.

During the conference, the eyes of world's engineering scientists will be firmly on South Australia, giving the state's educational institutions an opportunity to showcase their expertise, achievements and offerings on a global stage.

David Travers, the Australian chief executive of world ranked University College London, and an ambassador to Adelaide Convention Bureau's *Conventions Adelaide Program*, said in a press release that the conference would offer a unique opportunity for South Australian industry and researchers to highlight local expertise.

GEDC Conference will be held at the InterContinental Adelaide from November 30 to December 2 next year.

Previous host cities have included Paris, Beijing, Chicago and Buenos Aires.



Engineering scientists will flock to Adelaide in 2015

Regional bloggers meeting to be held in Colombo

COLOMBO Asia's first international travel bloggers conference will be held in Colombo this year, jointly hosted by John Keells Group's Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts and the Professional Travel Bloggers Association (PTBA).

Cinnamon Travel Bloggers Conference (TBC) Asia will run from November 14-18, focusing on the themes of travelling, writing and technology. It will feature educational sessions and networking opportunities, while representatives from the BBC, Facebook, TripAdvisor and Google are slated to speak.

Participants include travel and food writers and photographers who will be hosted, with air tickets sponsored by SriLankan Airline. – Feizal Samath



PTBA and Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts will co-host event



Be Impressed with Regal Airport Hotel

Directly connected to the Hong Kong International Airport within a 2-minute stroll, and in close proximity to the AsiaWorld-Expo convention centre, Regal Airport Hotel features 30 diversified meeting venues including a pillar-free ballroom to accommodate up to 1,500 persons.

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25th July 2014, Friday Gardens By The Bay

TTG Asia Media celebrated its 40th anniversary with close to 400 travel trade professionals coming together for an eventful fun run. From the get-go, the Gardens By The Bay came alive with the zealous energy of runners. The excitement was infectious, with every moment a highlight, from the fancy dressed, the fringe activities and groovy warm-up workout, to the all-out flag off, generous networking fare, and attractive lucky draw prizes & goodie bags. Everyone had a memorable evening steeped in camaraderie, that is extremely fitting of a well-loved brand that has stood at the heart of the industry for the last 40 years, and will continue to do so for many more years to come.

Run in Wonderland

Co-organised by



▲ In support of Gift of Gardens, a CSR initiative of Gardens By The Bay, TTG Asia Media delivers a cheque with proceeds collected from the fun run!

▲ Darren Ng (left) and Michael Chow (right) of TTG Asia Media with co-organiser Alloysius Teng of Gardens By The Bay



▲ All smiles from team Hertz Asia-Pacific.



▲ One of our generous sponsors, dynamic team Brand USA.



▲ Team Oakwood Asia all decked in unity.



▲ Team TTG all dressed up, transforming into characters from Tim Burton's Alice In Wonderland film, to welcome all our fun run participants!



▲ The Gardens By The Bay Team, our co-organiser and venue host, joined by TTG Asia Media's Darren Ng as the Mad Hatter and Michael Chow as the Noble Knight.



▲ Hands up in the air! All excited about the flag-off led by Ms Peggy Chong of Gardens By The Bay together with Mr Darren Ng and Mr Michael Chow of TTG Asia Media.



▲ Spotted running pillows! Team Ibis Singapore, with their adorable and bubbly mascots!



▲ Jumping for joy as Team Mandarin Orchard lit up the event with their energy and pretty balloons.



▲ Royal Plaza on Scotts gets our vote as best dressed team of this event!



▲ Hong Thai Travel and other trade partners with TTG Asia Media's Darren Ng.

With special thanks to the following sponsors:

Peach Garden • Bintan Lagoon Resort • Black Bean Ideas • BrandUSA • Bugis Street • Carlton Hotel Singapore • Dorsett Singapore • Equarius Hotel • Fraser Hospitality • Four Seasons Hotel Singapore • Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel Singapore • Grand Park Orchard • I12 Katong • Identity • Origin Associates Pte Ltd • One Farrer Hotel & Spa • Park Hotel Clarke Quay • PARKROYAL on Kitchener Road • Pere Ocean • Rendezvous Hotel Singapore by Far East Hospitality • Royal Plaza on Scotts • The Fullerton Hotel Singapore • The Ritz-Carlton Millenia Singapore • Timesprinters • Underwater World Singapore

SCAN HERE
for more pictures from
Run in Wonderland

or see more at #TTGFunRun and
#TTG40tude at
these platforms:



MACAU

The Business of Luxury

Targetting China's high net worth individuals, three trade shows in Macau will shine the spotlight on high-end **cars**, **yachts** and **jets** this November. It's going to be a glamorous mix of business and pleasure with some of the most prestigious brands in the world.

The world's luxury automotive, yacht and business jet community will be looking to Macau when three of Macau's most high-profile trade shows — **China (Macau) International Automobile Exposition**, **Macau Business Aviation Exhibition**, and **China (Macau) International Yacht Import and Export Fair** — open concurrently in November.

These exhibitions have gained a strong following among Chinese trade and leisure visitors, making all three a golden opportunity for industry professionals from around the world to understand the particular preferences of the Chinese market. The presence of major industry players ensures that the atmosphere is professional and experience is international.

China's growth engine

China continues to be a growth market for luxury automobiles, yachts and business jets. China's strong economic performance is expected to fuel demand, providing businesses in the entire value chain opportunities for growth.

These three trade shows have also grown to become a popular networking platform for those in the trade, thanks to the participation of business leaders and high-ranking government officials from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and the Pearl River Delta region.

This year, show organiser Nam Kwong Exhibition has added a series of activities to facilitate interaction among participants such as a business



summit, tour of business jets and golf invitation tournaments. Amid the festive atmosphere and eye-catching displays, visitors will not only get to talk business but also enjoy Macau's unique culture and modern business facilities.

Macau, a business destination

A gateway to China and trading port for centuries, Macau is today a world-class business destination. With strong government support, a well-developed transport and hotel infrastructure, and wide variety of venues to accommodate business events of any size, Macau has grown to become one of Asia's best destinations for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE).

The Macau government continues to play an active role in facilitating trade between China and the world. It

"The business aviation exhibition will take place at the same time as the auto expo and yacht show, creating a series of high-end business events with many exciting fringe activities. We hope exhibitors and visitors from all over the world will have an extraordinary experience in Macau."

Song Xiaodong

Assistant general manager
Nam Kwong Group

is especially supportive of international business events and the development of Macau's trade fair sector.

Macau has rolled out incentives for show organisers, giving local and international event planners much support in areas such as advertising and promotion, pre-event preparation and local partnerships. The goal is to create unbeatable value for MICE organisers and elevate Macau to become one of the world's leading destinations for international business events. ■

CARS

4th China (Macau) International Automobile Exposition

Venue: Cotai Expo, The Venetian Macao
Dates: November 7-9, 2014

2014 HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Special interest zones – “China-made Autos”, “Ultra Luxurious Cars”, “Imported Autos” and “Modified Cars and Accessories”.
- ▶ At 62,000 sqm, the 2014 edition will be the most comprehensive overseas exhibition by Chinese automotive manufacturers.
- ▶ Auto conferences, buyers-meet-sellers sessions, golf tournaments, photo contests and many other exciting activities.



In the 2013 auto expo, more than 400 cars from more than 60 brands were on display, drawing 160,000 visitor entries over three days. This year, all the top marques in China's automotive manufacturing will back as well as the most coveted auto brands from overseas. Look out for new energy vehicles, concept cars, racing cars, two-wheel vehicles, new processes and materials and auto services and lifestyle products.

www.macau-autoshow-nk.com.mo

YACHTS

China (Macau) International Yacht Import and Export Fair

Venue: Grand Coloane Beach Resort & Hac Sa Beach
Dates: November 7-9, 2014

2014 HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ More than 40 yachts plus exhibitions of art, antiques, wine and luxury lifestyle products and viewings of private collections.
- ▶ 8,000 special guests from Greater China, including VVIPs arriving on private jets.
- ▶ Activities include theme parties, gala dinner, cocktail party, luxury cruise and golf.

The Chinese yachting market is one which the world's yacht manufacturers can truly be upbeat about. At a time



JETS

3rd Macau Business Aviation Exhibition

Venue: Macau International Airport
Dates: November 6-8, 2014

2014 HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Static displays by the world's leading business jet manufacturers, with exhibits by related service providers in financing, maintenance, leasing and media.
- ▶ Attendance by industry leaders and high-level government VIPs from Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Pearl River Delta.
- ▶ Activities include a business summit, business jet experience and golf invitations.

China's economic growth has resulted in the rapid rise of business aviation in China. In Macau, the growth rate for business jet activities is an impressive year-on-year rise of 31.64% for the first quarter of 2014.

This exhibition is the largest business aviation event in Macau with the greatest number of jets on display, including those by Boeing, Airbus, Gulfstream, Embraer, Cessna, Hawker Beechcraft, Dassault, Bombardier. A full spectrum of products and services will also be showcased, in an area covering more than 20,000 sqm.

www.macau-gwj.com



when the prevailing sentiment worldwide is largely cautious, growth opportunities can still be found in China.

This exhibition provides access to a very wealthy yet untapped market, where interest for high-end lifestyle products remains strong. Its programme includes golf tournaments, music entertainment, private viewings, parties, wine-tasting, cocktails and gala dinners. The spotlight

will no doubt be on luxury yachts and the opportunity to acquire one of these “Jewels of the Seas” at the glamorous setting at East Port Marina. The show's reputation has been growing steadily among Chinese consumers and the diversity of visitors will give exhibitors more opportunities to gain new contacts and make sales.

www.macau-yachtshow-nk.com.mo

The life (what life?) of a PCO

The market is looking healthy but a PCO may end up sick – unless he knows how to manage a changing business, **Raini Hamdi** reports



Business is on the rise for PCOs but so are stress levels it seems, as meetings get larger, lead times become shorter while the number of employees becomes smaller.

That, is the lot of the PCO business today. Both the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO) and the World PCO Alliance (WPCOA) report fairly similar findings at the recent IMEX in Frankfurt.

First the good news: the market is starting to look healthy again after the lean years following the debt-crisis. The total number of association meetings handled by IAPCO members (115 from 40 countries) last year rose to 2,826, from 2,607 in 2012. Corporate meetings reversed its downward trend, rising to 3,329 in 2013, from 3,280 in 2012. Only government meetings remained down from its peak in 2011 (707), with 609 handled in 2013.

The number of participants handled also rose nearly six per cent on the previous year to 2,718,797. Average number of participants per event increased 16.5 per cent from the low of 2011 (345) to 402 in 2013.

Capping the good news is, roomnights have risen by a staggering 20 per cent-plus from 2012, perhaps indicating a return to service providers from impersonal online facilities. Michel Neijmann, IAPCO president, said: "This shows we could still fulfil the needs of the clients in this area and that people do want to communicate one-on-one with people for bookings, plus I think the PCOs also got smarter in packaging deals in a more creative way while clients too got smarter in realising that Expedia, Booking.com

The conference business is in the pink of health now but PCOs are having a tough time juggling shorter lead times, larger meeting attendance, fewer staff and not necessarily more money from clients

and the like might not necessarily be cheaper.”

Neijmann attributed the increase in association meetings and corporate meetings to “economic trust”, resulting in companies being “daring to invest” again in events.

WPCOA, comprising 20 PCOs world-wide, saw a total growth of 15 per cent in 2013 compared to 2012. Together, they handled over 500 congresses with over 450,000 delegates in 2013, said WPCOA.

However, a WPCOA study also shows that the lead time is getting shorter to the point it really puts to test an organiser’s ability to be flexible and work well under pressure.

In February this year, Malaysia-based AOS Conventions & Events secured three large events – all three are for this year. In 2013, another WPCOA member, International Conference Services Denmark, secured an event with 8,000 delegates. The lead time? Three weeks.

Said Nancy Tan, managing director of Ace:Dayton based in Singapore: “It is increasingly difficult for us to plan our budget. Usually we do not choose events that are too close to one another but with such lead times, it’s getting harder.”

PCOs interviewed said lead times are getting shorter for various reasons depending on each situation.

K&A International Taiwan president, Kitty Wong, pointed to an example where a pharmaceutical company doing a 500 pax event was booked at a mere six weeks’ lead time because “things got stuck with the PCO they hired or they thought they could have handled it themselves”.

Anthony Wong, group managing director of AOS, believes an increase in political strifes does play a big part in shifting business at short notice from one country to the next. At this year’s IMEX, for example, enquiries from buyers considering to shift events from Thailand were evident when news of



“PCOs are doing more with less staff.”

Michel Neijmann, President, IAPCO

martial law imposed in the country broke on the day IMEX opened. The Crimea incident saw Europeans boycotting Russia, and Russia avoiding Europe in favour of South-east Asia, said Wong, adding business could quickly shift not just from one country to a neighbouring country but from one continent to another as accessibility is no longer an issue with the number of flights today.

Compounding a tight timeframe for conference teams to prepare larger events, “PCOs are doing more with less staff”, said IAPCO’s Neijmann.

IAPCO’s latest survey shows the number of employees at its members collectively went down to 4,993 last year, from 5,097 in 2012 and 5,609 in 2011. Asked if this was due to more effective use of technology, he said it was probably more due to “on the whole, rising costs and the need to cut costs to ensure survival”. 2011 was also the year when the number of meetings, participants, etc, was at the lowest following the financial crisis that started in 2010.

AOS’ Wong added that human resource indeed is an issue and it’s not just a question of lack of staff but having to manage a new generation of them.

“We have to cope with last-minute bookings and shorter lead times. HR is an issue. Gen Y’ers – they don’t want to

learn too deeply, so it’s how you manage this issue. It’s so different from 20 years ago,” he said.

IAPCO is stepping up education, certification and accreditation to improve the quality of PCOs. It organises meetings masterclasses, an annual seminar and regional seminars, the latter intended to bring education to countries if they could not go to IAPCO, most recent being a three-day regional seminar in Bangkok and a four-day in Sri Lanka.

But K&A’s Wong said the reality is, for a lot of PCOs, cost (including on training and education) still matters a lot although business is rising.

“The fact is, the clients are not paying more,” she said. “If clients are not paying more, we either have to squeeze our suppliers further, or try and add value in order to keep the business. So now we have to do more work, such as assisting them with the programme content or marketing,” she said.

In the lead-up to the International Association of Volunteer Effort (IAVE)’s 23rd World Volunteer Conference & Youth Conference in Queensland’s Gold Coast this month (September 15-20), PCO Pamela Holsinger, managing director of Eventcorp Australia, organised a series of roadshows “to meet with the people who head up the industry in various regions and show them how to put together a delegation to the conference”.

“I think we’re better at marketing and could see things from a different angle. Associations might say it’s a waste of time for them to do roadshows in order to boost attendance. But having done these roadshows, we now have three regions that previously were not sending delegates that are doing so now. We do the strategic thinking and marketing and creative research as to what the delegates need, what would get them to go to a conference. Gold Coast Tourism too help with marketing support to incentivise delegates to come,” said Holsinger.

As Wong summed it up: “There is business, but it’s hard to make a decent living.”



“The fact is, the clients are not paying more... (but) now we have to do more work, such as assisting them with the programme content or marketing.”

Kitty Wong
President, K&A International Taiwan



Global Tourism & Hospitality Conference and 11th Asian Tourism Forum 2014

Undergraduates of Hong Kong Polytechnic University put textbook knowledge into practice to make a challenging two-in-one conference possible. By **Prudence Lui**

Co-organisers

School of Hotel and Tourism Management of Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Taylor & Francis Group

Venue

Hotel ICON, Hong Kong

Dates

May 18-20, 2014

No. of participants

Over 280

Objectives

To provide a platform for academics, industry leaders, editors and researchers to define the future roadmap of the industry, and strengthen SHTM's role as a world-leading provider of hospitality and tourism education

Results

The organising committee leveraged the opportunity to gain practical experience and demonstrate their abilities. The conference was an extraordinary experience for the delegates.

The joint Global Tourism & Hospitality Conference & 11th Asian Tourism Forum 2014 at Hotel ICON owed its success to an organising committee comprising 30 students from Hong Kong Polytechnic University's School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM).

A collaboration with Taylor & Francis Group, the event also coincided with SHTM's 35th anniversary, doubling the pressure on the committee, according to second-year student and committee chairman, Leo Yip.

"Our school had placed a lot of emphasis on this two-in-one conference. It took us almost 10 months to make it possible, from conceptualisation and planning to delivery. Six sub-teams were created to monitor various areas such as publicity, registration, programme, and hotel and tour arrangement," said Yip.

With guidance from the department's professors and staff, preparation started in September 2013.

Yip shared that producing the conference programme was one of the challenges, taking a longer time to be confirmed with the different teams having to provide content, such as the programme line-up and speaker information, outside their own busy study schedule.

"It took longer than we expected also because of many amendments. Authors of paper presentations were allowed to update their papers after the initial submission. Subsequently, many of them

changed their papers' content."

Another pre-conference challenge was that of having to liaise with the hotel and performers for rehearsals and conduct numerous briefing sessions with various parties all at once, nearer the event date.

Yip recalled: "For instance, the printing and production team struggled with type-setting, designing and formatting the conference information, on top of designing the conference backdrop and souvenirs for delegates. One day before the conference, we were still doing the final review as well as packing of the materials."

The conference's interactive session for attendees and invited speakers presented a challenge too. Yip said: "The speakers included editors of top academic journals and leading educators in the tourism and hospitality field. Preparation for the session and handling of the speakers were challenging for us, but luckily it all worked out nicely and we gained a lot of valuable experience."

Nevertheless, the organisers' efforts paid off because the target number of attendees was met. Asked if there was any room for improvement, Yip said: "This is the first practical experience for us in organising an event. Of course we can always improve, such as exercising greater caution in the selection of (the vegetarian) menu, and better time management for rehearsals. We believe we can do better in the future with the experience we have gained from organising this conference."



SIAL ASEAN 2014

The organiser of the food event has to cross several hurdles, such as simultaneously running another show, to enable it to be held for the first time in the Philippines. By **Marianne Carandang**

Convincing representatives from SIAL, the world's largest food tradeshow, of the Philippines' potential to hold the event wasn't easy, according to Jon Richmond Ang, marketing director for Worldbex Services, whose subsidiary Mafbex Events Management (MEM) executed the show.

The European food trade didn't really know the Philippines, Ang explained. "But the Philippines has several advantages. We eat the most."

He was referring to the Philippines' largest consumption of food per capita in ASEAN, due to its population of 100 million.

He added: "We're meat eaters; we eat pork, and we drink alcohol."

This edged out neighbouring countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, which have restrictions on both items.

But existing Philippine meat import restrictions were a concern. "We had to ensure that a lot of strict local rules and regulations were met – and that we could guarantee the safety of the delegates."

In fact, SIAL representatives had visited Manila in 2013 and saw how Worldbex stage Manila Food and Beverage Expo (MAFBEX), Worldbex's own consumer tradeshow, that has been running since 2006. The visit helped clinch the deal.

The show's trademarks include culinary workshops from top Philippine chefs

and competitions attracting students from the booming culinary school industry.

"We could always opt to have a different date and a different venue (for SIAL ASEAN), but since this was SIAL's first time in Manila, we thought, why not have it together with MAFBEX and show the international buyers how Filipinos put up a good show," Ang shared.

"We had to make sure that the message was very clear, that one show was B2B and the other B2C, and that putting them together made for the biggest food tradeshow (to date)," he said.

Marketing and promotion for SIAL were done in-house. The show would sell the Philippines as the "Best Kept Secret for Food and Wine Business in Asia" to address the market's lack of familiarity with the destination.

Sound logistics also played a part in the events' success. "It was the first time we organise two shows in one venue, so we had to really study the logistics of it all – traffic management, security measures, among others," said Ang.

An additional tent connecting to an existing one and the nearby Philippine Trade Training Center, a government facility, had to be constructed to accommodate all participants from both shows.

SIAL ASEAN enabled many first-time visitors to experience good Philippine service, from airport reception to the 24-hour shuttle services to and from partner hotels.

MEM also organised a gala for 400 delegates at the Blue Leaf Filipinas pavilion in nearby ASEANA City, who were welcomed by folk dancers and indigenous tribesmen in colourful traditional outfit.

There were also two special pavilions, one showcasing demonstrations from top chefs, while another highlighted groundbreaking product, packaging and processing innovations.

Additionally, MEM hired external help to organise a total of 700 pre-arranged meetings, which were held at a special lounge at the expo.

Although a little short of its target, SIAL ASEAN drew about 7,500 participants, 197 exhibitors, the bulk of which came from Japan, South Korea, China and Europe, and over 60 hosted buyers.

Apart from a proud moment when SIAL ASEAN bestowed a "best in innovation" award to Fisher Farms Inc, a Filipino aquaculture grower and food processor, Ang shared another achievement: "SIAL ASEAN will be held here again in 2016. The Philippines, it is."

Organiser

Mafbex Events Management

Client

The SIAL Group

Venue

World Trade Center Metro Manila

Dates

June 11-13, 2014

No. of participants

7,489

Challenges

Creating confidence in the Philippines as a food trade destination in ASEAN despite stringent rules on imports; and executing two shows at the same time and venue

Result

New interest aroused, especially from the European market, in Philippine products

WORK MEETS STYLE



The South Beach is set to transform the MICE sector in Singapore, offering MICE planners the unique opportunity to hold events within an edgy, design-driven setting.



Henry Ng
Director of Sales

First and foremost, how is The South Beach going to stand out from the crowd? Besides its obvious architectural merit, what will make The South Beach different?

Our property is a HIP hotel – with HIP being the acronym for highly individualised place. The entire South Beach scheme was developed based on the concept of “isolated togetherness”. What this means is that the development and the hotel are designed in such a way so as to create opportunities for visitors and guests to mingle with each other in one space, leading to the creation of a tremendous vibe to stimulate networking. The South Beach is set to revolutionise the MICE market by being an all-in-one destination offering retail, F&B and a fresh hospitality

product within the same iconic development that is strategically located within the heart of the city. This makes us a highly attractive preposition, especially for incentive programmes. It will be the place for people to see and be seen.

What MICE Facilities can we expect to see at The South Beach?

There will be one ballroom with banquet seating of up to 500 people and 19 meeting rooms housed in both modern and conserved buildings. Our primary strength lies in our meeting rooms and ballroom being highly flexible spaces – equipment and fixtures are fully mobile therefore every room can be adapted to suit individual needs. On top of that, we have incorporated intelligent technologies to enhance the whole MICE experience that even

Occupying a vast tract of land between the bustling Marina Centre and the historical Civic District, the prominent mixed-use development, South Beach, is set for a soft opening in 2015. Renowned architectural British firm, Foster + Partners has ensured that South Beach will come to dominate the city skyline. Their architectural design combines the clever use of revolutionary modern and environmentally sustainable features that also pay homage to the four conservation buildings that this iconic scheme will encompass. Eminent interior designer Philippe Starck will lend his elegant signature style to the development's 654-room luxury designer hotel - The South Beach.

touchscreens are considered passé! Small incentive groups can look forward to taking advantage of our intimate outdoor and indoor spaces, including two Sky Gardens to hold social or business meetings.

Who will you be targeting for MICE business?

We hope to attract a very different breed of MICE clientele – namely open-minded individuals who are looking for unique spaces to hold their once-in-a-lifetime event. Strategically, we have earmarked the design, fashion and entertainment industries as key sectors to target - segments which are currently woefully neglected or underserved by the MICE sector.

What will you bring to your new role as Director of Sales?

As the Director of Sales, I see my role primarily as a mentor, sharing my extensive experience with my young and energetic team while giving them the chance to manage accounts independently. My role also encompasses absorbing new ideas and trying to adapt them to suit our current strategic marketing and sales goals. I am excited to be part of this team, and to be part of this development which is poised to shake up the MICE industry in Singapore.



Catherine Ang
Director of Human Resources

How do you ensure you hire the right people? What is your process like?

We target the ‘TOP’ potentials – Talents, Organisational fit, Passion to succeed. For Talents, we are looking for people with the required skills and knowledge who can perform tasks at the optimal level. Our aim is to scout for talents possessing the right organisational fit; people who believe in our ‘HIP’ hotel concept. Last but not least, we believe that people with the right attitude and passion holds the key to the hotel’s success.

In terms of hiring, we have a structured selection process that encompasses a technical competency interview to measure a candidate’s skills and knowledge level, and another behavioral based competency interview to assess if the candidate is of the right fit for our organisational culture. However, more importantly the individual must possess the passion to succeed.

Name your ideal candidate for MICE roles.

The ideal candidate should be organised, meticulous and well-trained in the protocol of events. He or she should also be customer and sales oriented, and well-versed in our products and general knowledge. We are also looking for someone who has strong interpersonal and networking skills to stand out amongst representatives from potential



competitors. Most importantly, this candidate must believe in the ‘HIP’ concept of our hotel.

Why should individuals join The South Beach? What sets them apart as an employer?

The concept of a new luxury HIP designer hotel and it being part of a mixed-use development that sits alongside four conserved buildings definitely excite and entice potential candidates to join The South Beach. Furthermore, we are part of a sustainable and ecological development that has won two Green Mark Platinum Awards. We believe that potential candidates will gain a strong sense of pride to be part of the pioneering team of innovation that allows them to contribute creative concepts in the hotel development. The HR team is looking to leverage on staff talents and are committed to developing them through continuous learning and development, and building a clear career path for them. As the world has advanced into a high-tech environment, we are integrating technologies in our work process to enhance productivity and efficiency. Most importantly, we pride ourselves in providing competitive compensation and remuneration packages for our employees.



Who is in your family?
Wife and daughter.

What sort of holidays do you like?
Luxury travel of course!

How do you spend your weekends?
With my family – usually café hopping.



What is your favourite way to unwind?
I love going for wellness sessions.

Do you have any hobbies?
Developing myself as a person is extremely important to me. So I often read self-improvement books. They inspire me to do better in my personal life and career.

Top things to do on the weekend?
I enjoy communing with nature, and often take long walks with my family at parks and reservoirs.



Congratulations

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YOUR 40 YEARS OF
MOMENTOUS SUCCESS

The South Beach, a 654-room hotel designed by Philippe Starck, is the latest development by City Developments Limited (CDL) and IOI Corporation Berhad.

The hotel is part of a mixed-use contemporary and ecological development – South Beach, which comprises over 34,000m². The South Beach is located on Beach Road beside the Esplanade MRT Station and directly connected to Suntec Singapore via an overhead bridge on the Nicoll Highway. Creative intelligence prevails with interior designs by Philippe Starck, architecture by award-winning firm Foster + Partners and leading global firm Aedas. The South Beach aims to promote luxury yet a playful HIP concept, trustfully elevating the lifestyle hospitality scene in the region with its charm.



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THE
SOUTH BEACH



One-stop R&R

The term integrated resorts now describes urban or beach resorts offering a one-stop R&R with casinos, theme parks, shopping malls, entertainment centres and more, making them relevant to a wide range of clientele, from families to MICE delegates.

In this cover story, we take a look at four familiar names in South-east Asia – Desaru, Lombok, Bintan and Langkawi – whose time to shine has come given developments that are fast making them the next one-stop R&R venues.

*By Raini Hamdi, Xinyi Liang-Pholsena,
S. Puvaneswary, Mimi Hudoyo and Paige Lee Pei Qi*



Desaru Coast

Overview

This coastal resort in south-eastern Johor, Malaysia, with its laidback ways and kampung (village) feel, is a playground for locals and a smattering of Singaporeans from across the causeway. But Destination Resorts and Hotels (DRH)'s Desaru Coast development – pulling in names such as Amanresorts, Datali Hotels & Resorts (which it owns) and The Els Club, plus attractions such as marine and water parks – may change Desaru's humble image once and for all and bring in the well-heeled and MICE groups to the neglected destination.

Desaru had tried, twice before, to be in the major league of Asian resorts by attracting foreign investment. Twice it failed. This time, it's different.

"You've got to see it to believe it," said Darrell Metzger, a DRH board director. "When you see the golf courses, when the hotels are up, it won't take long before you realise this is a premier destination. For a stretch when you drive (to Desaru Coast), there is nothing but plantation, then a whole new world opens up when you see the signage, the landscape, etc, and everything there is new."

DRH has some 1,700ha

of land and what's on the drawing board currently (see details below) is just phase one, comprising 30 per cent of the land, scheduled to open in 2017, he said.

Established in 2010 by the Malaysian government's investment arm, Khazanah Nasional, DRH's mission is to own, develop and catalyse world-class premier destinations. For many, that's the big difference in helping Desaru to take off. For one, the important aspects of developing virgin territories, such as accessibility and marketing, are being handled.

For instance, DRH has been marketing Desaru Coast as a MICE and leisure destination since 2012 and to-date has built up "a large database of interested corporate clients and travel agencies", accord-

ing to Ahmad Burhanuddin, managing director of DRH.

"For MICE, we've been attending the major tradeshows in Asia-Pacific such as AIME, IT&CMA, IT&CM China and IBTM India.

"Being part of Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau's industry partner's programme, we also leverage on its presence at international tradeshows and attend its events to promote Malaysia as a MICE destination to MICE planners and travel agencies overseas."

MICE

Burhanuddin said Desaru Coast offers MICE planners and organisers a new choice. "Desaru Coast is a new venue with a conference facility, varied choice of entertainment within the development including two internationally-managed water theme parks and a 27-hole golf course designed by Ernie Els.

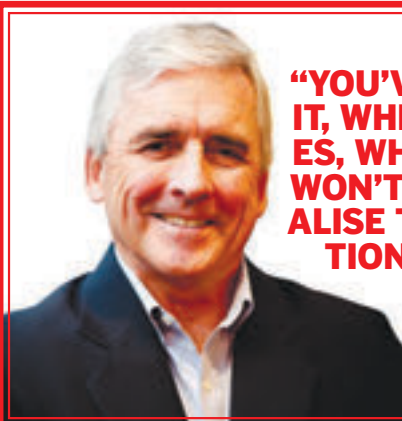
"Then there are the many local tourist attractions within

close driving proximity to Desaru Coast which provide options for post-conference visits. These include the Desaru Fruit Farm at Sungai Cemar, Desaru Ostrich Farm at Teluk Ramunia, crocodile farm at Kampung Belading and a Fishermen Museum at Tanjung Balau.

"While we are targeting mainly delegates from Asia-Pacific, we expect at least half of our visitors will be meetings, incentives and conference delegates coming from Malaysia and Singapore, while many international markets will come through Changi."

Coming up* The Els Club

This comprises two championship golf courses with ocean views, a 27-hole designed by The Open 2012 champion Ernie Els and an 18-hole designed by multiple major winner Vijay Singh. Not only are these the first two courses in the region designed by these champions, DRH is also bringing in the lifestyle golf club founded by



"YOU'VE GOT TO SEE IT TO BELIEVE IT, WHEN YOU SEE THE GOLF COURSES, WHEN THE HOTELS ARE UP, IT WON'T TAKE LONG BEFORE YOU REALISE THIS IS A PREMIER DESTINATION."

Darrell Metzger

DRH board director



From left: Ocean Quest Marine Park and Ocean Splash Water Park, Desaru Plantation hotel

Integrated resorts

Ernie. The Els Club Malaysia will be the first in South-east Asia and the third in the world after Dubai and South Africa.

Ocean Quest Marine Park and Ocean Splash Water Park

Ocean Quest is the first educational and interactive marine theme park in Malaysia offering guided and self-guided encounters with thousands of tropical reef fish, marine creatures and wildlife species ranging from birds, mammals, reptiles and insects. Ocean Splash introduces the largest saltwater wave pool in Asia, exhilarating water slides, raft slides and other exciting water features.

Aman Country Club and Aman Villas

Boasting 46 suites and 52 four-bedroom villas, this latest addition to Amanresorts is an exclusive six-star club resort situated in the south-east of Desaru with breathtaking views of the South China Sea.

The Riverwalk

A waterfront landscaped retail and lifestyle village located within easy reach of hotels and theme parks in Desaru Coast. The Riverwalk offers retail outlets, chic restaurants, alfresco cafes and entertainment venues.

Datai Desaru

Representing the first expansion of the Datai marque, Datai Desaru is a five-star luxury resort which pays homage to its inspiration, The Datai Langkawi. Nestled on a hilltop, the hotel and villas enjoy stunning golf and ocean views. There will be 16 villas and 84 rooms.

Plantation Hotel (working name)

A family-oriented hotel designed around the Ocean Quest theme park, integrating the immersive experience of marine life right into the heart of the property, the entertainment areas and even guestrooms. There will be 383 rooms.

A Starwood brand resort

This is a 275-room beachfront resort located in the heart of Desaru Coast with easy access to The Riverwalk, conference centre and the theme parks.

Conference centre

Located adjacent to the above resort, it will boast an exhibition space of about 1,200m², banquet capacity of up to 1,000 pax, meeting rooms, VIP lounges/pre-function rooms.

** All projects will open in 2017*



Langkawi



Kilim Geoforest Park mangrove area at the northeastern tip of Langkawi

Overview

Langkawi will sharpen its focus on the premium travel segment, including MICE, in order to increase yield and reduce its carbon footprint. Arrivals climbed 12 per cent last year to 3.4 million tourists, surpassing the three million target initially set for 2015 in the destination's 2011 tourism masterplan, according to Khalid Ramli, CEO of Langkawi Development Authority (LADA).

Hence, LADA is revising its 2015 target to four million arrivals, he said. However, tourism receipts are still below its aim of RM3.8 billion (US\$1.2 billion), so this will be a critical year to reach it, he added.

"We need to look at high net worth tourists because (this segment) will give higher revenues with smaller numbers."

This includes the MICE market, whose delegate yield is thrice more than international leisure tourists who spend on average between RM2,200 (US\$686) and RM2,600 (per tourist, per visit).

In line with the high-yield drive, Langkawi's hotel pipeline comprises several luxury hotels, including The Ritz-Carlton, which will boost the destination's room supply from the current 9,000 to 15,000 by 2017.

In addition, a host of new tourism products are opening (see Coming Up).

Property and leisure group

Tradewinds Corp is also reportedly investing some RM4 billion to develop Perdana Quay in Langkawi's Pantai Kok-Teluk Burau area on the northwest of the island. This will be the first integrated leisure, retail, residential and commercial development on the island.

The project is said to span 10 to 12 years in six construction phases, covering a total of 96ha of land. Phase one and two will include attractions such as butterfly, forest and water-themed adventure parks.

Retaining the destination marketing slogan as *Naturally Langkawi*, LADA will also leverage Langkawi's natural appeal to attract more sports and eco-related events, including high-profile ones like the IFMA Muaythai World Championship, which was held for the first time in May, and the 5th Asian Bird Fair, which will be held for the first time in Langkawi in November.

Meanwhile, LADA is in talks with airlines and relevant authorities to welcome direct flights from the Asia-Pacific region, revealed Khalid.

MICE

Last year, MICE contributed 10 per cent of Langkawi's 3.4 million total arrivals. Most delegates came for meetings and incentives, said Rosnina Yaacob, manager tourism division, LADA.

She said Langkawi is



Ocean Quest Marine Park and Ocean Splash Water Park

focused on attracting MICE delegates from the Asia-Pacific region by participating in MICE tradeshows such as AIME and Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau's roadshows overseas.

Small and medium-size groups of up to 400 pax are ideal at present. "More than that, there will be a problem to accommodate all delegates under one roof as there are only three properties on the island that have more than 300 rooms – Berjaya Langkawi Resort, Meritus Pelangi Beach Resort & Spa, Langkawi and Resorts World Langkawi. Flights are not really a problem because charters are an option," she said.

Of Langkawi's 9,000 rooms currently, 30 per cent are four- and five-star hotels.

For group sizes of 100 delegates or more, of which 70 per cent are foreign delegates, LADA will host a complimentary dinner and cultural performance, or a meet and greet at the airport and a cultural performance there.

Recently-opened Vivanta by Taj-Rebak Island Langkawi

The former Rebak Island Resort has been renovated and extended with an additional 12 guestrooms, bringing the total room inventory to 94 units. It was officially launched as a Vivanta by Taj resort on May 28. This 390-acre, five-star private island resort managed by the Taj

Group of Hotels & Resorts has an 18m x 3m function hall which can accommodate up to 100 pax theatre-style. There are three F&B outlets.

Els Club Teluk Datai

Els Club Teluk Datai, an 18-hole championship golf course, opened for play in May. The club is open to The Datai Langkawi hotel guests and to the public for a daily fee. It also has tie-ups with various hotels in Langkawi and golf packages are readily available to clients who want to play multiple rounds of golf.

The most significant feature about The Els Club Teluk Datai is its incredible location. From the lush backdrop of the rainforest of the Machincang Mountain range to the turquoise waters of the Andaman Sea, it's a feast for the eye.

Coming up Langkawi Sky Bridge

The iconic bridge has been closed for maintenance since July 2012 and is due to reopen by year-end. Hanging 700m above sea level from the peak of Machinchang Mountain, the 125m curved cable-stayed pedestrian bridge has been dubbed an engineering marvel. A new inclinator will take visitors up to the bridge.

Oriental Village (1Q15)

Home to more than 50 F&B outlets, retail stores, galleries and activity providers, the Oriental Village is undergo-



Langkawi Sky Bridge

ing an expansion over the next few years to welcome a 13.4ha eco-theme park and an exclusive resort.

In the first phase of the eco-theme park development, a key attraction will be an Omnidome 3D flight, a 3D theatre showcasing the island's beauty created in partnership with National Geographic. Other attractions will include a bio-dome highlighting the flora and fauna of Langkawi, a cultural village with an amphitheatre and a 250-room hotel.

The first phase is due to be completed in 1Q2015.

A second phase will follow, adding tree-top walks, rope bridges, an adventure park, a VIP tree-top resort and more hotels.

Hotel and Langkawi International Convention Centre (2015)

A new luxury hotel with 84 suites and 11 villas with an adjoining convention centre, to be known as Langkawi International Convention Centre

with a capacity to accommodate up to 1,000 pax, is being built in Kuah and is scheduled for completion just before the ASEAN Summit in Langkawi in April 2015.

The hotel and convention centre is owned by the Rajawali Group and is likely to be managed by an international brand.

The Ritz-Carlton Langkawi (2015)

The 132-room luxury resort is scheduled to open in 2015 on Pantai Kok, overlooking the Andaman Sea. It will offer a family-friendly escape with three swimming pools, a Ritz-Carlton Spa and three dedicated event venues for small to medium sized events.

Rahsia Estates Resort Residences, Eco-Hotel and Spa (mid-2016)

The 6ha resort development is set along a river estuary overlooking Pulau Dayang Bunting, in Kampung Temoyong in Kedawang. Comprising three precincts – 30 luxury cabana villas, 130 resort suites and a 116-room hotel – the RM480 million resort will also boast a non-invasive aesthetic clinic and a wellness centre featuring both Asian and Western spa treatments. It is set to be the first resort to achieve the Green Building Index certification in Langkawi.

The Sultan's Palace (2017)

This 9ha exclusive resort on Pulau Intan Besar can be reached via a 1.6km boat ride from the main Langkawi island. The RM500 million development will have 100 luxury suites and 17 high-end villas.



The Els Club



Lombok

Overview

The province of West Nusa Tenggara, along with Bali and East Nusa Tenggara, has been marked a tourism corridor in Indonesia's Economic Master Plan 2011-2025.

West Nusa Tenggara covers the main islands of Lombok and Sumbawa, and as many as 280 tiny islands surrounding them. The status gives them priority in developing infrastructure and facilities.

Lombok, too, is one of 16 destinations Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy is focusing on for MICE arrivals.

Development has started with the first phase of a 4km road construction, to finish this month. The total 22.5km road is expected to be completed in 2020.

Meanwhile, a solar cell with a total output of 15 megawatt is under review at the ministerial level with a target to start before the end of the year on a 40ha land, said Edwin Darmasetiawan, director of development, Indonesia Tourism Development Corporation, the master developer of Mandalika. Construction of other basic infrastructure such as telecommunications and water

opportunities for hotels and recreational facilities.

- The 400ha Tanjung Ringgit in the southeastern part of Lombok and the Eight Islands in the northwestern part of Sumbawa. Both are earmarked for integrated eco-resort development.

Indonesia's Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Mari Elka Pangestu said tourism to West Nusa Tenggara (where Lombok by far is the major destination) has picked up since it was singled out as a tourism corridor in 2011.

Domestic and international arrivals to the province rose to 1.2 million last year, from 887,000 in 2011.

Accessibility has tailed the growing demand. Air links between Singapore and Lombok have increased with Tiger Airways starting thrice weekly services last year, adding to SilkAir's five-weekly flights, while AirAsia has a daily service between Kuala Lumpur and Lombok.

Meanwhile, an increase of Garuda Indonesia services between Bali and Lombok, from one to thrice weekly, has given Lombok new opportunities to reach the Japanese and South Korean markets as well as Australian markets beyond Perth.

Data from Lombok International Airport showed that foreign arrivals are rising significantly. Last year, 1.1 million movements were domestic traffic and 79,000 were international, a rise of 17.3 per cent and 194 per cent over 2012 respectively.

MICE

According to Darmasetiawan, the convention centre and show hall will be built when hotels and other supporting facilities are up and running.

He said the show hall would host national and international concerts, performances and other showbiz events. "Bali does not have this facility and Lombok has the opportunity to develop this market, setting it aside from its neighbour.

"We have approached the

Kompas-Gramedia Group (which owns several convention centres in Indonesia including the Bali Nusa Dua Convention Centre) and it has shown an interest," he said.

But no concrete details are available.

Meanwhile, Lombok has been enjoying growth in domestic MICE, which its stakeholders have been building steadily over the last decade.

Regional data shows in 2013, the destination received around 900,000 domestic arrivals and more than half were there for MICE events.

What Lombok needs to do next is to develop infrastructure and human capital so that it can reach the level of Jakarta or Bali as a MICE destination, according to industry players.

The tourism ministry and MICE Centre, an Indonesian MICE research and development body, have done destination mapping for Lombok and, based on the findings, believe its greatest potential lies in meetings and incentives.

Christina Rudatin, advisor of MICE Centre, said: "As it is, Lombok is a promising destination. But it needs to have a MICE venue, its people need to be ready to be MICE hosts and there must be vendors which can cater for MICE organisers' needs."

Coming up
The Golden Palm Hotel, Mataram (3Q14)
180 rooms

Marina Del Ray (second half 2015)
A yacht marina in Gili Gede Island, West Lombok

Archipelago International (late 2014/2015)

Archipelago International will open four hotels in Lombok this year and two next year. Royal Kamuela Lombok, with 50 villas, and three Fave Hotels in Mataram and Senggigi with 100 to 140 rooms each will open later this year. Its two properties opening in 2015 are a 290-room Aston in Senggigi and a 140-room Aston in Mataram.



Lombok International Airport, which replaced Selaparang Airport in 2011, is scheduled to expand its runway from 2,750m now to 3,000m next year.

Mandalika Resort in the southern coast of the island is a Special Economic Zone, with the government providing incentives to investors developing projects in the integrated resort. A convention centre and a show hall will also be built there, dedicated facilities which stakeholders said Lombok needs in order to grow the MICE business.

Mandalika covers a total area of 1,175ha and will be developed in three stages with final completion by 2020.

supplies is also scheduled to start early next year.

Three investors are preparing to build six hotels, including Club Med and Marriott Vacations, and an 18-hole golf course which is targeted to open in 2018, according to Darmasetiawan.

Apart from Mandalika, there are three other integrated projects in Lombok:

- The 200ha Mekaki Bay Resorts in the southwestern tip of the island with slots for 14 four- and five-star properties and two luxury villa complexes. Surfing is a major attraction here.
- The 7.4ha Medana Bay Marina in North Lombok, which opens investment



Bintan

Overview

Since breaking ground in May 2008, Lagoi Bay has elevated the allure of Bintan Island with its highly-anticipated launch of resorts and attractions. A string of lifestyle and resort operators have opened, including the Lagoi Beach Village Mall, Air Adventures, The Sanchaya and, most recently, the 196-key Grand Lagoi Swiss Belhotel, equipped with MICE facilities. More are on the way (see Coming Up) in the Lagoi Bay development.

Upping the anticipation factor further is a deal inked between Garuda Indonesia and Singapore-based investment company Gallant Venture to develop a new international airport, located just 35 minutes from Lagoi Bay.

The new airport has already garnered interest from low-cost carriers, according to Asad Shiraz, Bintan Resorts International (BRI) marketing director. Shiraz is hopeful it will result in vital domestic and regional airlinks such as to India and China.

"We also see the opening up of charter flights from Europe for this airport," he added. European markets

such as the UK, France, Germany and, increasingly, Russia are significant for Bintan, comprising eight per cent of arrivals.

Bintan Island is currently served by Raja Haji Fisabilillah International Airport, located in Tanjung Pinang, the capital city of the Riau Islands. The bulk of visitors though arrive from Singapore via a 45-minute ferry connection.

With development picking up pace, BRI is stepping up marketing to the travel trade and consumers in selective markets, using channels including advertising both in online and print media, and social media.

A series of roadshows and mini-travel marts to India, China and Indonesia, and sales calls to Japan and South Korea, are also planned. Among segments targeted are weddings, MICE and school tours.

MICE

According to Shiraz, while the meetings and incentive segment comprises a mere eight per cent of visitors to Bintan, new offerings will help bring

this number up.

Pointing to Bintan Lagoon Resort, although the property is not part of the new Lagoi development, it has one of the newest MICE facilities on the island. Shiraz said the three-storey 2,000m² banquet hall, which opened early last year, can fit 1,300 pax in a theatre setting, and is a major pull factor for meeting delegates.

Additional space in this centre includes a ground floor reception foyer holding 500 pax (standing) and an outdoor roof terrace which can accommodate 200 guests.

Over at the 196-key Grand Lagoi Swiss Belhotel which opened in May, the Diamond Grand Ballroom, with three partitions open, can fit 220 pax in theatre-style. The hotel also offers five additional meeting rooms ranging between 45m² and 64m².

Keeping in mind that MICE organisers are often on the lookout for golf courses, Shiraz said: "We (BRI) have four courses in Bintan which are among the best in Indonesia, with the Ria Bintan Gold Club being the best in Asia."

Ria Bintan Golf Club is a 27-hole championship course designed by world-celebrated golfing legend, Gary Player, and has lured golf enthusiasts with its award-winning 18-hole Ocean Course and the nine-hole Forest Course.

The club also has two function rooms that can jointly accommodate up to 80 for a sit-down dinner.

Coming up

Plaza Lagoi (end 2014)

Touted as Asia's first beach village mall, Plaza Lagoi, which is built across 20ha, will have the highest concentration of commercial, leisure and recreational activities on the island. Resort visitors will have easy access to the mall via regular shuttle buses.

Bintan Market Place (end 2014)

Comprising 41 shophouses, an F&B enclave and a weather-proof canopied walkway, Bintan Market Place aims to offer visitors a new retail and dining experience. In the evenings, the four-storey complex will be illuminated with the latest lighting technology, followed by night entertainment with various live bands and music.

Alila Villas Bintan (2015)

Located on a hillside on Lagoi Bay, Alila Villas Bintan is the third addition to the Alila Villas brand. The 14.4ha gated development will comprise 12 three-bedroom beachfront residences and a luxury boutique resort with 52 one- and two-bedroom villas. Key to the development will be 'The Village', an additional 4ha hub for the arts, culture, culinary and wellness activities for guests and visitors.

Bintan Resorts International Airport (early 2016)

The airport will have one terminal and a 2.5km runway. It can accommodate aircraft such as the Boeing 737 and Airbus 320, which have an operational radius of about five hours. This would place much of ASEAN as well as southern China and South India countries within its reach.

The new airport is set to be operational by early 2016. The terminal will be linked to a ferry terminal serving Singapore-Bintan ferry services.

Lagoi Bay



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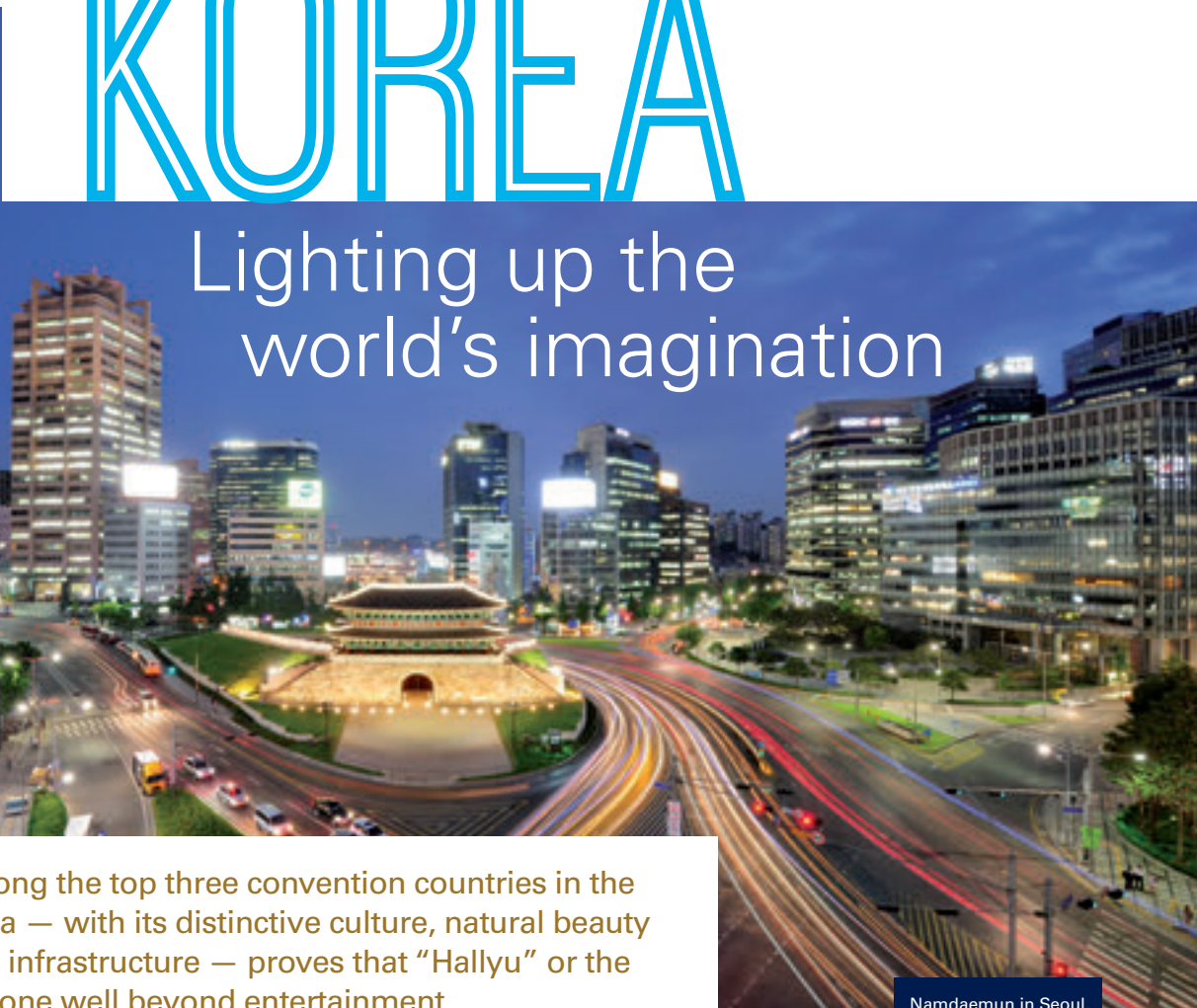
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KOREA

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Namdaemun in Seoul.

Ranked by UIA among the top three convention countries in the world in 2013, Korea — with its distinctive culture, natural beauty and excellent MICE infrastructure — proves that “Hallyu” or the Korean Wave has gone well beyond entertainment.

Korea is making great strides as a MICE destination. In their latest rankings, both Union of International Associations (UIA) and ICCA have shown that Korea is unmistakably moving up the charts. According to the 2013 International Meetings Statistics Report released in June 2014 by UIA, it is ranked **third globally** based on a total of 635 international conferences hosted, up from fifth place in 2012 and representing a global market share of 5.4 to 6 per cent.

The city of Seoul played host to 242 international conferences, moving up one spot to fourth place compared to 2012 when it hosted 253 conferences.

Apart from Seoul, other cities such as Incheon, Daegu, Busan and Songdo are also making notable

progress, having won numerous bids for various international events.

In ICCA's latest ranking, Korea moved from 16th to **12th place** in 2013, with 260 conferences held, or 2.2 per cent market share. Seoul, with 125 conferences in 2013, came in at 9th position, a great leap from 17th in 2012.

Just as inbound tourism is gaining momentum in Korea, MICE and business visitors are also starting to discover a destination surprisingly rich with unique experiences — beautiful sceneries, delicious foods, superb shopping and dazzling entertainment, all amid a mild four-season climate, friendly tourist services and modern amenities.

MICE organisers have come to recognise South Korea's **professional workforce, worldclass facilities,**

tourist infrastructure and **welcoming atmosphere** as its strongest selling points.

NEW ATTRACTIONS

There is always something new in Korea. Recent visitors to Seoul will no doubt have been wowed by the powerful, flowing architecture of the new **Dongdaemun Design Plaza**, or “DDP”. Next to it is the new five-star JW Marriott Dongdaemun Square Seoul hotel, giving business visitors an elegant resting place in one of Seoul's most popular shopping districts.

The **COEX Mall**, Korea's largest shopping mall, is currently undergoing re-modelling and is scheduled re-open in December 2014. It is connected to **COEX Center**, one of the country's largest convention and exhibition venues.

In 2015, the new **Korail**



New and old in Seoul: Dongdaemun Design Plaza (above); Gyeongbokgung Palace.





COEX Mall

Convention Centre will open in the Gangbuk area, offering a 7,500-capacity convention centre and a 26,500-square-metre exhibition hall. It is set to add a new buzz to bustling Seoul Station.

New developments are in progress elsewhere too. The city of Gyeongju is scheduled to open **Gyeongju Convention Center** by December 2014. In Jeju, the newly-opened **Jeju Kensington Hotel** has brought a luxury gallery concept to this scenic island.

WHY KOREA

A winning combination has made Korea the preferred destination it is today. Served by more than 70 airlines, it is **easily accessible** from over 170 cities in the world. Once in Korea, intercity buses, trains and city subways offer hassle-free and inexpensive connections to major meeting venues as well as other cities.

Korea's impressive **MICE infrastructure** is able to accommodate groups of 10 to 10,000 in a variety of professionally-managed

venues. These range from charming traditional houses to high-tech convention centres with full facilities. Korean **DMC/PCOs** are well qualified to help overseas MICE planners all the way from initial planning to on-the-ground coordination.

Korea has evolved to become a modern-day tourism hotspot thanks to its mix of **stunning historical sites**, such as Gyeongbokgung Palace, and **thrilling contemporary leisure activities** such as **shopping** and **entertainment**. Popular markets such as **Namdaemun** and **Dongdaemun** – which remain open till the wee hours of the morning – are just as exhilarating as the high-style department stores at Seoul's trendiest shopping district **Myeongdong**, such as Lotte, Shinsegae, Myeongdong Migliore, Noon Square and M Plaza.

Korean food – think delicious flavours, spices and sauces – has similarly captured the world's imagi-

nation. Visitors should try not only the world-famous **Kimchi**, but also **Bibimbap** (rice with vegetable and beef), **Bulgogi** (beef in soy sauce marinade) and **Grilled Galbi** (seasoned ribs). Street stalls called "**pojangmachas**" offer a unique dining experience too, for its lively atmosphere, cheap prices and authenticity. For visitors who want to go home with a new culinary skill, cooking classes are available as well.



Traditional Korean cuisine.



Star Avenue in Myeongdong.

"HALLYU" THE KOREAN WAVE

With K-pop and K-drama making waves globally, Seoul is truly the epicentre of "**Hallyu**", or Korean Wave. And fans will not be disappointed if they make their pilgrimage to this pulsating heart of Korean pop culture. There is a wide variety of activities

designed to thrill, from **special exhibitions, fashion shows** to visits to **filming locations** of popular K-dramas. At the DDP, the special "My Love from the Star" exhibition is on this summer complete with theme zones that follow the drama's story line.

Korean **cosmetics and beauty products** are very much a part of "Hallyu" and visitors may follow recommended itineraries to pamper themselves at spas, enjoy a makeover or shop for some of the most popular must-have fashion, lifestyle or beauty products.

A must-see for K-pop fans is **Klive**, the K-Pop hologram performance hall. Open in January 2014, it is located on the 9th floor of Lotte FITN in Eulgi-ro, Seoul. Don't miss the performances of Psy, Bigbang, 2NE1 and other idols and groups.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The Korean government has identified MICE as a growth engine and has allocated the necessary resources to support the development of this sector through the **Korea MICE Bureau**.

Staffed by experienced professionals and acting as a bridge between international event organisers and Korea's private-sector MICE enterprises, the bureau will assist in matters such as

identifying suitable venues and accommodation, pre- and post-event tours and social activities.

Depending on event size and scope, **monetary support** can also be made available in the form of complimentary accommodation, subsidy when working with a local contractor, cost of preparing bids, cultural entertainment and souvenirs.

The Korea MICE Bureau also offers **marketing support** for local and international public relations activities, online and offline communications campaigns, bid presentations, promotional booth set-up and supply of promotional materials such as videos, guidebooks, maps and brochures. It is also open to innovative ideas that effectively promote the image of Korea as a top MICE destination. ■

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Gangwon Convention & Visitors Bureau

The luxurious Alpensia Resort in Pyeongchang will be one of the main sites of the 2018 Winter Olympics

Gangwon reaches out

A convention bureau has been formed, underlining the South Korean province's determination to make the most of its Olympic win. By **Karen Yue**

Securing the rights to host the 2018 Winter Olympics has not only catapulted Pyeongchang city into the global spotlight, it has also inspired Gangwon province, which the city belongs to, to begin courting international business events by establishing a convention bureau last year.

The South Korean province, which sits on the northern-most end of the country, is accessible via Incheon International Airport followed by a two-hour car ride. Gangwon itself has both an international gateway – Yangyang International Airport, which connects with 10 cities in China – and a domestic airport, Wonjo Airport, which offers flights to Jeju.

Pyeongchang's win, which was announced by the International Olympic Committee in 2011, has already yielded a victory for Gangwon's MICE industry – it hosted the

2012 International Ski Federation Congress and became the first Asian destination to welcome the event.

Although the Gangwon Convention & Visitors Bureau (GWCVB) is in its infancy, the province is no stranger to leisure tourism, insisted Jeongmi Shin, marketing team manager.

Nature lovers have crossed the globe to explore Gangwon's three national parks – Mt Seorak National Park, Chiaksan National Park and Odaesan National Park – while history buffs have appreciated the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Yeongwol Jangneung. The Jangneung tomb of King Danjong is said to be one of the most beautiful royal tombs from the Joseon Dynasty.

Gangwon's other heritage draw is the Gangneung Danoje Festival, which is recognised as a UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Celebrated

across Gangneung city in the fourth and fifth months of the lunar calendar, the religious festival's roots go back over a thousand years and is today South Korea's largest traditional festival.

Gangwon is also a favourite haunt for ski enthusiasts as it offers nine major ski resorts, three of which sit in Pyeongchang.

"These attractions are popular (and) can cater to large groups of incentive and post-meeting tour participants," said Shin, adding that Pyeongchang's ski resorts are already attracting incentive groups from Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia during winter.

Despite the province's varied range of attractions, Shin said international corporate groups stay for only one to two days and these were usually for meetings, incentives and conferences. The lack of large exhibition centres has been Gangwon's stumbling block in attracting the full spectrum of MICE business.

"Most of the other provinces in South Korea have mega exhibition centres, but not Gangwon. We do have plenty of (other) venue options though, such as museums, universities, and hotels and resorts," Shin explained.

According to the Gangwon Provincial Government, the province has 37 hotels, 48 condominiums that welcome travellers, and 11 ski resorts. Several of these are equipped with event facilities. Currently, Yongpyong All Seasons Resort in Pyeongchang offers the largest venue in the province for corporate gatherings. It has 2,500 guestrooms, the Yongpyong Dome which can accommodate 5,000 people in two grand ballrooms and 19 seminar rooms, a 5,000-seat indoor gymnasium, a golf course, and 31 ski slopes.

Vivaldi Park in Hongcheon comes in at second spot with 2,446 guestrooms, 21 meeting rooms – the largest of which is the 1,386m² Grand Ballroom – and various recreational facilities including a water park, a 13-slope ski resort, and a golf course.

Unique venues that can support conferences, meetings and seminars include Kangwon National University in the provincial capital, Chuncheon, which offers its convention hall for rent. The space can seat 200 pax in theatre-style or 150 guests in a banquet set-up.

Hallym University in Chuncheon is another option for corporate event planners. Its Ilsong Arts Hall offers

a 78-seat auditorium and a 32-seat seminar room, while its Center for Aged Society Education has a conference hall for 88 people.

Gangwon's closest options to a dedicated venue for conventions and exhibitions are the Donghae Mangsang Convention Center and ANGVA Donghae Expo Exhibition Hall. The former has seven meeting rooms, with the largest being the Grand Ballroom which can seat 350 pax theatre-style. The latter, built to host the 3rd Asia-Pacific Natural Gas Vehicles Association (ANGVA) Conference & Exhibition in 2009, has two halls.

Gangwon's MICE capability is set to improve once the 2018 Winter Olympics draws to a close.

According to updates published on Olympic.org, several new winter sport facilities are being built in the lead-up to the games. They include a venue with figure skating and short-track skating facilities, an ice hockey stadium, and a speed skating oval

in Gangneung, all due to complete by October 2016. Pyeongchang's Alpensia Ski Jumping Stadium, meanwhile, is already operational, and was built as a legacy of previous bids for the 2010 and 2014 games. It sits within the luxury alpine resort of Alpensia and is supported by a range of quality accommodation including InterContinental Alpensia Pyeongchang Resort, Holiday Inn Alpensia Pyeongchang, and Holiday Inn & Suites Alpensia Pyeongchang.

Kim Jin-Sun, president and CEO of the PyeongChang 2018 Organising Committee, was reported to have

said that all new facilities will have post-game uses. "We are developing various legacy plans. Most of the snow venues are privately owned and will be used as resorts and for sports. The indoor venues will be converted into gyms, school gyms, convention centres and leisure centres for the public," he said.

Shin also pointed out that "there are plans to remodel the game facilities in Pyeongchang into a gorgeous exhibition centre".

She added that efforts are underway to certify Pyeongchang as a convention city in South Korea.

"Gangwon has various festivals all year round and we intend to promote these, such as Hwacheon Mountain Trout Festival and Chuncheon Mime Festival, to attract meeting, inventive and conference groups."

Jeongmi Shin

Marketing team manager
Gangwon Convention & Visitors Bureau



Need to know



Baa, baa, so many sheep!

Daegwallyeong Yangtze Sheep Farm which sits in Pyeongchang County, Gangwon is home to some 200 sheep. Popular with photographers, the sprawling ranch offers a scenic trail that runs 1.2km around the property. Visitors are invited to feed the sheep, and if they were to visit in March and April, they could see fluffy sheep being sheared for their wool.

For information on how this attraction can be incorporated into your programme, email Gangwon Convention & Visitors Bureau at igija0001@korea.kr.

Be on the borderline

Did you know that five counties in Gangwon are adjacent to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), a peaceful buffer zone between North and South Korea?

Underground tunnels in Cheorwon and Yanggu, the Unification Observatory, and the Dam of Peace in Goseong are all well-known tourist sites that serve as solemn reminders of the nation's title of being the only divided nation in the world. In addition to its historic and cultural significance, the DMZ has also gained attention for its lush ecosystem, which has flourished ever since access to the area was restricted to the general public almost six decades ago.

Contact Gangwon Convention & Visitors Bureau at igija0001@korea.kr for more information.

Cycle down the ocean coast

Samcheok Ocean Rail Bike is an attraction that leverages the majestic views of the East Sea and its surrounding pine forest and rock formations. Visitors will cycle a four-wheel bike down a 5.4km double track along the coast. Rest stops are available at Gungchon and Yonghwa Stations, and visitors can explore an observatory lounge, an ocean tunnel and other attractions.

For more information, email Gangwon Convention & Visitors Bureau at igija0001@korea.kr.

Plush attraction

Plush toys, that is. The Teddy Bear Farm in Gangwon's Sokcho chronicles the history of South Korea through the use of adorable teddy bears that are posed in scenes of recreated significant moments. There are also light-hearted scenes of teddy bears enjoying a pot of tea, at a birthday party, and building a snowman.

Fun programmes for visitors are offered too. Contact Gangwon Convention & Visitors Bureau at igija0001@korea.kr for more information.

A taste of Korea

The Traditional Korean Food Experience Center in Pyeongchang, Gangwon is dedicated to preserving and promoting local food culture. Set in a traditional building, the attraction gives visitors a chance to indulge in *hanjeongsik*, a traditional full-course meal that originated from the royal palaces.

Contact Gangwon Convention & Visitors Bureau at igija0001@korea.kr for details.



Penang, still loved for its great food, is gaining a reputation among the artistic community; street art "Little Children on a Bicycle" by Ernest Zacharevic pictured above

Moving on up

With leisure arrivals plumped up by a UNESCO world heritage honour, Penang is now banking on new hotels and convention centres to boost its MICE fortunes, writes **S Puvaneswary**

Penang has long been known for its addictive street food, well-preserved local culture and heritage, and beautiful beaches that are close to the city. Popular with holidaymakers and relatively unknown to business event planners, Penang's reputation only took a turn for the better – from a MICE point of view – after its state capital, George Town, was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008.

Inbound tour operators in Malaysia told *TTGmice* that the destination has become easier to sell since then.

Comparing year-on-year growth of meetings and incentives to Penang, Luxury Tours Malaysia manager, Ganneesh Ramaa, said his company had seen a 25 per cent growth in 2013 and the appeal for the destination was mainly from multinational companies with offices in Asia and

small incentive groups from Eastern Europe which appreciated the destination's offering of beaches, shopping, culture attractions and good food.

Ganneesh added: "For longhaul markets, Penang is usually twinned with Kuala Lumpur and the average stay in Malaysia is at least five nights. For Asian groups, Penang is usually a mono destination, with average stays of three to four nights."

He also noted that the completion of the Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah Bridge – commonly known as the second Penang bridge – on March 1 this year had made Penang far more accessible. The bridge links Batu Kawan on the Malaysian mainland with Batu Maung on the island.

"With the second Penang bridge, a coach ride from Kuala Lumpur to the island takes only five hours. Before that, access via the first bridge took

around six hours," said Ganneesh, adding that overland access offers a cheaper way to combine Kuala Lumpur with Penang.

According to Ganneesh, return flights on the national carrier between the two destinations cost around RM200 (US\$62.50) on economy class whereas a coach trip for 35 people costs RM60 per pax.

"It's also more convenient for delegates because after checking out of their hotel in the capital, delegates can travel by coach directly to their hotel in Penang. The flight time from Kuala Lumpur to Penang is only an hour but that excludes time at the airport for (immigration clearance and luggage collection), and the time needed to travel from the airport to the hotel."

Also thankful for the new bridge is Saini Vermeulen, head of international sales, Panorama Tours Malaysia. He recalled: "Five years ago, it used to be a challenge (bringing) more than 800 delegates (to Penang) at one time. There were insufficient flight capacity between Kuala Lumpur and Penang."

Besides bringing about a rise in arrivals, George Town's status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site has also led to a boom in property value in the state. Many pre-war heritage buildings in the inner city of George Town have been purchased by private individuals, preserved and converted into boutique hotels and restaurants.

Today Penang has 15,000 hotel rooms, of which 8,000 are in the four- and five-star categories.

New hotels that recently opened include the 180-room Royale Bintang Penang and the 220-room Four Points by Sheraton Penang. Royale Bintang Penang, located in the heart of George Town, targets business travellers and offers a ballroom for 400 pax and four meeting rooms. Four Points by Sheraton Penang in Tanjung Bungah is outfitted with 1,100m² of flexible meeting and function space, including two ballrooms that offer great views of the sea.

By the end of 2014, Penang will gain 1,240 more hotel rooms.

One future hotel development to watch for is The Rice Miller Hotel & Residences. Occupying a restored 19th century property where the Rice Miller godown once stood, the hotel will offer 45 luxury suites and 21 residence suites.

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gatherings, photo exhibitions and destination weddings,” said Thansita Sirapastuwanon, director of sales and marketing for The Rice Miller Hotel & Residences.

“Facilities will include six F&B outlets, a fitness centre, an infinity pool, a spa offering hammam treatments and event spaces equipped with state-of-the-art audiovisual and lighting systems.”

Penang will also see a boost in its conference and exhibition capabilities through the new Subterranean Penang International Convention & Exhibition Centre (SPICE) Arena and the Penang Waterfront Convention Centre (PWCC).

SPICE, formerly known as the Penang International Sports Arena, completed major renovations last year to the tune of RM25 million, said Khoo Teck Chong, general manager of SP Setia Property Division (North).

SPICE’s pillarless arena on the second floor can accommodate large conferences with up to 9,000 delegates. This massive space is supported by four other meeting rooms.

The arena is just one of five components of SPICE. The remaining infrastructure – including a convention centre, an aquatic centre, 42 lots of retail outlets and a 400-room business class hotel – is expected to complete in 2016.

Since opening its doors, SPICE has

played host to a two-day, 5,000-pax conference in December 2013 by Singapore’s Riway International, and an 8,000-pax QNET international convention, V-CON, from May 7 to 13, 2014.

Khairie Yusoff, events sales manager at Shangri-La’s Rasa Sayang Resort & Spa, noted that SPICE has drawn large events to Penang, which benefits four- and five-star hotels in the area.

“We got around 300 room nights from V-CON,” he revealed.

Due to be completed in 2017, the PWCC at The Light’s commercial precinct is being developed by IJM Land and Suntec Penang, a subsidiary of Suntec International. The centrepiece of this venue is a 10,000m² column-free multipurpose hall that can be divided into smaller spaces or be converted into a 9,000-seat arena for concerts. It is suitable for exhibitions, conventions, corporate events and private functions.

Meanwhile, the state government has also pumped in money to turn the streets of George Town into an interesting showcase for street art. There are currently 52 paintings in George Town alone, and more street art of good calibre, drawn by locals, have appeared elsewhere in Penang.

But a more definitive MICE move by the state government is its push for a state convention bureau to be established by end of this year. In

mid-August Danny Law Heng Kiang, Penang state minister for Tourism Development announced the appointment of David Hall, senior partner at Adelaide-based David Hall & Associates, as a consultant to set up the structure of Penang International Convention and Exhibition Bureau (PICEB) and recommend a sustainable funding model and potential candidates for the COO’s position.

Law said the bureau would be a division under Penang Global Tourism.

While many inbound agents agree that the bureau will build awareness for Penang and its offerings, views differ on whether it will succeed in generating more business for the state without cannibalising business going into other Malaysian cities.

Diethelm Travel Malaysia’s managing director, Manfred Kurz, opined that the bureau would compete with Sarawak Convention Bureau and Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau. On the other hand, Anthony Wong, group managing director of Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel, believes that Penang and Sarawak appeal to different markets. Wong explained: “Heritage, shopping and entertainment are Penang’s strengths. Sarawak’s strengths lie in its culture, heritage and nature. Penang is more likely to compete for business with neighbouring Thailand and Indonesia.”

Ideas One-day city tour of Penang



A lifelike painting of Penang’s chief minister, Lim Guan Eng, is a hot favourite with visitors at the Made in Penang Interactive Museum

Start your delegates’ day with a guided walking tour of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site, George Town.

The first stop is at the Pinang Peranakan Mansion, once the home of a rich *baba* – a Straits Chinese gentleman – more than a century ago. Built at the close of the 19th

century, the mansion is preserved and recreated to offer a glimpse into the opulent lifestyle, customs and traditions of Penang’s old Peranakan community.

After the visit, walk on to King Street, the historic core of George Town and hear its stories. King Street leads to Market Street where spice shops are aplenty. The guide will explain how various spices are used in Indian cooking.

Next stop, Little India, where delegates can cast their eyes upon lively and colourful shops selling beautiful sarais and delicious Indian food. Delegates will dig into a local Indian lunch and watch a seller prepare pulled tea. They will also be invited to try their hand at ‘pulling’ tea from one container to another until the beverage becomes foamy.

The tour continues after lunch

through the street of Harmony which is peppered with various places of worship such as Masjid Kapitan Keling, Kuan Yin Temple, St George’s Church and Sri Mahamariamman Temple – a reflection of Malaysia’s multicultural society.

As evening falls, your group will proceed to the quirky Made in Penang Interactive Museum at Weld Quay. Delegates will enjoy posing for pictures with 3D lifelike paintings on walls and floors.

All the walking should get your delegates hungry soon and the city tour concludes at Gurney Drive, a hot spot for seafood and popular street eats. Dinner will be hosted at Gurney Drive Hawker Centre, allowing your group to experience the local ambience and cuisine.

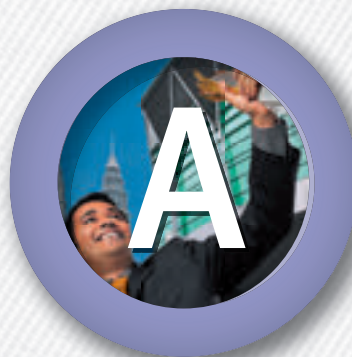
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Need to know



Shopping, dining, private parties all under one roof

Occupying three pre-war heritage buildings that are connected by a common courtyard, ChinaHouse has gained a strong following of fans who love it for its eclectic mix of shops, cafes and restaurants.

Art galleries and a multipurpose performance space on the upper floors can be hired for private dining functions or cocktails parties, as can the open air courtyard downstairs.

One of ChinaHouse's F&B outlets, 14 Chairs, functions as a mixed-use private dining space. It features a 12-foot marble table, an indoor kitchen and an old-fashioned outdoor kitchen. Besides being available for private hire, 14 Chairs hosts a wine dinner every Thursday and a chef's dinner every Friday.

Email info@chinahouse.com.my for more information.

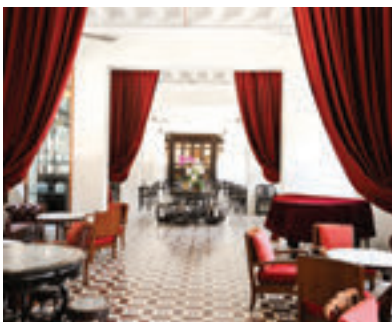
New hotel on Kelawai Road

Scheduled to open in 4Q2013, G Hotel Kelawai will offer 208 well-designed rooms and suites, six function rooms of various sizes, a business centre, three trendy dining outlets, a gym, and a roof-top infinity pool.

Guests will be placed within walking distance of two popular malls, Gurney Plaza and Gurney Paragon.

Stay differently

Opened last year, Seven Terraces is an 18-suite boutique hotel that occupies a row of seven 19th century Anglo Chinese terraces on Stewart Lane. Great for small-sized corporate groups that desire a unique accommodation experience, Seven Terraces offers a courtyard with ample space for events as well as a restaurant with a bar on the ground floor. Kebaya restaurant features décor and furnishings with a strong Baba Nyonya influence.



Host a green meeting

Sister hotels Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort & Spa, Penang and Golden Sands Resort, Penang are offering green meeting packages to help lower the carbon footprint and environmental impact of corporate meetings.

These packages feature environmentally friendly theme breaks. For example, water and snacks are served in non-disposable ware and locally sourced titbits are offered. In addition, non-toxic markers are provided and recycling bins are placed at strategic spots.

Delegates will also be given a plant each as a souvenir after their team-building activity.

Planners can choose to have their meetings outdoors, in the hotels' expansive gardens, to reduce their use of air-conditioning. At Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort & Spa, meeting delegates can start the day with a tai chi or yoga breakfast in the manicured gardens or under giant rain trees.

Go on a wet adventure

One of Penang's latest attraction is the Wet World Wild Adventure Park – said to be Asia's first seawater adventure park.

Opened on last Christmas Day, the park at Moonlight Bay, Batu Ferringhi can create water-based teambuilding activities.

Wet World Wild Adventure Park has 10 bouncy inflatables that mimic outdoor sports facilities such as a rock wall, a running track, a trampoline and a human catapult.

It has a maximum capacity of 80 persons.

For group bookings and more information, email getwet@wetworldwild.com.



CHM expands property network in Penang

George Town will welcome two new properties by Cititel Hotel Management (CHM) come 4Q2014.

The Wembley - A St Giles Premier Hotel, Penang, will offer 415 rooms, a grand ballroom with seating capacity for 1,200 people, several meeting rooms, an executive lounge, a swimming pool, a gym and a helipad, among other facilities. It will be CHM's first hotel in Penang and the northern region of Malaysia.

Adjacent to The Wembley will be the 234-room Cititel Express Penang, the third Cititel Express property after Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu. Located on Magazine Road, in the heart of the city's commercial and government district, the hotel will sit alongside retail shops, restaurants, a food court and car park bays for more than 500 vehicles.

Both hotels boast easy access to shopping complexes and numerous cultural and historical sites.

Bigger airport, more international air access

Extensive upgrading of Penang International Airport, completed in early 2013, has expanded the terminal's land area from 27,500m² to 52,000m² and given it a fresh and contemporary façade.

Today the airport is served by many airlines that offer direct flights from major cities around the world such as Guangzhou, Manila, Singapore and Osaka. Recent improvements in Penang's accessibility came in the form of four weekly flights between Sarawak's Miri and Penang by AirAsia and Hong Kong Express' daily services from Hong Kong.

Power of team spirit

Association meetings are on the rise in Hong Kong but industry players say stronger trade collaboration can speed up growth, writes **Prudence Lui**

Hong Kong is well-positioned as an international meeting destination, with more than 1.6 million MICE overnight arrivals recorded in 2013, based on statistics from Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb).

At the same time, the small but significantly growing segment of association meetings is “an excellent way to enhance Hong Kong’s international profile”, said HKTb’s general manager of MICE and cruise, Kenneth Wong.

“Given the city’s strengths in finance and medicine, there are many association meetings related to these sectors,” he remarked.

In January, Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong (MEHK) invited 15 medical doctors from China to Hong Kong on an exchange, which included meetings with medical associations and visits to hotels and attractions; pair-up activities like seminars and dinners were also held.

Wong said: “China is on our (target) list. This year, we will proactively (seek out) medical chapters and bring their national and provincial meetings to Hong Kong. Mainland Chinese are interested to visit the city alongside meetings, whereas international medical chapters look for knowledge exchange and even member recruitment.”

Next year, MEHK will focus on business development such as strengthening networks with decision-makers.

Other government bodies like Hong Kong Trade Development Council, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (HKETOs) and InvestHK also play a pivotal role in lead referrals and congress bidding.

Wong said: “We have leads coming from (our strong international overseas networks) regularly. HKETO refers mostly conference leads, and convention organisers who’d like to organise big events can approach InvestHK for advice.”

AsiaWorld-Expo Management director of business development, marketing and branding, Monique Yeung, said: “We have been working closely with HKTb on attracting

association events to Hong Kong. The venue works together with the bureau from the bidding stage right up to the event day.

“For example, for Future Travel Experience Asia 2013 and Airline Retail Conference 2013, HKTb provided constructive advice and practical guidance from the proposal stage to final conclusion and offered strong support in event promotion in both the local and overseas markets.”

Industry stakeholders are also starting to realise the potential of association meetings, although the segment is still a niche area in its infancy, observed Janet Wu, director of sales at Hotel ICON.

She remarked: “We hosted on average about 10 association meetings/conferences per year based on the last 30 months of operations. As we are owned by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, we get many business referrals (academic meetings). We hope to develop association meetings but the booking window is long, averaging about 2.5 years in advance. Moreover, countries like China and Singapore are also keen to compete for this sector.”

Wu hence urged HKTb to take the lead in pulling hotels together to create unique ideas and educate the trade on how to tap the segment more effectively.

Space constraint, on the other hand, is the greatest challenge to developing association conference business for Hong Kong Convention and

Exhibition Centre (HKCEC), which holds around 30 international conferences every year, with a majority related to the medical and dentistry sectors, said the venue’s managing director, Monica Lee-Muller.

“Other key reasons stopping association executives from bidding for congresses include financial risks, (the availability of) expertise to organise a congress and the small number of potential attendees,” commented Clemson Lo, general manager of MV Destination Management, which specialises in organising medical and scientific conferences.

“(MEKH) could help with overseas promotions and promotional materials, and introduce local suppliers to associations,” he suggested.

Sharing similar sentiments, Oscar Cerezales, COO Asia Pacific and global director of association services at MCI Group urged a more united industry front comprising the tourism boards, convention centres, expos and hotels.

“These service chains should be more cohesive, (comprising) not just their own agendas, tactical plans and strategies but one incorporating all services,” commented Cerezales.

“There is also a need to apply management strategy or specific tactics for low seasons, like (what) airlines and hotels do because the city has certain days, weeks or periods (that are) less full.”

Space constraints and high cost of operations are said to be obstacles to Hong Kong’s quest for more association events



Need to know



Cultural insights at Jao Tsung-I Academy

Formerly the Lai Chi Kok Hospital, the 32,000m² Jao Tsung-I Academy was recently converted into a cultural landmark. Divided into high, middle and low zones, the compound comprises historical buildings, galleries, exhibition halls, F&B outlets and landscaped gardens. Free guided tours are available to introduce visitors to Professor Jao Tsung-I's contributions to the field of humanities and exhibits as well as the site's historical and architectural features.

Visit www.jtia.hk for more information.

Silent dialogues

Developed by Ngong Ping and Dialogue Experience, Silence Motion 360 is a teambuilding event conducted in natural surroundings and dining facilities to promote interaction between people in total silence. A full-day programme combining this experience with optional activities such as hiking and a visit to Tai O can be provided. Later this year, the Ngong Ping 360 terminal will be converted into a new 310m² MICE venue named 360 Dialogue, which will offer teambuilding activities in total darkness.

Contact sales@np360.com.hk for details.

Survival in Ocean Park

Ocean Park's Ultimate Survival is a signature teambuilding programme designed for corporate professionals. Taking on the roles of a rescue team, participants will tackle a series of challenges to help the fictional country of Kacalia to overcome national crises and build a sustainable future. The team will have to explore park facilities and go on rides as they seek to accomplish their mission. For a tailor-made programme, orienteering elements can be combined with teambuilding activities.

Contact (852) 3923-2323 or visit www.oceanpark.com.hk.

Handmade Hong Kong

This tour takes delegates on a sensory experience of Hong Kong's grassroots industries through visits to workshops such as suit making, metal signage tooling and shoemaking. The eight-hour journey showcases long-cherished traditions of master craftsmen, offerings visitors first-hand insights into these handmade craft industries. Tours are conducted in English and Mandarin every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Contact (852) 3759-7022 or inbound@hstvl.com.



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Sporting ambitions on track

The Gold Coast is a strong contender for sports-related meetings and events, backed by its diverse attractions and new facilities.

By **Paige Lee Pei Qi**



Tourism Australia

The sporting appeal of Gold Coast is set to grow a notch higher as the city welcomes the newly upgraded Gold Coast Aquatic Centre, which just hosted the biggest Pan Pacific Championships in Australian swimming history in August and will be one of the official venues for the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

These two international events will give a “significant boost” to Gold Coast’s branding as a sports and recreation destination, according to Anna Case, director of business events, Gold Coast Tourism.

This “active reputation” will enable the destination to “court sports-related industries to host sports science and sports medicine meetings and conferences”, she said.

Opening in September following an A\$14 million (US\$13 million) redevelopment, the Gold Coast Aquatic Centre features not only state-of-the-art, international-standard competition facilities, but is also capable of hosting meetings in its multi-purpose spaces for up to 80 pax. Located along the Gold Coast Broadwater in Southport, the outdoor podium areas also provide a waterside venue for larger functions and events.

The centre will pave new opportunities for teambuilding activities with over-water views of the Gold Coast skyline, and the NTO is already linking up with corporations and conference organisers to develop a fresh range of teambuild-

ing activities.

She said: “With so many sporting heroes and athletes residing on the Gold Coast, we see this as an opportunity to incorporate their expertise, motivational and inspirational stories, and successes to engage with the corporates.

“Several former Olympic and Commonwealth Games medalists currently host teambuilding activities within their sporting field,” she elaborated.

An example is five-time Olympian Natalie Cook, who conducts motivational, leadership and teambuilding workshops as well as personal play and coach volleyball sessions to corporate clients, according to Case.

Talan Miller, managing director of Sabre Corporate Development, believes that the Gold Coast’s well-reputed image as Australia’s holiday and business tourism playground offers a “terrific backdrop for any tailored teambuilding experience”.

“The Gold Coast can easily offer diverse environments of beaches, city, rainforest, theme parks and luxury resorts all within a 30-minute travel radius,” said Miller. “This gives us unequalled scope for great events that incorporate different environments and locations, and it is also a very safe destination.”

Sharing similar sentiments, Byron Kurth, managing director at Managing Australian Destinations (MAD), said: “Gold Coast has a unique blend of urban and city experience,

coupled with water and bush. And given the climate in the Gold Coast, we rarely need to change plans to suit the weather.”

In tandem with the destination’s rising sports stature, sports-based activities can be incorporated into teambuilding activities to increase the fun factor, industry players advocated.

One of the sports-based activities Sabre offers is Beach Olympics, which immerses groups in Olympic-theme action with beach team activities and dress up to represent different countries, complete with opening and awards ceremonies, according to Miller.

Another top favourite he recommends is Strike Force, in which a commando raid interrupts a meeting and troops issue uniforms, dog tags and special equipment. The military theme then becomes a fun and dynamic medium for team missions, imparting key messages to ensure a memorable event on the battlefield.

Alternatively, MAD’s Kurth suggests Yachting Regatta, where participants get to race on luxury yachts and world champion yachtsmen can be invited aboard to share their skills to enhance the regatta experience.

For sporty activities but with less adrenaline rush, companies can opt for lawn bowling, which enables executives to wind down after a serious day of conferencing, Kurth recommended.

The Gold Coast offers an alluring backdrop for corporate meetings and teambuilding activities

Destination: Australia

Ideas

Out and about in Queensland in two days

Day 1 Begin the morning in style and zip freely down the roads of Gold Coast on a Harley Davidson, heading towards Surfers Paradise for breakfast with the dolphins at SeaWorld. The dolphin encounter also allows guests to touch and feed bottlenose dolphins and learn hand signals to communicate with them. Spend the rest of the morning at this marine animal park filled with attractions and rides for all ages.

At noon, indulge in a sumptuous buffet of local seafood and international delicacies at Four Winds 360°, alongside panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean and the hinterland at Queensland's only revolving restaurant. After lunch, take a helicopter out to South Stradbroke Island. At

this exclusive island getaway, guests can enjoy a diverse range of activities including speedboat rides, para-flying, seaplane rides and four-wheel drive tours.

Wind down with a sunset dinner cruise back to the Gold Coast, savouring views of the beautiful ocean over champagne aboard a comfortable sailing boat.

Day 2 Rise and shine early, and take off at dawn on hot air balloons to float over picturesque landscapes on a 60-minute ride. Following which, indulge in a delicious breakfast with refreshing champagne at a secluded vineyard.



Delegates take to the sea for corporate outings

A revitalising break away from the city awaits in the afternoon. A hinterland tour will take guests to visit tumbling waterfalls, verdant rainforests and stunning lookout points in the South East Queensland region.

Come evening, head to Harbour Town Shopping Centre on the Gold Coast, where guests can shop at brand outlets and specialty stores offering goods at discounted prices.

Mark the end of the day in true Aussie style. Enjoy a unique dinner-and-show experience filled with out-back music, drama and action with over 40 stock horses and a three-course Australian BBQ dinner.

Credits: Gold Coast Tourism

Need to know



Sleeping in the wilderness

Taronga Western Plains Zoo, near Dubbo in New South Wales, has launched 10 new luxury African-inspired lodges at Zoofari Lodge. The new safari lodges feature African-inspired décor, king-size beds, double bath and private decks right on the edge of the zoo's African Savannah, enabling guests to see giraffes, elephants and zebras roaming from the comfort of their own lodges.

Dirty Dancing returns to Down Under

Fans of *Dirty Dancing* will rejoice to know that the popular stage musical will return to Australia for its 10th anniversary production. AussieTheatre confirmed that the production will open at Sydney's Lyric Theatre by late 2014. *Dirty Dancing* staged its world premiere in Sydney in 2004 and has since enjoyed ongoing success on the international circuit.

Tigerair starts roaring on Brisbane-Cairns route

Tigerair Australia launched new daily return services between Brisbane and Cairns in April, reflecting growing confidence in the Far North Queensland tourism industry. The introduction of the service will provide a 30 per cent growth in Tigerair's existing services to Cairns. Also launched in April are daily return services between Brisbane and Darwin.

Cooking with Masterchef Julie Goodwin

Learn to cook up a storm with Australia's first MasterChef winner Julie Goodwin, who has established her very own cooking school, Julie's Place. Located in Gosford, Central Coast, the school features a selection of cooking classes hosted by Julie and her team.

A wide array of culinary skills at various levels are available for mastery at Julie's Place, ranging from the fine art of cake decoration and classic French techniques to canapés and family meals. Email cook@juliesplace.com.au for more information.

Darwin welcomes new homegrown hotel

The 301-key Élan Soho Suites has opened its doors in Darwin's CBD in July, marking the launch of the Northern Territory's newest homegrown hotel chain.

Offering one- and two-bedroom apartments, this modern 4.5-star property is Darwin's first hotel to offer remote check-in facilities, allowing guests to check in via smartphones and using their devices as room keys throughout the duration of their stay.

The mezzanine level boasts a dedicated conference floor comprising six event spaces that can accommodate up to 400 delegates. The hotel will also introduce Darwin's inaugural Korean barbecue restaurant, Seoul Food.



Tim Xue



Sunny Heng



Irena Reha



Fabian Seet

China

Edward Mair is now executive chef at **Fairmont Nanjing**. Mair was last sous-chef at the hotel. Prior to joining Fairmont Nanjing, he was executive chef at The Westin Haikou. He possesses close to 15 years of culinary experience, and has worked all over the world, including the Middle East at the Westin Dubai.

Raffles Hainan has welcomed **Tim Xue** to the position of director, sales and marketing. Xue joins Raffles Hainan with more than 15 years of experience. He was last director of sales and marketing at Dalian New World Hotel.

Sunny Heng has taken on the role of managing director at both **Sheraton Zhuhai Hotel** and **St Regis Zhuhai** – properties that are due to open along the Chinese Riviera in November 2014 and 2016 respectively. Heng joins from St Regis Sanya Yalong Bay Resort where he had served as general manager for the past four years.

Hong Kong

Marco Polo Hotels has appointed **Jennifer Cronin** vice president, sales & marketing. Cronin was last vice president of sales & marketing with Dusit International. She subsequently left to pursue her PhD in crisis management leader-

ship with Bond University in Australia and is now in the final stage of the programme.

Rosewood Hotel Group has named **May Pendraat** its new vice president of sales & marketing. She has over 25 years of sales and marketing experience in the regional hospitality industry and was most recently vice president of sales & marketing at Marco Polo Hotels.

India

Nitin Kumar has joined India's **StayWell Hospitality Group** as regional sales manager, taking charge of operations in the country. Kumar has been in the travel industry for seven years, and has worked with brands such as Ginger Hotels, Clarks Inn Group, Peppermint Hotels and Premier Inn India.

Indonesia

David Hill is now general manager of **Bintan Lagoon Resort** in Indonesia. Hill joins from WMC Property Management Group where he was general manager and responsible for opening a 40-floor mixed-use tower in Saigon in January 2013.

Grand Nikko Bali has appointed **Irena Reha** its new director of sales & marketing. For the past six years Reha had been

based in Dubai, working for international and Arabic hotel brands including The Westin, Le Méridien, Sofitel and Habtoor.

Singapore

Fabian Seet is now vice president, sales with **Pan Pacific Hotels Group**, based in Singapore. Seet was last general manager, International Markets at Jin Jiang International Hotel Management Co. Prior to that, he was director, global sales with The Ascott Limited.

Sharmini Moganasundram has moved from her role as general manager of Parkroyal Serviced Suites Kuala Lumpur to helm **Parkroyal on Kitchener Road** in Singapore.

Worldhotels has promoted **Christina Spykerman** to regional vice president, sales and marketing. She was last senior director of sales and marketing, Asia Pacific.

Thailand

Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit, A Luxury Collection Hotel, Bangkok has named **Kornchuma Udomphan** its new director of sales. Kornchuma, most recently senior director of sales at W Bangkok, brings with her close to 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry. She has also



Sharmini Moganasundram



Kenneth Bruce Hill

worked at hotels including InterContinental Bangkok and A Royal Meridien Hotel, Bangkok.

Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts has made **Kenneth Bruce Hill** director of sales and marketing for Bangkok and Laos. Hill brings with him over 25 years of sales & marketing experience in the hospitality industry. Prior to joining Banyan Tree in Bangkok, he was director of sales & marketing with Noble House Hotels & Resorts in the US.



A Farrer deal

The former founding chairman and CEO of Raffles International Hotels & Resorts puts his creative thinking and boldness to action again with a new hotel in Singapore, One Farrer Hotel & Spa. **Raini Hamdi** has coffee with Helfer as the hotel opens its doors September 3

A luxury hotel with conference facility in a non-luxury location, Farrer Park, raises a few eyebrows. Is location your biggest challenge?

Farrer Park is one of the most interesting and centric locations in Singapore.

Over the years, Singapore has become geographic. Before, it did not really matter where you stay; you could stay in Orchard, Marina Square area, etc, and it's all only 15 minutes away on the island. There were no hotels in the East Coast, none in Shenton Way or along the Singapore River – in fact we were one of the first hotels on the river when we built the Merchant Court (now Swissotel Merchant Court; Helfer was then head honcho of Raffles International Hotels and Resorts).

Today, it does matter where you stay, as it can take 45 minutes to get to a meeting, so being centric to what you want to do is important. We've become a large city and congestion is part of it, although the good thing is we don't have really bad traffic as in Bangkok or Jakarta.

It's natural for larger, urbanised cities to have different hubs and precincts, and there is a need for a good balance of five and four-star hotels in those locations. Singapore would not be as interesting a destination if it were not geographic.

Why Farrer Park, and how did the whole development Connexion at Farrer Park come about?

Farrer Park is probably one of the last bastions in the heart of Singapore that has not been overly-developed as a hotel destination.

When our company, The Farrer Park Company, tendered for the site, it was a large 'white site' (a planning concept which allows developers more flexibility to optimise the use of land for various uses without incurring hefty charges),

40 per cent of which was required to be a hotel.

Part of the investors is a group of medical doctors and their dream was to build the best private hospital in Singapore, so the rest of the white site became in time, The Farrer Park Medical Centre and Farrer Park Hospital with the One Farrer Conference Centre being part of the hotel component (see box).

How dependent is the hotel on the hospital/medical centre for its occupancy?

The hospital and medical centre are like a good corporate account for the hotel and will probably comprise 23-25 per cent of the hotel's business mix – families and relatives staying pre-, during or post-treatment. It's good seed business. The remainder 75 per cent is based on our ability to attract corporate, MICE and leisure travellers to One Farrer Hotel & Spa as a five-star venue in an exciting new area of Singapore.

Exactly my point, what has the area to offer and why did you decide on a five-star positioning?

Three-star hotels are what everyone has built there to-date and the way I look at it is it's only by having a five-star hotel that you can control the nature of the business.

I know that for so many of the hotels we have built, be it in Asia, Europe, the US or what have you, it is us who drive the market. And we drive the market by concept, by understanding what is required to make the market work, with a bit of passion thrown in to ensure that we achieve what we said we were going to do.

Plus, if you look at the exorbitant land costs in Singapore, it is a shame if you under-build. As well, it's not as if we're building a hotel in the middle of nowhere. Remember this is the centre

of the city. The location is good and, today, being on top of an MRT station is extremely beneficial. We find that with the Millennial generation, travelling by MRT is actually a preferred choice. The whole development too has some 900 employees, so it is important to be connected with an MRT.

Why would people go to One Farrer Hotel & Spa?

Because it is going to be a great hotel! Even if you're only in Singapore for two days, whether you walk in our gardens, swim in our pools, visit our spa, attend a meeting in our conference facility, experience in-room shopping – there are over 300 items you can buy, not online or through a traditional shopping mode, but from the comfort of your room, providing immediate gratification for your shopping desires.

That, plus I honestly believe, as we said earlier on, Farrer Park is one of the most interesting locations in Singapore. When you walk out of the hotel, you actually see Singapore. A lot of times when I walk out of a hotel whether in Singapore or New York, I really don't know where I am, it could be anywhere. I think if you ask people why they haven't stayed in Farrer Park, they would say it's because there has not been a five-star hotel there.

Secondly, there are a lot of new, very interesting restaurants and places opening up in the area. People want to enjoy uniquely Singapore places and Farrer Park is special. It is not the European town, it's not Kampung Glam (the Malay quarters), it's not Little India, it is a special wedge in Singapore's history. The original race track for Singapore Turf Club was at Farrer Park and was the site/landing strip for Singapore's first manned airborne flight in a box kite glider. The first meeting of the PAP (the ruling People's Action Party), the

first multi-racial social club, etc, were all developed at Farrer Park. So it's a microcosm of a lot of things that happened in Singapore, and all the communities that make up Singapore are there.

Are you saying just by having a five-star plus hotel is enough to open demand to a location that many overseas visitors aren't familiar with?

No, definitely not. To drive a destination, you must first understand what the destination does not have and what it has too much of, so you can come in and complement (the offering). Once you've identified that, then you have to totally focus on building a property that is not only the best in the particular area but you also have to look at what everyone else in the marketplace is doing.

We don't have the convention size facility of Marina Bay Sands, but we have a 550pax ballroom and three meeting rooms and fibre optics cabling through from Farrer Park Hospital's 18 operating rooms and our Institute of Nutrition (see box)) so we can go actively after specialist medical-related/lifestyle meetings. By nature those meetings are not large and we can cater for them better than anyone else in the market, because of our ability to enable technology to make our facilities state-of-the-art.

Would medical meetings form the bulk of your conference business?

No, for a 500pax ballroom and a 243-room hotel, we must have a balance of different types of meetings and also small incentives.

As part of our concept of being a 'total environment' for work, leisure and lifestyle, in addition to the three hotels, we have 14 gardens on 20 different levels and an over 500-piece Greater Asia art collection that we've specially curated for the entire Connexion Complex. We have a number of interesting places for small groups to do meetings, receptions and incentives. These aren't necessary places you would find elsewhere in Singapore.

So we're in a sweet spot where we can take in medium-sized groups and do them really well. As part of our strategic collaboration with Samsung Electronics, we have a conferencing system where delegates will be presented with a Samsung tablet and they can do instant polling, interact with the speakers on stage, amplify their voice when they ask a question with their picture instantly appearing on the large screen – it's really cutting edge.

Do you see One Farrer competing with other precincts like the Novena

area, where Far East Hospitality also has a hotel next to a medical centre?

I think we compete with every area, although we are more centric in location than some of the others. The rates at One Farrer Hotel & Spa for a while would be more attractive than some other areas of the city, as it's a new location and we are a new independent hotel. This plus our superior facilities are good reasons for people to come as they know we're a five-star hotel and they can try it out at a lower rate for now.

What are the rates?

For the first three to six months, our opening rates for the Urban Hotel would

start at S\$280 (US\$225), for the Skyline Hotel from S\$400, the suites will be from S\$500 and the villas would fetch S\$1,000 and above.

Is this the first hotel that you've had done since the Raffles days?

We have, and continue to undertake a number of hospitality, lifestyle and mixed-use projects focused mainly in greater Asia, but One Farrer Hotel & Spa is the first hotel project we have conceptualized, developed and implemented in Singapore since Raffles City, Raffles Hotel and the Merchant Court Hotel. Singapore being our home base makes this project even more special.

AT A GLANCE: ONE FARRER HOTEL & SPA

- Part of a mixed-use development called Connexion at Farrer Park, comprising the 243-room five-star hotel and spa; The Farrer Park Medical Centre, home to more than 200 medical specialists; and The Farrer Hospital, one of the first private hospitals to be built ground-up in Singapore after 30 years
- One Farrer Hotel & Spa is positioned as a trend-setting five-star hotel whose three 'hotels within a hotel' concept and lifestyle features on their own will draw guests to the property, 25 per cent of the mix of which will be medical, 15 per cent leisure, 30-35 per cent corporates and the rest meetings and incentives
- The 'hotels within a hotel' concept comprises three styles of accommodation with a total of 243 rooms: Urban Hotel, levels 11-15, targeted at business and leisure travellers; Loft Apartments, levels 16-17, targeted at the extended stay market; and The Skyline Hotel, levels 18-



20, targeted at the luxury segment with suites and villas

- The hotel boasts the One Farrer Conference Centre (see below)
- There are nine F&B offerings
- The Spa Retreat offers specialised aesthetic and holistic treatments. It boasts an Olympic-sized swimming pool, Japanese-style onsens, reflexology water walk, relaxation gardens and comprehensive fitness facilities, among others.

The One Farrer Conference Centre features:

- a 698sqm Grand Ballroom that can accommodate up to 550pax for a sit-down dinner and 700pax for a reception, with live video feed capabilities from the hospital's 18 operating rooms and the hotel's fully-equipped culinary studio, the Institute of Nutrition, where cooking demonstrations and workshops can be conducted and be beamed to a wider audience



- Three contemporary meeting rooms with floor-to-ceiling panels, suitable for small to mid-sized events such as solemnisations and corporate seminars. Each is 104sqm in size and can accommodate up to 250 guests when combined
- Venues such as the Marquee, Flip Flop Restaurant, Sunset Bar and The Box Kite Lounge. The air-conditioned marquee seats up to 350 guests, while Flip Flop Restaurant and Sunset Bar are poolside venues. The Box Kite Lounge, the site of Singapore's first manned airborne flight, has high ceilings and lush greenery in an al fresco setting. The hotel's 14 gardens can be backdrops for pre-event receptions and evening cocktails.
- A fully equipped Technology Centre is located within the conference centre.



In celebration of its 40th anniversary, **TTG Asia Media** co-organised a fun run with Gardens by the Bay on July 25 for travel and tourism trade participants. Photos by Patrick Tan



Starwood Hotels and Resorts and **TTGmice** recently co-presented a **Hangzhou MICE Industry Dialogue** held at the Sheraton Hangzhou Wetland Park Resort.



The **Singapore MICE Forum 2014** held at Marina Bay Sands' Sands Expo and Convention Centre in July saw a huge turnout and active interaction. Photos by Paige Lee



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What's next?

Rising stars in Asia – Several destinations in Asia are sharpening their MICE capability and winning over business event planners. In the next issue of *TTGmice* we look at some of these emerging options. Also, travel with us to **China, Japan, Macau, Philippines** and **Thailand** to find out what these destinations have to offer for your next business event.

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For Association Executives

- Learn how PCOs can assist in organising overseas association meetings.
- Discover the secrets of achieving global outreach.
- Find out why Thailand's association meeting was such a success.
- Understand how sustainability drives value for your association.

Corporate Performance Forum @ ITCMA

2 Oct | Thursday

For Incentive & Corporate Executives

- Learn how to incorporate creativity in incentive travel programmes and boost effectiveness.
- Explore the values of co-locating business meetings with your incentive travel itinerary.



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WARNING! EVENT MAY BE TOO INTENSE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND IS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 13. NO COSTUMES OR MASKS ALLOWED.