

November 2014

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Singapore invests in
creative experiences

Taiwan dangles carrots for
corporate groups

MICE venues in Asia share
steps taken to minimise
food waste from events



Pushing the limits

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Karen Yue
Group editor

Eat up for goodness' sake

It has never occurred to me how much food is featured in a business event until that fateful lunch meeting with the Marina Bay Sands' sustainability team a few months ago. As we chatted about the integrated resort's green efforts and exchanged ideas on what more could be done in this aspect, Kevin Teng, executive director of sustainability, and his colleagues caught my attention with insights on how the massive property coped with food waste from events and its dining outlets.

There is much from the conversation I am not at liberty to share here, but there's enough information to make me wonder just how much the MICE industry is contributing to the strain of rising food demand and waste on the Earth's resources.

If you read the May issue of the *National Geographic*, you'd learn that there are seven billion mouths to feed worldwide each day and growing prosperity and population across the globe is driving an increased demand for food. By 2020, farms will need to double their production. And yet, according to the United Nations – as conveyed to me by Roger Simons, group sustainability manager of MCI Headquarters – 30 to 40 per cent of what is grown on this planet is wasted and 1.4 billion hectares of land is used annually to produce food that's never eaten.

In developed, high-income countries, where most major MICE cities are, it is hardly surprising that food waste is dominated by consumer waste.

Just think about this: a two-day trade conference could easily feature a welcome dinner, a breakfast presentation, several coffee breaks with finger food to keep delegates awake throughout each day, at least one cocktail networking function with trays of beautifully made canapés going around, and a closing dinner – and there would be more than enough food at each of these functions to feed everyone in the room. As an Asian who is used to the concept that a great host is one who offers his guest an abundance of everything, including food and drinks, the extent of feasting offered during events in this part of the world is not surprising.

Simons, too, agrees that "Asian cultures are more inclined to overflowing buffets showing the spirit of hospitality, which tends to mean that a food item running out is unacceptable".

It is therefore comforting to know that several Asian MICE venues I spoke to for this issue's *In focus* (page 14-15) have in place sensible systems to minimise and responsibly process food waste from events. Just as important too, in my opinion, is the venue's ability to dish out food that delegates want to eat. That means, food that is served hot, fresh and tasty, no matter the scale of the event, and enough options are available to guests with specific dietary needs.

At the same time, there needs to be a change in consumer attitudes towards food. Delegates should register ahead for a dining function and actually turn up for it so meals prepared for them will not go to waste; take just enough food from the buffet line and finish what they've got on their plates; and be the force driving change by insisting that event organisers provide sustainable catering options.



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協助於本局參與之活動（澳門境內外）進行宣傳推廣 ◆ Provide publicity and promotion opportunities in local and overseas events participated by IPIM

協調與本澳相關政府部門聯繫 ◆ Co-ordinate and liaise with Macao government departments

協助在澳成立公司開展會展項目 ◆ Assist Macao Companies to develop MICE projects

提供會展合作配對服務・協助尋找合作夥伴 ◆ Provide MICE cooperation matching service in search for potential partners



We love



Taste the goodness in Phnom Penh

Want your delegates or winners to take a taste of Cambodia home with them and earn good karma while doing so? Here's the answer – Feel Good Cooking School, helmed by the young and energetic Sovannara “Nara” Thuon.

Participants are picked up by tuk tuk and taken to the Feel Good Café in Phnom Penh, where the school is located, to enjoy a fragrant cup of coffee brewed from beans that have been roasted locally. Then it's a three-minute walk to a buzzing local market to pick up groceries for the lesson. Nara leads guests on a journey guaranteed to tingle the senses – suck tart guava-like fruit, dip your fingers in freshly squeezed coconut milk, and enjoy the refreshing scent of kaffir lime.

Participants haul supplies back to the sparkling kitchen of Feel Good Cooking School and get down to business – the creation of one appetiser, one salad, a main dish, and a dessert, with guidance from Nara's capable hands.

The menu includes but is not limited to chicken sausages wrapped in banana flower petals, mango salad with dried shrimp and dried fish, pumpkin custard, and the Khmer cuisine signature fish amok.

The lesson is wrapped up with a sit-down meal for participants to relish, literally, their new-found culinary prowess! Printed cook books containing recipes to all dishes offered at the school are given to participants.

Feel Good Cooking School opened in April 2014 as the latest initiative under the Feel Good social enterprise seeking to train and empower Khmer youth. It has welcomed a couple of small corporate groups and is set up for classes of up to 12. Book one week in advance.

Contact nara@feelgoodcafe.com for reservations and customised programmes.

Accor takes MGallery to Myanmar

The Lake Garden, Nay Pyi Taw, Accor's first hotel in Myanmar and a member of the MGallery Collection, has opened.

Located a five-minute drive from Myanmar International Convention Centre and 20 minutes from Nay Pyi Taw International Airport, the hotel is surrounded by a tropical landscaped garden overlooking a tranquil lake. It comprises four elegant, low-level buildings and features 165 spacious rooms and suites.

The hotel's meeting facilities are said to be the city's best, consisting of a conference room for up to 250 delegates, six breakout meeting rooms for small and medium sized functions, and two state-of-the-art boardrooms.

Dining options at the hotel include The Grand Bell, an all-day dining, bell-themed restaurant which serves a diverse range of cuisines; The Oak Room wine cellar and cigar room; and The Primo, a specialty Italian restaurant.

For recreation, The Lake Garden offers MSpa, a fully equipped MFit fitness studio, an oversized outdoor swimming pool and a tennis court.

“This hotel opening will officially mark Accor's return into Myanmar,” said Patrick Basset, COO of Accor Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and the Philippines.

“This opening comes at a time when the capital is seeing an influx of visitors with a strong demand for an upscale accommodation with international standard facilities and superb services. The Lake Garden is the perfect accommodation for discerning travellers looking for a memorable hotel experience in this capital city.”



A better, faster, sharper website

The Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre has upgraded its website (www.klccconventioncentre.com) with new features to enhance user experience and connectivity for its global clientele.

New technologies have been harnessed to ease navigation and introduce new, customised features for users planning an event. For instance, users can now utilise an event profiler page and a product page to refine their search at the click of a button and gain instant access to content relating to the different segments i.e., Association Conventions & Conferences, Banquets & Functions, Corporate Meetings & Events, Entertainment & Concerts, Exhibitions and Small Meetings, and their respective product offerings.

Angeline Lue, the centre's director of sales & marketing, said: “We want the site to be both a key information touch-point for our global clientele and a marketing tool, so new features such as dedicated email addresses for the sales team and individually configured to each event type mean sales enquiries can reach us in real time and prompt a faster response. All this will help us better serve our clients whilst reaffirming our world-class reputation and position as Malaysia's premier convention facility.”

Old school flaunts new allure

Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore has transformed a historical school building nestled within its lush premises into its latest MICE offering.

Now known as The Pavilion, the former Singapore's Hollandse School, which operated from 1928 to 1982, has been lovingly conserved and restored to its former glory. The charming colonial-style venue can host receptions with 120 guests or banquets for 100 people, and comes with a foyer and courtyard.

"Due to its historical value, fond memories of The Pavilion remained in the minds of guests and colleagues alike. When the plan for regular refurbishment of furniture and fixtures was confirmed, the ownership decided to transform this sentimental site into a venue that will again create lasting memories for families and corporations enjoying their celebrations and events," said Reto K Klauser, vice president and general manager of the luxury hotel.

While Klauser believes that The Pavilion's rich heritage alone will draw event planners, the hotel has rolled out new initiatives to enhance the appeal of the venue. They include the *Back To School* meeting package, a "Heritage Wall" that commemorates personalities who have made an impact to the hotel, and an outdoor grill experience delivered through an outdoor kitchen in the courtyard.

"This revolutionary outdoor grill experience is unlike any other," said Klauser. "Our creative chefs have designed three flexible packages, for example a set dinner with Russian-style service, buffet or communal (dining). The experience takes gourmet meals to a different dimension and our chefs are able to deliver unparalleled freshness directly to guests' plates. These grilled dishes are also not available at any Shangri-La restaurants."

Prices for an outdoor grill dinner start from S\$90 (US\$71) per person.



What's next for tech-savvy business travellers?

The first of SilverNeedle Hospitality's technology-focused Next Hotels brand has opened in Brisbane, showing what it means to cater to the modern business traveller.

Guests of the 304-room property are encouraged to download the Next App from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store, allowing them to perform express check-ins, room selection and check-outs. Guests who do not want to download the app can use the self-service Next Kiosks in the Meet & Greet Zone to check in.

The app also gives visitors the ability to unlock their room door; control room temperature, lights and entertainment channels; order cocktails by the pool; and call for room service.

Each guestroom is also equipped with a complimentary Samsung Galaxy S4 phone, which can be tapped as a personal hotspot. Local calls on the phone are free and international calls are cheaper, while incoming calls to the hotel room are automatically diverted to the S4 phone. Guests also have a choice of four free items daily from the minibar.

Facilities at Next Hotel Brisbane include a 24-hour Club Lounge which houses an outdoor pool, an adjoining terrace bar, a 24-hour gym and a business centre, as well as an InTransit Zone with shower pods and sleep pods which will appeal to business travellers arriving after a long flight.

Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the property.



Guide to meetings in Hangzhou out now

The MICE Department of the Hangzhou Tourism Promotion Centre, Hangzhou Tourism Commission, has produced its first incentive planner in English and Mandarin.

Roger Shu, MICE manager, said it is also the first incentive guide to be produced by any tourism department or convention bureau in China.

Some 2,000 hard copies have been produced, and only the Mandarin version will be mailed out, while English copies will be distributed at MICE shows such as IMEX, IT&CM China and CIBTM. The English version can also be downloaded at www.micehangzhou.com/en.

Shu commented: "The incentive planner is targeted at international meeting planners, incentive houses, the media and end-users based in China. Outside of China, our incentive target markets are Greater China, and South-east Asia. It showcases Hangzhou products that focus on interactive activities."

The planner has 56 recommended products under five categories. These products allow incentive groups to experience Hangzhou's culture, nature, water attractions, nightlife, and options for teambuilding, he added.

— Caroline Boey

Tea terrace in Hangzhou



Haikou welcomes first Marriott property

Marriott International last month debuted its first Marriott-branded hotel in Haikou, capital of China's Hainan.

Located on the west coast of Haikou and adjacent to Hainan International Convention & Exhibition Centre, Haikou Marriott Hotel offers 386 well-appointed rooms including two luxury villas in nine different categories.

Its selection of event facilities comprises an expansive lawn with ocean views for up to 800 guests, and over 4,000m² of configurable meeting space including an 845m² Grand Ballroom and seven meeting rooms.

There are three restaurants and four bars, while recreational offerings include adult and children's pools and an eco-pool. The Touch Spa boasts six hot spring pools, two steam rooms, two saunas, two Jacuzzis, three foot spa rooms and six treatment rooms.

Outrigger gears up for MICE

New meeting facilities at the Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort is allowing the property to better position itself as a suitable venue for medium-sized meetings.

At the centre of the resort's hardware revamp is the 716m² Similan Ballroom which can accommodate up to 350 delegates in theatre style and 290 guests banquet style.

The resort has also unveiled three meeting rooms – the 158m² Tongfah, and Tawan and Talay breakout rooms at 77m² each.

Darren Edmonstone, Outrigger managing director, Asia-Pacific, said: "The new Similan meeting space allows Outrigger to extend its unique passion for meetings excellence and teambuilding to event organisers around the world."

Tony Pedroni, general manager of the Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort, said the new spaces would allow the resort to host team-building programmes with a "uniquely Thai twist".

Meetings held at the resort can benefit from high-end, in-house audiovisual equipment, technical support, free Wi-Fi, and an events and catering team. All four meeting spaces are designed to allow in natural light.

Event planners are supported by a variety of outdoor spaces in the form of extensive gardens and a beachfront for teambuilding activities and outdoor banquets.

Easier hotel billing for TMCs

Payment solutions provider eNett International and travel technology firm Cornerstone Information Systems have developed a direct hotel billing payment solution for TMCs.

Through the new solution, TMCs can access virtual account numbers (VANs) without the need for lengthy credit assessments, while the solution automatically relays payment instruction and data to the hotel. By allowing TMCs to do away with a traveller's personal or corporate credit card, the solution helps them save processing time and improve reconciliation, usage and spend control.

The solution is also available via the Travelport Travel Commerce Platform, so no changes to existing back-end systems are required.

eNett managing director and CEO, Anthony Hynes, said: "We developed eNett VANs specifically to address the inefficiencies of travel payments, making innovative and integrated technology accessible to companies of all sizes. The rapid uptake of VANs globally has been driven by a need for new payment solutions to meet evolving industry needs."

The solution offers several low-cost FX options across 27 currencies, and eNett customers can earn rebates for transactions paid with VANs as soon as they start transacting.

Lewin Terrace

Lewin Terrace's ambience and new Kyoto-inspired menu is sure to give top achievers a memorable taste of ancient Kyoto elegance. By **Hannah Koh**



Tucked into a verdant corner of Fort Canning Park, getting to Lewin Terrace is half the magic of this restaurant. Guests must cut through the parking space belonging to an adjacent building, ascend steeply hewn steps, and catch your breath before you gain a glimpse of the classic colonial bungalow that is Lewin Terrace.

The stylish black-and-white property was the former residence of the British fire station chief during colonial times, and the restaurant bears the name of Major-General E O Lewin, the general officer commanding in Singapore from 1933 to 1935.

If you're looking to deliver your guests an exclusive and romantic dining experience, Lewin Terrace lends you the charm of yesterday and the luxury of fine dining.



MICE application

Lewin Terrace's boutique appeal has made the restaurant a hit with the fashion mob. Among the A-list brands that have held functions at the colonial residence-turned-restaurant are Chanel and Tory Burch, while Olay hosted its blogger event at the venue as well.

There are two major sections – an outdoor veranda that seats 12 and room for 66 indoors. A narrow bar can take four guests. Altogether, the restaurant can accommodate up to 100 guests for banquets and 150 pax for standing receptions.

F&B concept

Marrying principles from both Japanese and French cuisine, the seven-course seasonal menu by chef de cuisine Ryoichi Kano starred fresh-flown Kyoto produce trimmed and plated exquisitely, with ingredients such as *mat-sutake*, bonito, taro, and other harvest season foods taking centre stage.

I thoroughly enjoyed the *amadai urokoyaki* with Japanese turnip sauce. A portion of the scales of the *amadai* tilefish were left intact and deep-fried to create a satisfyingly crunchy contrast to the soft but sweet flesh of the fish.

Fans of duck meat will enjoy the *challan* duck presented with a *touban*, which is a heated ceramic plate on which to cook the meat to your preferred done-ness. Cooked quickly, the fat from the duck bubbles merrily on the hot surface yet keeps the meat juicy and tender. Alongside it came a selection of *Kyo-yasai*, unique vegetables grown specifically in Kyoto,



and a miso red wine sauce.

The fresh fig tart was served with a drizzle of caramel sauce and vanilla ice cream. Light and fragrant, it was the perfect end to a meal.

General manager and chief sommelier, Daisuke Kawai, is on hand to ensure only the best wines are served. Kawai was formerly chief sommelier at top French fine dining restaurant Les Amis in Singapore.

Service and ambience

Lewin Terrace is romantic without overbearing intensity, shielded from the outside world but open enough to encourage conversations among guests. Service was constant, prompt, and thoughtful. Servers took time to tell guests about each dish, making sure that eating was not just a physical endeavour but an educational one too.

Contacts

21 Lewin Terrace, Fort Canning Park
Singapore 179290
Email: info@lewinterrace.com.sg
Website: www.lewinterrace.com.sg

Opening hours

Lunch, 12.00-15.00 (last order at 14.00)
Dinner, 18.30-23.00 (last order at 21.30)

Luxury cruises set to make waves in Asia come 2015

Top-end river cruise expedition company Pandaw has rolled out itineraries for 2015, now open for bookings.

A 10-night Laos itinerary, to be operated on the new 10-stateroom *Laos Pandaw*, features two nights in UNESCO World Heritage Site Luang Prabang, and expeditions to tribal villages in the Laotian jungle, crossing rapids, gorges and jungle pools. Departing November 1, 2015, the Laos voyage is priced from US\$3,250. Bookings made before January 5, 2015 will enjoy a 10 per cent discount.

The cruise operator is also due to begin eight-day Brahmaputra River cruises on the *MV Mahabaahu* on March 29, 2015.

Guests will be taken to the north-east region of Assam, India to the largest river island in the world to meet the Mishing people and Kaziranga National Park. Wildlife enthusiasts can expect close encounters with single horned rhinos, buffaloes, Indian tigers and river dolphins. Prices from US\$2,430. Pre- and post-cruise stays can be arranged for New Delhi and Kolkata, including domestic connecting flights.

In Vietnam, Pandaw is putting a spin on the traditional Halong Bay cruise by tagging on a Red River expedition, to be sailed on the *Angkor Pandaw*. During the 10-night sailing beginning July 10, 2015, passengers will explore the bay's limestone islands and caves, floating villages and school, before moving into the Kinh Tay River and Duong River. Passengers are given two days of sightseeing in Hanoi before being shipped off to see the Red River. Prices from US\$2,600 and a 10 per cent discount applies to reservations made before October 31, 2014.

For more information, visit www.pandaw.com.



Angkor Pandaw

A new Jen-eration of hotels is born

Shangri-La International Hotel Management has launched a new brand of fuss-free mid-range hotels, with the first two properties located in Singapore.

Hotel Jen Orchardgateway Singapore opened on September 15, offering 502 keys, dining outlets and technology-driven complimentary guest services such as free Wi-Fi, mobile charging stations throughout the hotel, and iMac stations and a PressReader app with free access to 2,500 online publications.

The second Hotel Jen property occupies the former Traders Hotel Singapore on Cuscaden Road. The 546-room Hotel Jen Singapore will embark on renovations this month, with works carried out in three phases and scheduled to end in 1Q2016. The hotel will remain open throughout this period. Future rooms will feature modern, apartment-style furnishings and smart technology including interactive TVs with multi-device enabled streaming and in-room check-out.

In the next phase of the Hotel Jen roll-out, Traders hotels in Hong Kong, Brisbane, Penang, Johor Bahru, Manila, Maldives, Beijing and Shenyang will be rebranded by March 2015. Further development projects are under consideration in key gateway cities in Asia.



HOT DEALS

InterContinental Hong Kong

The hotel has unveiled Hong Kong's largest hotel LED wall in its InterContinental Ballroom, a product that can provide a stunning visual impact for meetings and other events. Two packages which include use of this new LED wall are now on offer.

The Backdrop Package, priced at HK\$12,800 (US\$1,648) net per event, comes with a single image as the LED backdrop and an hour-long testing before the day of the event.

The Event Package, priced at HK\$68,000 net per event, includes full-day use of the venue from 08.00 to 23.59, two laptops for image/video/powerpoint as playback on the LED Wall, one switcher between two laptops, an hour-long testing before the day of the event and an engineer on hand for technical support on the actual day.

Images provided by the client should be a format size of 2500 x 832.

Event planners can also choose to project a live feed of the hotel's spectacular harbourview on the LED Wall for HK\$5,500 net. An

additional HK\$8,000 net for live video filming with crew from the hotel's rooftop applies.

For more information, e-mail iceventshk@ihg.com.

Fairmont Beijing

The hotel has rolled out a new meeting package for its three Hutong inspired meeting venues. These event spaces span 378m² and include the main Gold Fish Hutong room which can accommodate up to 200 pax in theatre style.

The meeting package includes themed coffee breaks throughout, Nespresso coffee machine usage, and a personal banquet service. Groups can make use of state-of-the-art meeting technology, an LCD projector and screen, podium with standing microphone and two wireless microphones, a whiteboard or flipchart with markers, and other amenities including writing pads, pencils, mint candies and bottled water.

The full-day package is priced at RMB680 (US\$111) per delegate while the half-day option goes for RMB650 per attendee.

Meetings & Events



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SACEOS spearheads greening of Singapore's MICE sector

By Caroline Boey

The Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (SACEOS) is taking the lead to show the MICE industry why it pays for businesses to be sustainable and gain a competitive advantage.

The association's campaign kicked off on September 16 with A Sustainability CEO Breakfast, to be followed by another breakfast on November 10, and a Driving Value & Success through Sustainability – MICE & Hospitality Workshop on November 21.

Forty-two participants from 31 companies attended the first breakfast where the Singapore Tourism Board, Marina Bay Sands (MBS), MCI and Ivan Ferrari, chair of SACEOS Sustainability Subcommittee and senior global event manager of UBM Media (Singapore), made presentations.

The sustainability workshop this month, the first to be organised by SACEOS in partnership with MCI, is priced at S\$481.50 (US\$378.60) for SACEOS members, and S\$577.80 for non-members. Those who sign up can enjoy a 60



Ferrari: sustainability awareness is still low in Singapore

per cent rebate under the Product Innovative Credit scheme. Visit www.saceos.org.sg for more information.

Ferrari said: "The aim of SACEOS is to raise MICE sustainability awareness, which is still rather low, and to underline the fact that it is not only about protecting the environment. MICE sustainability practices also provide social and governance benefits, and create a magnified lever effect for both the industry and Singapore if most of the players embrace this change.

"There is the misconception that going sustainable is going to add business cost. Just the opposite, it can help businesses save money, retain talent and minimise business risk."

Roger Simons, group sustainability manager, MCI, noted that 41 per cent of MCI's clients are now looking at the sustainability performance of their suppliers.

He added that 76 per cent of MCI's suppliers have seen an increase in client interest, and more clients are looking for Singapore sustainable MICE-certified partners.

{ Talking numbers }



30

The amount in millions of euros (US\$38.4 million) that Chic Outlet Shopping aims to bag by end-2014 as a result of MICE business. The company has intensified MICE promotions this year

Confidence in Christchurch returns

Three years after it was struck by a major earthquake, Christchurch is back in the game as a conference destination, having successfully clinched two international bids in recent months.

In August, the city announced it had won the right to host the Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis Annual Symposium, which will see around 100 delegates visiting in June 2015.

The latest success marks the second conference win for Christchurch this year. In June, the city secured hosting rights for the 20th Pacific Association of Quantity Surveyors Congress in 2016, which will attract 400 Asia-Pacific delegates.

Christchurch and Canterbury Convention Bureau manager, Caroline Blanchfield, said: "It is heartening to see another conference made up entirely of international delegates choosing to meet in Christchurch.

"Christchurch is proving it offers a unique learning environment for delegates across diverse fields of interest. We have a wealth of expertise to share in many sectors including earth and health sciences,

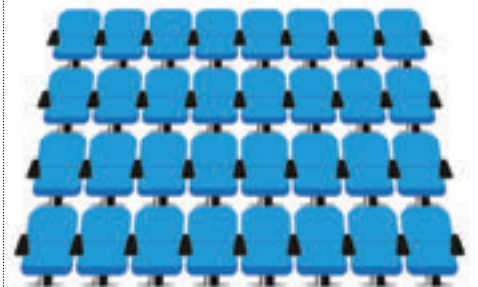
agriculture, technology and education."

In August, Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism also announced it would develop a new convention centre that can accommodate up to 2,000 delegates. Slated to open in 2017, this means that the city can now actively pursue large international conferences.

Tim Hunter, chief executive, Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism, said: "We already have significant interest in events wanting to book at least three years out. Now we have the certainty to go out and sell Christchurch on this scale. The new venue will tick all the boxes for conference organisers and fit what the convention industry is looking for."

Tourism New Zealand international business events manager, Bjoern Spreitzer, pointed out that the venue will attract more high-value visitors to the South Island in the off-peak season, and boost the country's reputation abroad.

"With an outstanding venue in a lively central city precinct, Christchurch will help put New Zealand on the map," he said. – Paige Lee Pei Qi



2,600

The number of people the conference hall in the future Kigali Convention Centre can accommodate. The venue in Rwanda, due to open in 2015, is part of a complex that includes a five-star hotel and IT park

All eyes on Naypyidaw as Myanmar's MICE magnet

By Sid Dhartha

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is promoting Naypyidaw as an ideal destination for MICE, partnering with neighbours like Thailand to stimulate more business traffic to its capital.

Htay Aung, Myanmar's minister of hotel and tourism, said: "Myanmar tourism is mainly based on natural and cultural attractions. But now the market has turned and Myanmar is a destination not only for holidays but also for business."

In a likely boost to Naypyidaw's MICE scene, Myanmar's largest private business federation, the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, signed an agreement with the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) in August.

Both sides agreed to collaborate on improving and expanding tourism, trade promotion and the development of the MICE industry.

"More business traders and tourists are travelling to cities in Myanmar using Thailand as a gateway. This is an opportunity for us to support Myanmar's booming tourism sector, and to leverage the trade and travel between the two countries," said Puripan Bunnag, director, domestic MICE department, TCEB.

Htay Aung said that the ministry intends to promote MICE especially in Naypyidaw, where there is "strong infrastructure" such



Uppatasanti Pagoda, Naypyidaw

as international standard convention centres and hotels.

"Another factor is that Myanmar is the current chair of ASEAN and many meetings are being held in Naypyidaw. (We are preparing for the) ASEAN Tourism Forum in January 2015 and expecting 2,000 participants," Htay Aung added.

He said that his ministry is also in talks with the relevant authorities to relax regulations at Naypyidaw airport to support arrivals growth. Currently, the only two international airlines flying to Naypyidaw are China Eastern Airlines and Bangkok Airways.

Abacus offers tips on corporate travel compliance, cost control

Abacus has released the latest results in its Corporate Travel Practices Survey conducted with views of 82 of the region's top corporate travel brands, with insights on structural and behavioural issues facing corporate travel managers and how they can be addressed.

Five specific action points have been proposed for better compliance and cost control.



Bailey: technology can help travellers keep to policy

Firstly, TMCs and corporate travel agencies (CTAs) must be able to align content from multiple sources into a single itinerary, as some 87 per cent pointed to lower prices in B2C sites as one of the reasons why travellers go off policy.

Robert Bailey, president and CEO of Abacus, said: "Technology can aggregate disparate content to offer new forms of fixed and dynamic packaging. It will ensure TMCs and CTAs manage more of the clients' business, with wider sourcing countering increased competition online."

Secondly, with over half of respondents reporting an increase in spend on ancillaries, CTAs and TMCs should detail ancillary options in clients' travel policies and keep track of choices made for pre-trip approval and post-trip expense reconciliation.

Corporate travel professionals also need to motivate travellers to use corporate booking tools. The Abacus study highlighted that a third of companies are still seeing clients resist self-service technology – South-east Asian clients prefer to talk to travel consultants while in North Asia there is resistance against travel arrangers.

But where CTAs and TMCs can overcome initial resistance, evidence shows that use of corporate booking tools grows "exponentially".

Fourthly, TMCs and CTAs must leverage mobile tools or risk having non-compliant booking behaviour in favour of apps by OTAs and LCCs.

The last suggestion is that expense management must be automated. Despite clients putting more of their travel budgets into secondary expenses and the nature of such expenditure evolving, only 44 per cent of survey respondents work with clients to manage secondary expenses.

Best Western to run MICE venue

Best Western International has inked a management contract with Sabanilam Enterprise for a new upscale hotel and convention centre in Malaysia, expected to open in 2016.

The Best Western Plus hotel and conference facility is part of the ITCC Penampang complex – a 10.5ha mixed-use development that is taking shape in Kota Kinabalu, the capital of Malaysia's Sabah state.

The hotel will offer 330 guestrooms, ranging from 27m² to 49m², all with modern amenities such as flatscreen TVs and complimentary high-speed Wi-Fi. Other facilities for both business and leisure travellers will include restaurants, a swimming pool, a fitness centre, a business centre and meeting rooms.



de Souza: an exciting development for Best Western

Best Western will also manage the new convention centre connected to the hotel. It will feature a large ballroom capable of housing 170 tables for local and regional conferences, corporate events, product launches and weddings.

Both the hotel and convention centre will be directly connected to ITCC's four-storey retail podium and Grade A office tower and residence.

"ITCC Penampang will be a significant addition to Kota Kinabalu's landscape and economy, and I am delighted that Best Western International has the opportunity to be part of this exciting project," commented Glenn de Souza, Best Western International's vice president of international operations for Asia & the Middle East.

Phuket's time to shine for incentive travel

By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

The launch of direct services by Middle Eastern carriers to Phuket looks set to be a good conduit of longhaul MICE traffic to the island, traditionally perceived as a leisure beach destination.

Emirates launched daily Dubai services end-2012, while Etihad Airways and Qatar Airways began daily non-stop services from Abu Dhabi and Doha respectively, from October 26.

Sumate Sudasna, managing director, Creative Destination Management and president, Thailand Incentive and Convention Association, said: "The leisure market for Phuket

is already very established, so these services will help hotels to have a better balance of MICE and leisure guests across the entire year."



Campbell: more interest from Europe

Sumate said the Middle Eastern carriers "help open up longhaul markets like Europe and South America for MICE", adding that should any crisis unfold in Bangkok, the direct flights would be a "good back-up" for Phuket.

Phuket sellers, too, are hopeful.

Rory Campbell, director of sales & marketing, Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort, said: "There has been a lot of interest from European operators who prefer the Europe-

Middle East-Phuket route. Many have travelled via Asia in the past so new stopover opportunities are helpful. Spain and Italy have also noted that the connections and times are more favourable – especially for large incentive group travel."

While noting that it will take some time to see the benefits, Laguna Phuket director of sales-MICE & corporate events, Prapa Hemmin, said: "We observe growth in sports tourism...the top five participating athletes in last year's Challenge Laguna Phuket triathlon were contributed by the UAE. With easier access to Phuket, we may see international companies including our sports events in their MICE programmes."

Better online content, tools needed for business travel managers

A one-stop source consolidating content such as hotels, car rentals, air fares and ancillaries could be the solution to non-compliance issues corporate travel managers face today.

The point was raised during a panel discussion on disruptive technology at CAPA 2014 Asia Pacific Corporate Travel Innovation Day last month in Singapore.

Ian Heywood, vice president, global supplier strategy, GDSs, Travelport, said: "Life is currently a nightmare for TMCs. There's an overload of information that isn't coming in in a sensible manner, you've got to go to multiple websites to access it, and airlines continue to have different product differentiation.

"This is breaking down booking models. The corporate traveller may go out and book it himself, or the TMC may book the flight but can't book the ancillary and has to go to the airline website. This is cost-

ing a lot more money."

For technology to benefit TMCs, Heywood argued that all content must be in one place. "It means the fares (and ancillaries) are on the same aggregated shop list, not different systems on the same page. You need the TMC or travel consultant to be able to book all of this content in the same workflow very effectively and efficiently."

Serko's head of strategic sales & market development, Michael Thorburn, commented that travel apps in the travel space today were narrow in scope but deep in content and functionality. "For instance in India, you can use the IndiGo app, but what about the other airlines? What about managing the other components of the trip?"

"A decent mobile solution for business travel must sit on top of a single, substantial data source," he said.

But Andrew Wong, regional

director, Asia, TripAdvisor, pointed out that current technology already allows for this. "At TripAdvisor we have APIs that you can stick into the GDS, etc. Content is out there, but the problem is the willingness to break down those walls to make things available."

Similarly, a travel manager and procurement specialist who wished to remained anonymous told *TTGmice* that such content was already in place, although she admitted that the online booking tool used by her company "could be better".

Asked how then could business travellers be encouraged to book within policy, she said: "More education needs to be done to tell business travellers why online fares are better. When travellers book on their own they ignore factors such as safety and the need for the company to capture data." – **Hannah Koh**

{ In brief }

SITE unveils 2015 events

SITE has released the dates and destinations for events in 2015.

First up, SITE's international board of directors will convene with local industry professionals at the SITE Executive Summit from February 9-13 at the JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Dubai.

From September 27-30, SITE Classic will gather customers, colleagues and industry leaders at the Baha Mar: The Bahamian Riviera in Nassau to support SITE Foundation.

SITE Global Conference 2015 will be held from October 23-26 at the Taj Palace Hotel in New Delhi.

SITE Nites Europe and America will take place a day before the opening of IMEX Frankfurt and IMEX America respectively. Hosted buyers and exhibitors at the two shows will spend the evening networking on May 18 in Frankfurt and October 12 in Las Vegas.



New travel tradeshow for India

The year-old the Federation of Associations of Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) has garnered the support of the government to launch a new B2B MICE and leisure show in India from April 23 to 25, 2015.

Sarab Jit Singh, FAITH vice chairman, said the federation would be organising the event with two key ministries – the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Commerce. While the name and location of the tradeshow has yet to be determined, Sarab added FAITH will be responsible for the sourcing of buyers for the show.

FAITH is also trying to gather all foreign airlines that fly to India to look at marketing India as a tourism destination.

MoU to groom MICE talents

Stamford International University and Thailand's IMPACT Exhibition Management has inked an MoU on the creation of opportunities for students to develop skills and perspectives that will lead them to successful careers in the MICE industry.

TTG Travel Awards 2014 crowns new winners, dishes out new awards

The annual TTG Travel Awards 2014, which marched into its silver jubilee this year, celebrated 82 winners during its awards gala dinner at Centara Grand at CentralWorld, Bangkok on October 2.

Twelve new winners made their way into the awards this year. First-time winners such as Virgin Australia and Starwood Hotels and Resorts successfully claimed titles that were dominated by long-time winners, taking the honor of Best Pacific Airline and Best Global Hotel Chain respectively.

In the BT-MICE Awards category, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (Management) swept the Best Convention & Exhibition Centre title for the first time. Veronica To (pictured here) collected the award on behalf of the venue.

Other winners in this category include Thai Airways International for Best Airline - Business Class; Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok for Best Business Hotel; The Venetian Macao for Best Meetings & Conventions Hotel; Singapore for Best BT-MICE City; and Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau for Best Convention & Exhibition Bureau.

Winners of the BT-MICE Awards, along with other categories, are voted in by industry peers.

TTG Travel Awards 2014 also saw the addition of two new awards to the Outstanding Achievement category. The inaugural Best Trade Supporter award was won by Best Western International while the Sustainable Travel Company of the Year title went to Centara Hotels and Resorts.

In the same category, the Philippines was crowned Destination of the Year for its relentless efforts to engage the industry, Brand USA for Best Marketing and Development Effort, and Kwek Leng Beng, CEO of Hong Leong Group Singapore as Best Travel Entrepreneur of the Year. Winners are hand-picked by TTG Travel Trade Publishing's editorial team.



CWT adds hotel-booking function to app

Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) has begun pilot testing its hotel-booking app function in the US, UK and Ireland, with an international roll-out expected by end-2014.

Users of the company's CWT To Go app will be able to search for, book and cancel hotel rooms. Search results are displayed on a map and include rates and properties that fall under the travel policy.

CWT's Traveler Services teams can also retrieve bookings made via the app, providing users with further support if necessary.

David Moran, executive vice president, global marketing and enterprise strategy, CWT, said: "Hotel booking for CWT To Go users is a significant addition to creating a seamless and supportive app. Travellers and travel managers alike have told us mobile booking is important to them, and this is a key step in our mission to become the managed travel app of choice."

In addition, the new version of CWT To Go is integrated with CWT Portrait, CWT's traveller profile tool that stores name, credit card, and loyalty programme information, all of which will be viewable on the go.

Another new feature is updated flight alerts containing more specific information.

{ 2014 Calendar }

November 1-5
53rd ICCA Congress
Antalya, Turkey

November 3-6
World Travel Mart
London, the UK

November 14-17
SITE Global Conference,
Rotterdam,
Netherlands

November 18-20
EIBTM
Barcelona, Spain

{ Advertorial }



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- 46%** Incentive / Motivation Houses
- 39%** Meeting Planners
- 36%** Travel Management Companies
- 34%** Professional Conference Organisers
- 28%** Corporate Company with Incentive Programmes
- 26%** Destination Management Companies
- 6%** International Associations

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Australia gets starry-eyed with astronautical win

ADELAIDE The International Astronautical Federation has chosen Adelaide as the host destination for the International Astronautical Congress (IAC) 2017.

Adelaide Convention Bureau bagged the event in partnership with the Space Industry Association of Australia and state government of South Australia, beating rivals such as Bremen, Orlando, Istanbul and Dublin.

IAC 2017 will feature an exhibition while the organising committee will leverage the congress to promote Australian innovation. It is expected to draw over 3,000 delegates including 200 astronauts, making it the largest congress ever hosted in Adelaide, and inject A\$18 million (US\$15.8 million) into the local economy.

The International Astronautical Federation executive director visited Adelaide earlier this year to view city tourism facilities while IAC officials were shown a video

that gave them a better idea of what delegates would experience if the event was held in Adelaide.

Adelaide Convention Bureau CEO Damien Kitto said: "The IAC is the world's most important annual interdisciplinary meeting for the space industry, regularly attracting over 3,000 participants from more than 70 countries, including space professionals, academics, corporations, government officials, students and media."

"The legacy to be left to South Australia's space and related industries as a result of this win is priceless. (During) the event, the eyes of the space industry will be on this state. It will increase opportunities for international collaboration and regional leadership, especially relevant as Australia – and South Australia in particular – is recognised as an emerging participant in the international space community."

IMPACT hosts mega convention

BANGKOK The 2014 Unicity Global Convention has concluded its run at IMPACT Exhibition & Convention Center – an event said to be the largest ever hosted in the Bangkok venue.

Attended by at least 50,000 Unicity distributors worldwide, the mega convention from October 15 to 18 is projected to have generated over 1.78 billion baht (US\$54.9 million) in revenue for the destination.

Unicity, founded more than 10 years



ago and headquartered in Utah, the US, specialises in nutritional supplements and business development.

ISST launches two new events

SUBIC The International School of Sustainable Tourism (ISST) will hold the Global Summit of Youth in Environmental Sustainability and the Subic International Eco-Film Festival, back to back, on February 25-27 next year in Subic, the Philippines.

Both first-time events are expected to help boost Subic's positioning as an eco-tourism and MICE destination.

The youth summit, expected to be attended by 500 graduating university students, will be held at the Subic Bay Exhibition & Convention Centre. It aims to build the capacity of students and young community leaders to understand the issues and benefits of protecting the environment and to incorporate them in their daily lives.

The eco-film fest, to be graced by an estimated 100 film practitioners, will

be hosted at the former Subic Bay Arts Centre which is now occupied by the ISST. This event will tackle the challenges faced by environmental film producers with a discussion on environmental and commercial films.

ISST president and former tourism secretary, Mina Gabor, said the eco-film fest will include an eco-film competition with entries from countries including Japan, South America, Iceland, the Philippines.

"We're starting small to get our feet wet but we have some good films," she said, noting that there are many very good commercial films about the environment, including Avatar which was a huge success.

Participants at the youth summit will be encouraged to attend the screening of the eco-films. – **Rosa Ocampo**

Technology, medical science leaders link up at Daegu conventions

DAEGU Two major technology conventions were held in Daegu in September, drawing some of the brightest minds from the fields of innovation and medicine to the South Korean city.

Hosted at the Daegu Gyeongbuk Institute of Science and Technology, the 11th Asia Association of Learning Innovation and Coevolution Studies saw former vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, Jong-Yong Yun, deliver the keynote speech.

It drew participation from researchers in local institutions, namely Keimyung University, Daegu Technopark, the Science and Technology Policy Institute, and the Korea Institute of Science & Technology Evaluation and Planning.

At the same time, the city also welcomed the Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine International Society Asia-Pacific Annual Conference 2014 at Daegu Exhibition and Convention Center.

The event was attended by 800 tissue engineering and regenerative specialists from 40 countries, who discussed and presented the most cutting-edge research in the field.

Delegates also went on a technical tour to visit the city's infrastructure of medical research.

Jeong-Ok Grace Lim, president of the Korean Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine Society which organises the conference, of which she is also programme chair, said Daegu had shifted its investments from the IT sector to biotechnology.

"Local officials have been especially influential in initiating research in this area, providing support to form a research partnership between Kyungpook National University and Wake Forest Institute for Regenerative Medicine."

Lim is also professor at Kyungpook National University Hospital's Biomedical Research Institute.





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A ratio system helps Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre to determine the amount of food needed for each event

Food for thought

Rising global food demand and waste is stressing the Earth. With the extent of F&B featured in business events, venues in Asia are doing their part to minimise impact on the environment, writes **Karen Yue**

As any good, hospitable host will ensure his guests are well entertained and nourished, business event organisers spend considerable effort developing strong content that educates attendees and opens new business avenues for them, as well as on how they are fed during welcome receptions, refreshment breaks in between meetings, networking cocktails and closing dinner galas.

In Asia, where it is customary to demonstrate hospitality with an overflowing supply of good food, the amount of food consumed and wasted should give pause to event organisers and venue operators especially at a time when satisfying global food demand has become one of the biggest environmental threats.

Environmental experts have blamed agriculture for being the biggest cause of global warming, due to the massive volume of greenhouse gases emitted by cattle and farmland, and through the clearing of land for farming. Farms also consume a lot of water while fertilisers pollute water systems.

Agriculture's impact on the environment is bound to intensify with the growing need for food. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

projects that, under current production and consumption trends, global food production must increase 60 per cent by 2050 in order to meet the demands of the growing world population.

More events equals more food?

Considering how several dining activities are featured at business events, which are on the rise at major venues in Asia, is the MICE industry adding to this environmental woe?

According to Kevin Teng, executive director of sustainability at Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, there is a direct correlation between the amount of food prepared and business volume. While the integrated resort is unable to provide quantitative information on the extent of food consumed at business events held there, Teng said all team member dining rooms serve up to 7,000 meals daily.

Just how much goes into the belly?

A post-event sustainability report prepared by MCI Headquarters and Marina Bay Sands for the 500-pax Responsible Business Forum on Sustainable Development last year, found that the event had generated 215kg of food waste.

"Food waste is one of the highest

streams of solid waste for events," declared Roger Simons, group sustainability manager of MCI Headquarters, Asia Pacific.

"Events can produce a significant amount of food waste simply by their scale. A 6,000-pax congress (with a no-show of) 20 per cent for an evening function results in 1,200 meals being wasted."

Chucking food is a crying shame at a time when food demand is high but not equally distributed globally, causing some nations to starve. Food disposal is also cause for concern because it generates methane emissions, which also contributes to global warming, warned FAO.

Fortunately, some venues have told *TTGmice* that a large portion of food prepared for business events goes into the bellies of delegates.

At the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, 95 per cent of food prepared for an event is consumed, while the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre reports that the consumption rate is 90 per cent.

To minimise food wastage during events, venues have developed ways to calculate how much food is needed.

Chen Soo Yoong, director of facilities at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, said: "We have a formula to calculate the amount of food required for a particular event. This formula has been enhanced over the years based on our experience and the consumption rate for a variety of events held here."

Marc van der Meer, director of food & beverage at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, said his venue uses a specific ratio system that is "based on the number of people being served, the type of event and the menu items ordered".

Sheraton Beijing Dongcheng Hotel actively tracks food wastage from each event, compares that with its food requirement estimates and makes adjustments, if necessary, for future events.

"Events can produce a significant amount of food waste simply by their scale."

Roger Simons
Group sustainability manager,
MCI Headquarters, Asia Pacific



Meanwhile, Marina Bay Sands has spent the past 12 months developing a food waste tracking system “to monitor each meal option served and the waste generated in our team member dining rooms. With this tracking system, we are not only able to actively reduce food costs but also overall wastage”, revealed Teng.

Internal push

All the venues *TTGmice* spoke to said they are committed to sustainable practices and have procedures to follow and goals to meet.

Ross Grinter, hotel manager of Sheraton Beijing Dongcheng Hotel, said: “Sustainability is a key goal of all Starwood hotels as we want to ensure our business is run in an environmentally responsible manner that is integrated with the local community. We have aggressive goals as an organisation to meet this objective, and accordingly, our management team gives a great deal of focus to both reducing energy consumption from our daily operations and minimising food wastage.”

The hotel manages food waste by directing excess food that has not yet left the kitchen to the internal staff canteen and by composting leftovers.

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre has an employee Environmental Taskforce dedicated to enhancing sustainability initiatives, which include looking at ways to reduce food waste. “We were the first convention centre in the world to be awarded a six-star Green Star environment rating, something we work hard to maintain,” said van der Meer.

Reducing waste in general is a priority for Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. “To cut down on food waste, the venue practises bookshelf cooking, whereby nonperishable items are pre-cooked and stored to be made à la minute. This keeps food fresh and reduces (over-production). Where possible, non-exposed food prepared for events but not consumed are served in the staff canteen while nonperishable (meat) is used for stock,” explained Chen.

On top of that, the centre has a licensed contractor who collects waste and turns food waste into fish food for local fish farms. These combined efforts have allowed the centre to reduce its annual food waste from 69 tonnes in 2010 to 37 tonnes last year, said Chen.

At Marina Bay Sands, the first MICE facility in South-east Asia to obtain the ISO 20121 Sustainable Events Management System certification, employees are educated on ways to manage food waste.

Teng said: “We continually run food waste awareness programmes such as monthly clean plate activities in the team dining room. Team members are reminded

and encouraged to take only the required amount per serving.”

Marina Bay Sands also transfers unconsumed food prepared for buffet lines to executive team dining rooms and channel subsequent food waste to a processor that decomposes and breaks down such waste into clear reusable water that is then pumped into the public waste water system. As of October this year, the system had converted up to seven tonnes of food waste to water, Teng said.

MCI Headquarters believes that venues with strong sustainability policies have an advantage in winning over event clients.

Simons said: “(We) have definitely seen a rise in corporate clients requesting for venues and suppliers with solid sustainability practices. Brands like Schneider, BASF, Oracle, Symantec and Intel are making it a strong requirement and many feature sustainability as a core part of their event programme.

“There is no denying that the trend is led by North America and Europe, but we are seeing global companies making commitments to responsible business wherever they are.”

Charitable solutions

Another way of minimising food waste is to direct surplus food to charities.

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre has been working with community food programme SecondBite for the past six years and OzHarvest since January 2014. Surplus food suitable for donation is kept refrigerated while collection arrangements with the charities are made. Donation amounts vary according to the events being held at the centre.

Non-profit organisation Food from the Heart receives unconsumed bread from Marina Bay Sands’ buffet lines. According to the property’s spokesperson, Val Chua, some 2,400 pieces of bread are donated per month to the charity. Event clients are also encouraged to take part in this bread donation exercise.

Presently, Sheraton Beijing Dongcheng Hotel is “exploring options to partner with charities”, said Grinter.

Reaching out to clients

Venues are working closely with event clients to achieve smarter food management, by advising them on F&B require-



ments and providing options to manage unconsumed food responsibly.

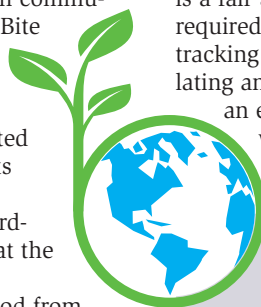
Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, for instance, can arrange for leftovers brought in by event visitors to be donated to one of its charities.

Marina Bay Sands’ ECO360° meeting packages offer planners the option to achieve waste targets for their events. Planners can also pick sustainably sourced F&B options from the Harvest Menu. An even more valuable option for planners comes in the form of the Sands ECO360° Event Impact Statement, a post-event report that consolidates sustainable event metrics such as energy and water consumption, recycling rate and carbon emissions.

Chen observed that “clients in general are willing to listen and act on our advice and expertise”.

MCI Headquarters can also produce post-event reports for its clients.

“We’re encouraging as many clients as possible to be transparent about their event’s impact. As you can imagine there is a fair amount of time and resource required in engaging suppliers, tracking the relevant data and then calculating and presenting the information in an engaging manner, so not all clients want to head down this path,” said Simons.



MCI's tips for reducing food waste

- ✓ Ensure accurate guest numbers and where needed, have delegates register specifically for meals to reduce attrition
- ✓ Reduce packaging waste by avoiding food that are individually wrapped
- ✓ Make sure that religious dietary needs are met and attendees have a choice of vegetarian, nut/dairy/gluten-free meals
- ✓ Avoid plated starters and pre-filled glasses
- ✓ Focus on FLOSS – Fresh Local Organic Seasonal and Sustainable food that people actually want to eat rather than typical dishes

Nu Skin Celebration Trip 2014

The intimidating incentive group size of 2,000 participants has M.I.C.E Matters tackling logistical issues – from flight to accommodation to tour arrangements – effectively with creativity and sound planning, writes **Paige Lee Pei Qi**



Organising an incentive trip often necessarily entails challenges, but when it is to be planned for a group as large as 2,000 participants, the task can seem a tad overwhelming.

Event organiser M.I.C.E Matters was called to such a task in February, when Nu Skin Southeast Asia decided to send 2,000 sales leaders to Istanbul, Turkey as a reward for having achieved the company's Go Double Double target this year.

Hailing the 4D3N trip as the largest ever from Nu Skin Southeast Asia and the largest ever from South-east Asia to Istanbul, M.I.C.E Matters director, Melvyn Nonis, admitted the group size did pose logistical challenges when planning for transportation, accommodation and tour activities.

The team first designed and implemented a customised e-registration system to meet the requirements of the event. This helped accommodate last-minute changes, facilitating constant updating of information in the system.

Then, obviously, the large group had to be divided for separate flights over two days, the arrival times of which posed a problem. Nonis said: "As most flights are red-eye flights arriving early in the morning into Istanbul, the hotels are not ready for check-in yet."

Plans therefore had to be made for the tour and lunch before the hotel check-in was possible. To cater to the di-

verse nationalities of participants, tour guides were hired to conduct the tour in five respective languages – English, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Vietnamese and Mandarin – along with 60 coach buses.

Accommodation wise, it was impossible for all to be housed in one hotel. Hence, bookings were made in advance with three hotels: Hilton Istanbul, Grand Hyatt and InterContinental Istanbul, and all strategically within close proximity to the Istanbul Convention and Exhibition Center (ICEC) where the gala dinner was to take place.

The final hurdle was the execution of the group photo-taking at ICEC, which was impressively completed in an hour. Applauding this achievement, Nonis explained it was not likely for all to be photographed in a conventional setting, but a creative solution was hatched.

"We had to arrange for all participants to be in the picture, so we prepared 2,000 markings on the ground prior to the session for each of them to stand on. We marked out a star formation and even used a 70m crane for the photo-taking," he added.

Evita Singson, regional vice president for sales, Pacific & South-east Asia, Nu Skin, said: "Istanbul is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for many of our sales leaders and we managed to overcome the challenge of taking such a big group there, allowing them to truly enjoy the city."

Organiser

M.I.C.E Matters

Venue

Istanbul, Turkey

Dates

February 16-19, 2014

No of participants

2,000

Objective

To reward direct distributors from Nu Skin Southeast Asia for achieving the Go Double Double target

Challenges

The large group size of 2,000 proved logistically challenging, especially when coordinating group activities and hotel accommodation

Solution

Careful and creative planning by the organising team



Routes Asia 2014

Communications company Enzo Global has to divert the media's attention from unexpected news of Malaysia Airlines' missing flight and keep them focused on the conference, writes **S Puvaneswary**

Routes Asia 2014, owned by UBM Information from the UK, was held for the first time in Kuching, Sarawak in March. It was an important event for co-hosts Ministry of Tourism Sarawak and Malaysia Airports Holdings, which both wanted to leverage on the presence of delegates from the aviation industry to introduce Sarawak and attract more foreign airlines to fly to the destination.

Thus, Enzo Global, a strategic communications company, was engaged about 10 weeks prior to the start of Routes Asia 2014, to drum up media publicity and create more awareness of the attractions of Sarawak and its state capital, Kuching. It was also tasked to generate news and business articles of interest to those in the aviation industry.

Justin Santiago, director of Enzo Global, recalled: "We developed a communications strategy leading up to this annual conference. This included writing the website content on Sarawak for conference delegates, and thought leadership articles to promote Sarawak. Many of the articles were released in stages prior to the event.

"The articles we wrote were first vetted by the Ministry of Tourism, which in turn forwarded them to the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Communications Sarawak before disseminating them to the local and foreign media.

"One of the challenges we faced was that we had no contact person within the Ministry of Infrastructure Development

and Communications to inform us of the dates the releases were sent out. On one or two occasions, we noticed the releases were only picked up by the foreign media, so we had to send them out ourselves to Bernama, the Malaysian national news agency. Thankfully, the rest of the local media picked up the articles."

Santiago added that an important lesson learnt from this undertaking is that if there has to be an intermediary between the company and the press, in this case, the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Communications, there also has to be a specific contact person for the company to liaise with for better workflow and maximum media reach.

Then, adding to the challenges, unfortunately, was the reported disappearance of Malaysia Airlines' Beijing-bound flight MH370 just a day prior to the start of the event.

Santiago said: "We needed the media to stay focused on the conference and the key messages given by the Minister of Tourism, Abdul Rahman Zohari Openg, at the press meeting. Therefore, we had to brief the media in advance, to keep questions related to the event.

We also released our remaining stock of thought leadership articles during the event so that the attention on Sarawak would not be drowned out by news on the disappearance of flight MH370."

Additionally, Enzo Global helped the media write summaries on conference sessions, especially those related to the destination. It also penned articles highlighting places of interest in Sarawak, then disseminated the articles to the foreign media representatives who were interested in writing features on the destination.

Owing largely to Enzo Global's efforts, there was a lot of positive media coverage on Routes 2014 as well as on Sarawak from both the local and international media. According to Santiago, Routes Asia 2014 managed to garner 108 clippings in print, online and television coverage.

Event

Routes Asia 2014

Local host

Ministry of Tourism Sarawak

Dates

March 9–11, 2014

Venue

Borneo Convention Centre Kuching

No. of pax

800 delegates representing 100 airlines and 230 airports from 60 countries

Challenges

No contact person within the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Communications Sarawak to liaise with; getting the media to focus on the destination and the conference instead of the disappearance Malaysia Airlines' flight MH370

SUCCESS!

Pushing the limits

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. More Asian corporates are humming the tune, showing willingness to embrace some adventure in teambuilding programmes

Reporting by Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Mimi Hudoyo, S Puvaneswary and Paige Lee Pei Qi. Written by Raini Hamdi



As they say, the higher the risk, the greater the reward, but most Asian corporates are still shying away from 'not-for-sissies' types of teambuilding primarily due to safety concerns. However, many are beginning to put more action into teambuilding programmes, a sign they are willing to push the limits a notch further.

For some, cooking together or fun obstacle courses on the beach are making way for something more physical. From dragon boat racing and white water rafting, to jungle trekking and a hiking challenge, corporates are no longer averse to "manicured" adrenaline-pumping activities, said Laurent Kuenzle, CEO, Asian Trails, referring to organised outings that are by no means hard-core adventure, but are nevertheless challenging.

Explaining this further, Ferdinand Tabaluyan, who is in charge of Adventure Indonesia Outbound Division and Extreme Expedition, said: "To us, activities like flying fox, white water rafting or jet skiing are skilled games or adrenaline challenges, while adventure is putting participants in extraordinary environments and facilities with significant outdoor and natural elements. For example, participants need to build their own tents and hunt for/cook their own food or else

there is no shelter or food.

"When a company requests a training programme with medium or hard-core adventure elements, it is usually a continuation of a number of programmes done earlier, i.e., they have gone through ranks of training and reached the advanced level."

Kuenzle said Asian groups, particularly the more mature markets such as Hong Kong and Singapore, and MNCs doing incentives with focus on teambuilding, are becoming more active and do not "only eat, shop, enjoy nightlife and do a bit of sightseeing".

Tour East's group vice president of sales and marketing, Judy Lum, too, noted that most Asian markets are asking for teambuilding activities they have not done before – not necessarily adventurous, "just different and more activity-based", she said. Before, Asian professionals tend to prefer being pampered when on business, meeting or incentive, said Lum.

Holly Richter, director of ExoAdventure, Exotissimo Travel Group, said the company is receiving more requests from Asia for corporate challenges, be it cycling from Saigon to Nha Trang, or adventure racing through Chiang Mai, Bagan or Luang Prabang.

"Japan supports running challenges. Indonesia targets cycling challenges. Singaporeans simply love sports – water sports, cycling, running, etc. Hong Kong requests trekking, cycling and running. Notably, we just received our first request for a cycling challenge for a Vietnamese corporation," said Richter.

One reason could be that baby-boomers are starting to make way for Gen-Y executives, while a healthy lifestyle with regular exercising has caught on in today's world.

Noor M Ismail, head, sales & marketing, Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel and AOS Conventions & Events,

said while baby-boomers prefer activities that are more mentally than physically challenging, companies with a lot of Gen Y'ers and male employees are more willing to try new ideas such as swimming with sharks or survival cooking in the jungle.

Saini Vermeulen, head of international sales, Panorama Tours Malaysia, believed that an increase in the number of mergers & acquisitions in Asia also facilitates the use of medium to high-adrenaline activities to integrate staff.

Typically, action-packed teambuilding programmes are geared not so much towards rank-and-file but middle to senior and C-level executives of a company, with the objective of instilling a resilient corporate culture where executives are able to confront and overcome fears and operate outside comfort zones.

"We find active sessions really important to keep our team close," said Trevor McDonald, managing director of Mango Tree Worldwide, based in Singapore, who has done a few marathons in the past where staff did different distances and is now looking at going to an adventure resort next.

"It's of the utmost importance to get everyone out of the box, see who people really are and help them develop (through adventure teambuilding). I myself did many personal development courses in Canada and they helped me become who I am today. In Asia we have less opportunity for these and I believe that it's important for staff development.

"We have grown to over 70 restaurants worldwide and our staff count has increased accordingly, so to find activities that bring them together and increase personal bonding is key to our success in the fast-paced restaurant business when there is a lot of pressure and reliance on colleagues."

Observed Exotissimo's Richter: "It is not uncommon for top CEOs to be avid cyclists, marathon runners or tri-athletes. The qualities that make them successful in business also hone them as



"IT'S OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO GET EVERYONE OUT OF THE BOX, SEE WHO PEOPLE REALLY ARE AND HELP THEM DEVELOP (THROUGH ADVENTURE TEAMBUILDING)."

Trevor McDonald

Managing director, Mango Tree Worldwide, Thailand



"IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR TOP CEOs TO BE...ATHLETES. THE QUALITIES THAT MAKE THEM SUCCESSFUL IN BUSINESS ALSO HONE THEM AS ATHLETES."

Holly Richter

Director of ExoAdventure, Exotissimo Travel Group

athletes. Dedication, determination, perseverance, humility, good sportsmanship and the drive to be successful are a few qualities developed through adventure challenges. Corporate challenges develop these same characteristics in their work force. They bring teams together beyond the work place."

Part of the reason why Asians are more willing to try new and more adventurous teambuilding is also because they are becoming more familiar with it while excellent safety records with these exercises bolster their confidence, said Andrew Chua, founder of Focus Adventure, Singapore.

Adventure operators interviewed report virtually zero accident in the years they have been in operation, but admit that the fear of putting their team at risk is what holds back corporations to embrace more adventurous teambuilding.

"The biggest myth (about adventure teambuilding) is that it is dangerous," said Sobek Bali's CEO, Eelco Koudijs. "As an adventure activity provider, we minimise the risk by proper staff training and SOPs, and proper judgement of the client's capability, but the main problem I see is that clients cannot judge which provider is good and safe, which is not."

The other big myth is that it is only suitable for males or young people, added Nomad Adventure Malaysia director Chan Yuen-Li. "Often people in their 40s or 50s are much better prepared for adventure activities because they have mental resilience. Women also do well in adventure sports because balance, poise and collaboration are more important than brute strength or fearlessness," Chan said.

While adventure operators have their

work cut out to dispel such myths, DMCs believe destinations too have to put in more effort if they want to see a bigger market share.

Said Adventure Indonesia's Tabaluyan: "Indonesia has unity in diversity, we have so much nature and culture. But what the country needs is better infrastructure, consistent regulations across the country and a well-managed environment (i.e., cleanliness and sanitation). And it should eliminate high airfares (to travel between destinations in the country), which are due to the different regulations each regional government applies. This has made adventure travel in Indonesia more expensive than in other countries."

Malaysia, on the other hand, needs to upgrade some of the "extremely basic" lodges, said Asian Overland's Noor. On Noor's wish list are also more venues in Malaysia that are incentive and teambuilding friendly, and for certain public venues to be more open to innovative ideas when DMCs want to use their facilities for teambuilding.

Added Panorama Malaysia's Saini: "We need more adventure parks in the country and these have to be well maintained by the venue providers. These parks should also keep up with the latest trends and needs of clients, otherwise they will become outdated. The venue providers should also work with DMCs in marketing and promotions."

– Meet the adventure operators, turn to pages 22-24

"EXCELLENT SAFETY RECORDS BOLSTER THEIR (CORPORATIONS) CONFIDENCE (IN ADVENTURE TEAMBUILDING)."

Andrew Chua

Founder of Focus Adventure, Singapore



How adventurous are you?



Louis Than, general manager of Hotel Clover 5 Hong Kong Street and Hotel Clover The Arts, Singapore

"We have not done any medium to hard-core adventure

activities. However, we recognise the benefits of such activities and will consider planning one in the near future.

Such activities not only help to build bonds and strengthen relationships between employees but also help to break down barriers between employee and management which in turn encourages healthy communication among all staff. We believe this also helps us in retaining our employees, and the bonds help to instill a sense of belonging between employees and the company."

Cecilio Tuanquin, head of sales, Samsung Enterprise Business Team, Philippines

"We have not tried medium to hard-core adventure activities, as staff prefer and perceive teambuilding as more of easy and fun activities. But we might consider going for medium to high adrenaline adventure activities depending on what the staff want and taking into consideration the risks and dangers involved."



Christopher Wong, director-business development, Bake180, Malaysia

"As a company, we went hiking from Ulu Bendol Recreation Park to Angsi

Mountain in Negri Sembilan. This activity is suitable for people of average fitness. It can be done over a weekend as Negri Sembilan is less than 1.5 hours drive from Kuala Lumpur. It is suitable for both men and women and not too exhausting. It allows the team to communicate outside an office setting in a neutral and relaxed environment.

We went prepared with raincoats and First Aid kit in case of rain or injury.

As this is in the outdoors without toilets and cooking facilities, it may be a turn off especially for city folks."



Lancy Chui, regional managing director, ManpowerGroup Greater China Region, Hong Kong

"ManpowerGroup believes that staff engagement and

teambuilding activities are critical to financial performance, customer satisfaction and employee retention. In Hong Kong, we have conducted various engagement programmes, for instance, dart competition for whole company, while some teams tailored their own teambuilding programmes such as cooking, drinking, hiking, etc. We do not conduct 'trendy' or 'fashionable' hard-core teambuilding exercises that would jeopardise the health or safety of our employees – our teambuilding exercises are designed around staff and clients first."



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Meet the adventure creators

Nomad Adventure, Malaysia

Founded in 1994, Nomad Adventure played a pivotal role in developing outdoor activities like rock climbing, white water kayaking, rafting and adventure racing in Malaysia. S. Puvaneswary speaks to director Chan Yuen-Li



“WE AIM TO STRETCH THE LIMITS OF PARTICIPANTS AND GET THEM TO PUSH THROUGH THEIR PERCEIVED BOUNDARIES.”

Q How do you assess the client's ability to do an adventure? Firstly we need to understand what the client has in mind when they want an adventure programme. To some companies, an outdoor programme is when participants stroll around a park in khakis and polo shirts; others envisage staff neck deep in rivers and sleeping in tents. We need to understand the

client's expectations and objectives first more than their physical ability.

We adhere to the principle, Challenge by Choice, so we never force participants to measure up to our mark of what is “adventurous”. We believe that it is our job to design a challenge that is appropriate for the client, because if they do not willingly make that choice there will be no learning, only coercion. (That said) we aim to stretch the limits of participants and get them to push through their perceived boundaries, so they go away feeling, ‘If I can do this, I can do anything’.

Q Have you ever said no?

Yes – when clients have unrealistic expectations of logistics and timings. Typically, this is when they want to put through too many people in a too short a timeframe for everyone to get an appropriate safety briefing, which includes demonstration, practice and proper use of equipment.

Q How do you prep up the team before the big event? Any training required?

Usually everyone needs to know what type of clothing and footwear to bring, so we need to give them an idea of the type of accommodation and facilities. For 99 per cent of our programmes, no pre-training is required.

Q What safety measures/insurance are in place?

Nomad Adventure has two independent audits every year to ensure all our procedures,

equipment, facilities and staff qualifications are in accordance to safety standards, and to our ISO 9001:2008 certification and Professional Ropes Course Association accreditation. Apart from this we have continual staff training on First Aid, rescue skills, risk assessment, group management and facilitation skills.

We offer personal accident insurance for our participants and the company also has public liability insurance.

Q How many accidents have occurred and why?

In the last five years, out of around 30,000 participants we had five injury cases requiring medical attention: a participant who suffered three cuts by slipping or falling unexpectedly, another who lost a tooth because she was accidentally hit in the mouth by another participant's paddle, and another who dislocated her shoulder from a normal activity due a pre-existing injury.

The majority of cases actually happen after the activities, during down times when people are relaxing or playing around. Our data is similar to the majority of outdoor adventure camps around the world.

Q What risks do you bear?

Outdoor sports are perceived as high-risk activities and perhaps because of that, the level of responsibility of providers is higher. In a study of several thousand sports centres in the UK, researchers found that indoor football was seven times more likely to have injuries than climbing artificial walls. Yet operators of futsal courts are not required to have any safety precautions in place, whereas climbing wall operators are deemed responsible for any accident that happens.

Q Are prices thus higher?

Good equipment that is certified, and safety training and facilitation expertise, are expensive. However we keep our prices affordable by providing basic and eco-friendly accommodation.

Q Is it a profitable business? If you are motivated by profit,

then this is not the business for you. However, Nomad Adventure is a successful business and provides employment and growth opportunities for our staff. It is tremendously rewarding to see people learn and grow, and develop an appreciation for the natural world and for each other.

Q What are the pros and cons of running this business? Con – getting clients to appreciate what we do, especially for safety and learning experience. There are clients who would rather spend their budget on air-conditioned comfort than safety or quality learning. In Malaysia, awareness is poor as to what safety standards actually mean.

Q What rewards do companies gain from adventure teambuilding?

There are two kinds of risk: perceived risk and actual risk. Our adventure-based learning programmes are effective because we work in the realm of perceived risk.

We confront FEAR – False Evidence that Appears Real. This kind of fear is mostly a fabrication of our egos or beliefs that keep us imprisoned. Overcome this unhealthy fear and we will wake up to news perspectives and possibilities.

Sobek Bali, Indonesia

Caldera Sobek is group of companies which specialises in teambuilding and corporate adventure programmes such as white water rafting and cycling, and experiential travel programmes, for Indonesian companies and international clients, especially in Bali. The group has its own highly trained staff to execute programmes but uses outside providers for specialised activities for example, canyoning in Bali, where it partners French-owned Adventure and Spirit. Mimi Hudoyo speaks to CEO, Eelco Koudijs

Q How do you assess a client's ability to do an

adventure? Normally we use a questionnaire to learn how experienced the company and individual participants are, including the type of training sessions they have done before and if there were any problems. We ask for relevant medical records.

▶ **Have you ever said no?**

We have refused people on rafting trips and other adventure activities because of asthma, heart problems or broken bones history. Sometimes we get the information beforehand and our doctor at our resort in Sukabumi, West Java evaluates a participant before the start of the programme. But at times we only find out that a person has a health problem after they arrive in camp, through our observation.

▶ **How do you prep up the team before the big event? Any training required?** For long activities like mountain climbing or bike touring we give them a training schedule. But for a lot of activities there is no real physical preparation needed.

▶ **What safety measures/insurance are in place?** We have a doctor and paramedic joining us for the activities. All our staff are trained in First Aid and CPR. We have our swiftwater rescue teams. And of course we have insurance for all clients; for international clients it is up to US\$100,000.

▶ **How many accidents have occurred? Why?** In 25 years of operation, Sobek has a zero accident track record.

With white water rafting there are certain safety procedures to avoid accidents. For instance if it is raining hard and the water level is rising and gets too high for safe rafting, we have to cancel the activity. This can happen even when we are already on the river, when the water level rises faster than expected and we have to evacuate. This is always hard for the client. They have been in the bus for a couple of hours,



only to find that the activity has to be cancelled. However, a standard procedure is a standard procedure.

“PEOPLE WHO DO NOT INFORM US OF THEIR HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE THE WORST.”

Having said that, light incidents like sprained ankles and bruises are normal. Long fingernails are a big problem for rafting – while paddling, they can ‘hit’ the raft and come off completely.

▶ **What risks do you bear?**

People who do not inform us of their health problems are the worst. Also, there are clients who want extreme programmes without really considering participants’ (physical condition). We always have to be ready to change a programme.

▶ **Are prices thus higher?**

No, but if a client wants something custom-made, we need a lot of time to create it and that will be reflected in the pricing.

▶ **Is it a profitable business?**

Not extremely profitable, but it’s alright, we do it because we like it. We love the outdoors, we love training people and we love to see the results of our training.

▶ **What are the pros and cons of running this business?**

Pros – we have to be constantly creative and constantly improve our programmes through evaluations and feedback from customers. Cons – we depend on manpower and equipment, which are our biggest costs. Training staff until they are competent takes a long time and training is seasonal.

▶ **What rewards do companies gain from adventure teambuilding?** For the individual, personal development. For teambuilding, it depends on the internal follow-up by the company itself. Does it set up a mentoring and coaching system to take maximum advantage of the training? We can help them with the follow-up to make sure that what is learned will be applied. Some clients are serious about this, but a lot only want to finish their training budget or say they don’t have the time.

Our experience is that even though people make a commitment during training session, most of it disappears after two to three weeks. So a follow-up should start shortly after the training.

Asia Ability, Singapore

Established in 1996, Asia Ability has offices in Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam, and also holds regular events in Australia, Hong Kong, China, the Philippines and Indonesia.

Each of its team programmes falls under one of eight abilities – Activeability,

Businessability, Createability, Exploreability, Innovateability, Interactability, Responsibility and Rhythmability. Paige Lee Pei Qi speaks to managing director David Powell

▶ **How do you assess a client’s ability to do an adventure?**

The key part of the event design process is to align the desire, preferences, profile of participants and their physical ability to the proposed team adventure activity. Once the programme and activities are finalised, and the participants are selected by the client, each individual would be requested to provide a brief medical history and any specific dietary requirements.

▶ **Have you ever said no?**

We have indeed declined clients who have requested specific adventure activities for their teams. Safety is Asia Ability’s top and a non-negotiable priority and if we do not believe that a particular activity, venue, external provider or weather conditions will allow the event to be conducted, we will decline, although in most cases we will propose an alternative.

▶ **How do you prep up the team before the big event? Any training required?**

We provide a detailed event briefing well in advance – this is normally in written format and includes an equipment list, an outline of the itinerary, tips for success and training suggestions. Some clients arrange for this briefing to be done in a face-to-face presentation which works well when logistically possible as it already begins the team development process.

Depending on the nature of the activity and the level of physical challenge, training is recommended. For multi-day adventures it works well for teams to be formed in advance and for teams to do some training together.

▶ **What safety measures/insurance are in place?** Asia Ability and our sister company Ability Expeditions pride

Teambuilding



ourselves in managing all our activities and facilities to international safety standards. We conduct detailed risk assessments, do extensive staff training on safety management, provide high quality equipment and strive to create a safety culture among all participants. We hold appropriate public liability insurance for the events.

▶ **How many accidents have occurred? Why?** We have been operating for 16 years with no major incidents. Safety management is our top priority and this focus reduces the risk factors significantly.

▶ **What risks do you bear? Are prices thus higher?** Good insurance, qualified staff and quality equipment are all expensive but are vital components to a safe and successful corporate adventure.

Prices need to reflect the substantial time, staff and expenses involved in creating and managing such activities.

▶ **Is it a profitable business?** Such activities are still quite a niche offering and as such it is difficult for us to run a successful business with only these types of events on offer. Thus, they are part of a wider offering of creative teambuilding events.

▶ **What are the pros and cons of running this business?** The amount of preparation and planning time for a two to five-day event is substantial, often months in advance, thus can be draining on our resources.

▶ **What rewards do companies gain from adventure teambuilding?** These activities create powerful bonds between people and such a shared experience is never forgotten. When people are challenged to step out of their comfort zone in a well-managed, safe environment, there is a huge opportunity for self development.

"SAFETY MANAGEMENT IS OUR TOP PRIORITY."

▶ **How do suppliers track the gains?** We offer clients the option of a follow-up session with the participants to discuss with them the impacts and benefits of their shared experience. In addition, many participants share their feedback and comments with us both informally and through formal surveys.

▶ **What are the biggest myths about adventure activities?** A big myth is that participants need to be very athletic or super fit to participate – we design and conduct adventure experiences that anyone can participate in and enjoy. I have in the past guided a 77-year-old executive to the top of Mt Kinabalu!

Sail in Asia, Thailand

Established in 2004, Sail in Asia offers a range of water-sports including dragon boat-ing, sea kayaking and wake boarding; sailing activities on its fleet of yachts; luxury yacht charters; and professional and recreational sailing and safety courses certified by International Yacht Training. The Phuket-based company also provides teambuilding and event planning and management for corporates, and outdoor education and adventure activities for international schools. The company operates mainly in Phuket and Pattaya, but is able to offer programmes elsewhere in Thailand upon

request. Xinyi Liang-Pholsena speaks to CEO Mike Downard

▶ **How do you assess a client's ability to do an adventure?** We don't really assess their ability to do an activity. All of our activities can be done by most people, regardless of physical strength, body type, etc.

▶ **How do you prep participants up before the big event? Any training required?** Before the event, we give a thorough safety briefing to the whole group. Then we break them into smaller teams, where each Sail in Asia representative will give another briefing and introduce themselves. There will also be instructions and a brief sailing lesson before the regatta, so everyone knows what their role is and what they should be doing on the boat.

▶ **What safety measures/insurance are in place?** Sail in Asia regattas take place with at least two safety boats on the water. All the instructors are trained in man-overboards, First Aid and safety at sea. The most common problem is seasickness, and we have tablets for this.

▶ **How many accidents have occurred and why?** No serious accidents have occurred. Boats can be dangerous places, but thanks to our boat safety and briefings, we have avoided problems.

▶ **What risks do you bear? Are prices thus higher?** Prices

es for sailing yachts are higher than dragon boats or cardboard boats because of the extra risk, as well as the cost of boat maintenance, etc.

▶ **Is the corporate/incen-tives segment a profitable business? What are the pros and cons of running this business?** MICE events provide a significant contribution to our yearly turnover. There are many pros – fun events, highly visible therefore good advertising, people returning for sailing courses. Cons – the events require a lot of energy and careful client management to make them as successful as possible.

▶ **What rewards do companies gain from adventure teambuilding?** We offer a unique package: large-scale, mass-participation water-based teambuilding events in a stunning setting. We reduce the risk for our clients as much as possible. The fact that we have been doing this for 10 years helps client trust us, and that is reciprocal. From the moment teams arrive to when they leave, we help them to feel relaxed and at ease. During the event itself we encourage synergy and togetherness in an informal, positive and enthusiastic environment. Clients have regularly commented that their entire team has enjoyed the activity and that the teambuilding felt seamless and natural. That is the environment and the emotions we endeavour to foster at Sail in Asia.

"THE BIGGEST MYTH ABOUT ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES IS BECAUSE YOU'RE OLD, INEXPERIENCED, FAT, THIN, WEAR GLASSES, ETC, YOU CAN'T DO CERTAIN ACTIVITIES."





From left: Fly a fighter jet, canyoning in Indonesia, all action in making teams

Let's get physical

For corporates considering a bit more action and adventure to build a team's strength and character, here's a list of ideas

By Natasha Dragun, Caroline Boey, Xinyi Liang-Pholsena, Paige Lee Pei Qi, Mimi Hudoyo, S. Puvaneswary and Prudence Lui

HARD ADVENTURE

Fly a fighter jet, Australia

Ever wanted to be Tom Cruise in *Top Gun*? Jet Ride flights in Melbourne and Brisbane allow executives to channel their inner fighter pilot, taking them from zero to 600km/h in less than 20 seconds! Each adventure includes a full safety and mission brief covering the area of operations, weapons delivery and G-force preparation. Plus, executives will be outfitted in a full military pilot flying suit, helmet and oxygen mask. Customised corporate flights are available.

Purpose An exhilarating ride that will have everyone screaming together as a team as they zip through the sky.

Pricing From A\$1,400 (US\$1,225)/person

Operator Jet Ride; jetride.com.au

Agroventures, Rotorua, New Zealand

The park offers five adventure activities, Agrojet, New Zealand's fastest jetboating experience; Freefall Xtreme, a flying experience in an outdoor wind tunnel; Swoop, which hauls up three people in sacks and swings down at 130km/h; Shweeb, the world's only human-powered 600m recumbent aerodynamic pod that reaches speeds of up to 50km/h along two 200m inverse tracks five metres high; and the 43m drop Rotorua Bungy Jump can be done individually or in tandem.

Exclusive use of the adventure park for

teambuilding activities can be arranged depending on the number of people and the activities selected. The 142ha park can accommodate up to 600 people.

Purpose Overcome fear and creates sense of achievement.

Pricing From NZ\$19.70 (US\$16.35) per ride

River rock challenge, Philippines

This activity is conducted in a virgin forest behind the property of Gratchi's Getaway in Tagaytay, and takes around 2.5 to three hours, depending on group size. The risk element is the jump from a rock.

Team descent from a mountain path in the forest (which is rather steep at times and requires a rope in some areas to descend) to an untouched river. They will walk the natural river path and swim to a large rock down by a waterfall. Then as a group they need to figure out how to ascend the rock while waterfall is rushing down on them. The climb requires teamwork as it's difficult to climb alone. Upon reaching the top, each team member is asked to recite his name and his individual Goal for the Year for their company, then jump off, plunging to the river below.

Some clients often need two or three tries and extreme encouragement from teammates to get them to jump. Some cried before doing their jump.

Purpose A leader will emerge from the group to get the team up the River Rock. Extreme physical teamwork is needed to get to the top of the rock, giving the team an unforgettable memory of accomplishment to bring back to the office.

Pricing 500 pesos (US\$11) per person

Operator Playworks Team Building; www.playworks.ph; tel. + 63-915-477-PLAY (7529)

Firewalk on the beach, Philippines

On the beach at night, after a small fire is put out, the embers are spread till they fizzle out. The facilitator takes a reading of the temperature to ensure that the embers have become slightly warm. He is the first to walk barefoot over the bed of embers, followed by participants. Embers are not

a good conductor of heat so they won't burn the person walking on it. Also, the amount of time the feet are in contact with the embers is not enough to induce burn.

Purpose Mind over matter; confidence building

Pricing Upon request

Operator Playworks Team Building; www.playworks.ph; tel. + 63-915-477-PLAY (7529)

Bangkok to Phuket by Bike, Thailand

Riding on good quality tarmac roads with a few days of undulating hills – termed a '4 Chilli ride' in cycling lingo. Riders should be confident of their physical condition and bike-handling skills. In some cases the distances may be short but due to heat or altitude, the riding is still a challenge.

The ride covers the route from Bangkok to Phuket, however the days can be customised to suit the needs and abilities of the group. A mix of distances with longer days up to 200km can be set. The ride is a guided point-to-point event, with full vehicle support to ensure that the riders are always supported by a team of guides on bikes and drivers, usually at a ratio of one guide, one vehicle and one driver to eight riders. For corporate groups, the organiser, SpiceRoads, can help to design and source customised cycling jerseys.

Purpose Wellness benefits, improving the health of staff and thereby the positivity and morale within an organisation. CSR elements can be included.

Pricing Varies, depending on group size, standard of accommodation, etc.

Operator SpiceRoads; www.spiceroads.com

Panda tracking in Xi'an, China

The place is Foping Nature Reserve, Qinling Mountains, 215 km north of Xi'an. Be prepared to walk about 10km a day for four days in valleys and mountainous terrain of up to 2,500m high to track pandas and other wildlife. Rural accommodation in the 115,000ha nature reserve may not have running water or hot water, and only Chinese cuisine is available.

Teambuilding

The best season for this programme is between May and October. Temperatures in the mountains can be quite cold and range between -5°C and 10°C. Panda sightings are not guaranteed and participants will not be taken to captive sanctuaries as the programme is designed to view pandas in the wild.

Purpose Suitable for individuals and a group of up to 12 people, the idea is to provide a sense of adventure and anticipation of what lies ahead. It also tests each individual's endurance in the wild to build character and team spirit.

Pricing/Operator Part of a five-day/four-night Beijing-Xi'an Shanghai programme offered by Destination Asia (China). Land tour prices are from RMB10,365 (US\$1,688) per person twin-share.

Forest Adventure, Singapore

Get the team ready for up to three hours of exhilarating fun in the trees. This is an aerial course built in trees comprising ladders, bridges, swings, nets, trapezes and zip lines where participants move unaccompanied, from tree to tree, five to eight meters above ground. All participants are equipped with harnesses and are responsible for securing themselves to a safety line at each stage. The course has 34 different stages including four zip lines (flying foxes) across the water. Divided into four sections, participants descend from the trees to the forest floor on a zip line at the end of each section, together as a team.

Purpose Participants will be exposed to the physical challenges of height and will learn to take risk and push their limits in a safe environment.

Pricing S\$70 (US\$55)/participant

Operator Forest Adventure; <http://forestadventure.com.sg>; email: info@forestadventure.com.sg

Flores Trail Adventure, Indonesia

A combination of 4WD ride, climbing up the steep hills of Flores up to Werang and trekking through patches of the island for 1.5 hours to Cunci Rami waterfall to swim and cliff jump, then onto Cunca Wulan waterfalls for canyoning.

Groups are divided into teams of four and the whole track is set as a teambuilding scavenger hunt.

Purpose Better teamwork, create a team spirit; conquering fear (canyoning down the cliff of the waterfall).

Pricing Unavailable, based on seasonality.

Operator Plataran Komodo Beach Resort & Phinisi Vessels. www.plataran.com

Sumatra Challenge, Indonesia

This one-day outbound training combines an amazing race, treasure hunt, city survival and charity, with 30 per cent done indoors and 70 per cent outdoors in West Sumatra. Participants will need to break codes and finalise a challenge before moving on to the next challenge.

Purpose Teamwork; a new experience

Pricing From 2,369,000 rupiah (US\$204) per person, minimum 60 persons

Operator Sumatra and Beyond Tour-Training-Event Planner; www.sumatraandbeyond.co

MEDIUM ADVENTURE

Humpback whales, Australia

Swim with, or watch, migrating humpback whales from Mooloolaba, along Australia's Sunshine Coast in Queensland from July to November. While whale sightings are not guaranteed, you have to be unlucky not to spot one. When whales are spotted, groups of people are permitted into the water with snorkels, always maintaining a safe distance.

Can be done as a team or individual. No more than 10 people are allowed in the water at any given time, but larger groups can tag-team between snorkelling and watching from the deck of the boat.

Purpose It's the only activity of its kind in Australia – how many people have experienced the exhilaration of getting up close and personal with these majestic animals?

Pricing AU\$114/person

Operator sunreefsuperstore.com.au

Climb Harbour Bridge, Australia

Climbing the Harbour Bridge is one of the best ways to take in Sydney's sights. The climb is not for the faint hearted – winds can whip over the bridge, and there are lots of stairs. But the BridgeClimb team is a stickler for safety and everyone is secured using a state-of-the-art harness system. Climbs are held throughout the day, and from dawn to night.

There is a limit to the number of people climbing with one guide (14 people), but multiple guides can be used.

Purpose Sense of immense achievement reaching the top of one of the world's most famous landmarks.

Pricing From A\$198/person

Skyline Rotorua, New Zealand

Participants can compete in Luge gravity races in New Zealand-designed three-wheel carts with a unique breaking and steering system. Or do the Skyswing, which is a bungee-like swing ride for three people.

The latest attraction is the high-speed twin Zoom Zipline where participants descend 385m down the side of Mt Ngongotaha at 80km/h followed by a unique a Quickjump from the landing platform (optional). Individuals and teams can compete in a variety of teambuilding challenges based on the different adventure activities selected.

Purpose Suitable for building team spirit and bonding through fun adventure activities.

Pricing From NZ\$38 (US\$30)

Twilight Adventures, New Zealand

Adventure activities take place when the sun begins to set and participants are taken on jetboats, a Monster 4x4 Thrill Ride, and drive in 4WD Bush Safari convoys navigating tricky offroad situations like plunging down a "waterfall" or manoeuvring a 45°-angled slope.

Purpose Suitable for individuals or teams, they foster team spirit by participating in adventurous activities and bonding over a campsite bonfire and native bush camp dinner.

Pricing From NZ\$50 per head; packages are from NZ\$114 per head.

GeoPark Adventure, Hong Kong

This adventure starts at 10am with a transfer by speedboat or junk from Sai Kung waterfront to the kayak base at Sha Kiu Tau fishing village close by. This is followed by activities such as kayaking, swimming, snorkelling, paddling through a sea arch (weather permitting) and a short jungle ridge walk in the Sai Kung GeoPark. Then return to kayak base at around 2pm for lunch and back to Sai Kung at 4pm. Speed boat/ or junk follows to offer safety and support.

Paddling through the sea arch is the key aspect of the challenge. Teams have to improve their kayaking skills on the journey to the sea arch. Failure to do so results in not being able to pass through safely.

Only double-seat kayaks are used for teamwork, safety, fun and logistic purposes. Ideal for groups of up to 20pax.

Purpose A shared experience in a new environment; improved communications and coordination skills.

Pricing HK\$800 (US\$103) to HK\$1,200/person

Operator Kayak and Hike; Tel: 852- 9300 5197; www.kayak-and-hike.com

Team Challenge Hourglass, Singapore

High ropes courses. Group of five to six pax in a team will move up an hourglass in spiral manner, going through different challenges. The only way down is up. To come down, the team has to first reach the hourglass summit. A short version will take only two hours while the full experience can take up to four hours.

Can be done alone or as a team. However, it is highly recommended to do it as a team.

Purpose A fun adventure in an urban environment that focuses on character-building through teamwork.

Pricing From S\$150 per pax

Operator Focus Adventure; <http://focusadventure.com>
Email: info@FOCUSAdventure.com

Survivors in the jungle, Singapore

An extraordinary experience with nature inculcating basic survival skills like making fire, cooking over camp fire and building a shelter. From morning till late afternoon, the team will be trekking around the only wild island in Singapore, Pulau Ubin, and exploring the fauna and flora with customised activities. When the sun is down, the team puts into practice the skills it has learnt during the day.

Purpose To build team spirit by working together in a cohesive environment.

Pricing S\$99/pax

Operator Adventour; <http://adventour.com.sg>
Email: info@adventour.com.sg

Mini Regatta, Thailand

Can be a simple afternoon affair with a

few boats, to a full-day event with up to 15 boats competing for a prize. The mini-regatta is split into two sessions to familiarise participants on the activity, the first teaching participants how to control the sails and equipment, and each team member is given a role on the boat. Following lunch the second session kicks off with a series of short races amid the Andaman's stunning backdrop.

Whether in Pattaya or Phuket, this activity is tailored to the clients' wishes, but each boat will always have at least two highly experienced sailors onboard to steer the boat, manage the sails and be in constant communication with other yachts in the fleet.

Purpose Like the corporate environment, sailing requires communication, positive encouragement, working together and personal strength, so the main purpose is to encourage people to work together to achieve a goal.

Pricing From 2,000 baht (US\$63) per person,

Operator Sail In Asia; www.sailinasia.com

Outdoor adventure survival, Thailand

A two-day/one-night adventure on an island in the vicinity of Samui or Phuket only accessible by boat. Once there, delegates will be given material for shelter, food and water. The time spent on the

island will be split between the essential tasks necessary for survival, such as building camp, fishing, cooking and orienteering. With an emphasis on active, physical challenges and adventure, this event involves surviving as a team on a tropical island with a minimum of equipment.

Ideal for young and adventure-oriented business people seeking new challenges.

Purpose To encourage positive thinking, motivation and innovation; to learn about others under pressure; to improve trust, cooperation and leadership skills

Pricing From 155,000 baht for a group of 50 pax

Operator Making Teams; www.teambuilding-thailand.com

World's highest via ferrata, Malaysia

Activities include mountain hiking and via ferrata climbing on Mt Kinabalu, the highest trekking mountain in South-east Asia. It has one of the lowest risks in adventure sports and will require a commitment of at least two days and one night on the mountain terrain.

Suitable for individuals and teams. A trainer will provide a safety briefing to participants and training on how to use the safety devices. Trainers will also climb with the group and provide tips along the way on how to negotiate difficult spots.

Purpose For personal development as it will make

individuals push their personal boundaries and step out of their comfort zone. It will also foster greater teamwork as ranks and seniority give way to motivation and encouragement.

Pricing From RM1,300 (US\$412) for a two-day/one-night experience

Operator MountainTorq; Tel: +60 88 268126; www.mountaintorq.com

Stanchart KL Marathon, Malaysia

Held annually in Kuala Lumpur since 2009, the marathon starts and finishes right in the middle of the city, at the historical Independence Square. Open to both individuals and teams.

The corporate challenge is a 10km competitive yet fun platform for organisations to register and compete as a team. It is open to all companies in Malaysia. Minimum three runners are required for each organisation, and there is no maximum number of runners. Team members must be employees from the same organisation. The average time of the top three finishers from each organisation will determine the winning corporation. Next year's marathon will be on October 4.

Purpose Enables corporate teams to raise money for charity; encourages a healthy lifestyle.

Pricing Cost per runner is RM1,000 (mandatory charity donation) + RM50 (registration fee)

Contact www.kl-marathon.com



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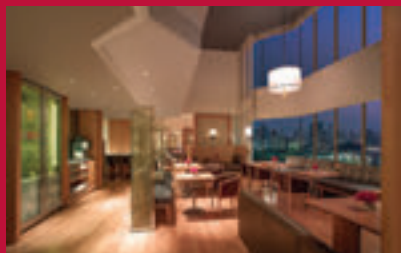


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Investing in innovation

The Lion City has identified unique experiences as a way to win the hearts of incentive delegates.

By **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

After years of furious tourism infrastructure developments, Singapore is now fine-tuning its “software” to stand out from intensifying competition from regional destinations.

Yap Chin Siang, assistant chief executive, policy and planning group of the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), told *TTGmice*: “While Singapore’s tourism sector has been experiencing strong growth in the past decade (from 2002 to 2012), the growth was propelled by the introduction of new attractions and marquee events.

“The backdrop to this has changed today, with intensifying regional competition. Infrastructure developments can be easily replicated, but what makes our attractions stand out among the competition and appeal to increasingly discerning travellers will be the quality of experiences we offer.”

As a result, STB is developing “innovative tourism experiences” with industry partners that can appeal to the target audience, Yap revealed.

An example of such efforts is STB’s Attractions Experience Design Series, launched last year in collaboration with the Workforce Development Agency of Singapore (WDA) and the Association of Singapore Attractions (ASA) to enhance the attraction industry’s capabilities in designing and delivering emotive visitor experiences.

Selina Chavry, Pacific World’s regional director for Singapore and Malaysia, said: “Singapore is constantly reinventing itself and looking for new ways to attract travellers, and this forward thinking mentality is what separates it from its competitors.”

She added that DMCs can leverage these innovative themes to sell Singapore creatively to business event planners and owners, especially



Resorts World Sentosa

when packaging incentives that inspire repeat visits.

Several popular attractions in Singapore have made moves to develop creative and innovative experiences for incentive groups.

An example is the River Safari wildlife park, renowned as Asia’s first river themed wildlife attraction, which is inviting visitors to take a behind-the-scenes peek through two new programmes – *Fishy Business* and *Be a Panda Researcher* – and have hands-on experiences with its animal residents.

Through *Be a Panda Researcher*, corporate groups can get into teams and learn more about the park’s giant pandas Kai Kai and Jia Jia, dissect panda poo, examine paw prints and other panda markings to gain insights into how researchers track pandas in the wild, and appreciate the hard work that goes into meeting the pandas’ special dietary needs.

Through *Fishy Business*, delegates can venture deep into the underbelly of the Amazon Flooded Forest exhibit and discover what the aquarists do to keep the animal residents in the pink of health.

While Tour East’s group vice president of sales and marketing, Judy Lum, appreciates local attractions “going out of their way to make things happen”, she pointed out that

behind-the-scenes experiences may only appeal to “certain demographics” and their take-up rate “depends on what organiser considers fun and wonderful”.

Lum added: “To really have an incentive group feel that the experience was conjured solely for their enjoyment, an attraction buy-out will be a better option.”

Customised programmes for incentive groups are offered at Resorts World Sentosa’s Dolphin Island. Delegates can choose to wade into the waist-deep waters of the lagoon to meet and feed the resident dolphins, or visit the healthcare facility to learn how the cetaceans are being cared for by specialists.

Travel consultant John B Sutherland, who specialises in luxurious and unique programmes for leisure travellers and business event groups, agreed that innovative incentive experiences will help ensure a “unique Singapore”, but added that the client’s budget may limit what can be achieved.

Sutherland said: “We can always come up with new and extreme ideas for our clients and turn any place into something totally unique, but at the end of the day it is about the budget so it is important to first know your customers and their expectations.”

Resorts World Sentosa’s Dolphin Island offers tailored programmes for corporate groups

Oh, what a good sport!

The much anticipated S\$1.3 billion (US\$1 billion) Singapore Sports Hub opened its doors in June this year, boasting a 55,000-seat stadium capped with the world's largest free-spanning dome roof.

"There is no other venue like (the Singapore Sports Hub) – it is a special place for companies to capture a unique experience for attendees," said Mark Collins, managing director, Singapore Sports Hub.

The 35ha sporting facility houses two 1,000-pax restaurants, a multi-purpose indoor area that can be configured to hold up to 3,000 seats, as well as the Sports Information Resource Centre, which is intended for exhibitions.

According to Collins, the various unique facilities within the Singapore Sports Hub can support or host both business and sports-related events as the areas can be used in many flexible ways depending on the event requirements.

Since its opening, the Singapore Sports Hub has played host to a string of events and conferences such as the Southeast Asia Swimming Championships, the World Club 10s



Singapore Sports Hub draws major sporting events to the Lion City

Ruby, the 16th Stadia & Arena 2014 Asia Pacific Conference and the BNP Paribas Women's Tennis Association (WTA) Finals Singapore. The latter, held in October, was the first WTA finals to be played in Asia-Pacific. It welcomed tennis stars like Li Na, Serena Williams and Maria Sharapova.

With the rise of the Asian middle class, the total sports industry

revenue from the Asia-Pacific region is expected to reach US\$27.5 billion in 2015, according to the Singapore Tourism Board.

Amid this backdrop of positive growth, the Singapore Sports Hub will play a critical role in accelerating the development of the sports industry and take it to the next level in Singapore, opined Collins.

Ideas One-day Peranakan trail in Singapore

Begin the day with a visit to the Spice Garden located at the original site of the first Botanic Gardens at Fort Canning Park. Stroll through the Spice Garden before heading to the At-Sunrice GlobalChef Academy, a culinary centre dedicated to promoting pan-Asian cuisine and culinary skills. There, join a cooking class to learn the intricacies of *Peranakan*

cooking, influenced by techniques adopted from Malay and Chinese kitchens.

Next, make your way to the Peranakan Museum on Armenian Street just nearby, for a full cultural immersion into the heritage, culture, language and costume, as well as the important traditions and rituals of the *Peranakans*. With the finest and most

comprehensive collection of *Peranakan* artefacts in the world, you'll discover all that you need to know about this unique fusion culture.

This *Peranakan* trail will bring you into the Joo Chiat area of Sin-

gapore, where you can absorb the relaxing atmosphere of this part of town, often associated with *Peranakan* and Eurasian communities.

The olden day opulence and charm of the place remains intact with traditional *Peranakan* houses like Katong Antique House and Rumah Bebe. Both are great places to pick up a *Peranakan* outfit, snacks and homeware, and are must-visit establishments that help you learn more about the culture.

Finally, end your *Peranakan* trail at dinner-time, trying fine *Peranakan* cuisine at the well known Peranakan Inn on East Coast Road, or Chilli Padi at Joo Chiat Place. Remember to order the fish head *assam* curry and *nasi goreng buah keluak*, for a taste of two of the more famous traditional *Peranakan* dishes.

Itinerary by Singapore Tourism Board



Get to know the Peranakan people with a visit to the Peranakan Museum

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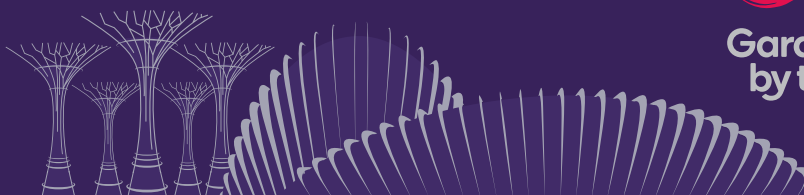


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Need to know



Peter Pan flies into Resorts World Sentosa

The magic and wonder of J M Barrie's timeless classic will be brought to life at Resorts World Sentosa through a blend of stunning visual effects and heartwarming music presented in *Peter Pan, The Never Ending Story*. The theatrical production will make its Asian debut on November 27 and until January 20 next year.

Tickets are priced from S\$58 (US\$46). A premium option, which comes with a glass of wine, goes for S\$168. Visit www.sistic.com.sg for more details.

Suntec Singapore launches customer portal



Leveraging the exponential power of technology, Suntec Singapore has launched its new customer portal for virtual event planning, allowing MICE planners real-time access to their booking information.

Set to transform the way Suntec Singapore work with its planners, the interactive portal provides organisers a 'live' dashboard displaying the full details of their bookings including meeting space, furniture, equipment, F&B items, and digital signage allocation.

The portal provides an interactive 2D blueprint for clients to visualise the layout of their spaces. The floor planning tools allow them to move the furniture, audio-visual equipment, and decorative items according to their requirements.

Further to that, the 3D-viewer with 360° panning ability promises clients a comprehensive view of the space.

Visitors can preview the customer portal here: <http://bit.ly/1tZv52H>.

Juice up your day at The Westin Singapore

Staying true to the Westin brand's promise For a Better You, The Westin Singapore has joined hands with The Juicery to launch a new, dedicated fresh juice and smoothie offering.

Westin Fresh by The Juicery features juices and smoothies designed for guests seeking healthy options while traveling. These delectable mixes are designed to nourish the body and mind with nutrition rich ingredients such as beetroot, açai, kale, pomegranate, mint, spinach and blueberries.

Guests can grab one of these refreshing juices and smoothies to kick-start their day at the hotel's contemporary gourmet deli, Daily Treats on Level 1, and signature interactive dining complex, Seasonal Tastes on Level 32.

The Westin Singapore is among the first hotels to pilot the new menu, which will be featured at all Westin hotels worldwide by early 2015.



Put on your sunglasses and get to work

Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort & Spa has joined its sister properties across South-east Asia and Fiji in mixing business with pleasure through a new meeting offering - *Sunglasses at Work*, a series of unique meeting settings that encourage fun during corporate gatherings.

The hotel on Sentosa island entices meeting planners with three options: *Engage with Nature* promotes wellness and interaction with the resort's lush surroundings in between breaks; *Explore* offer socially responsible teambuilding activities; *Excite* injects land, sea and air obstacles into a corporate retreat to get delegates' adrenaline pumping.

Fun activities on offer include attempting acrobatic stunts eight metres off the ground on The Flying Trapeze, beach volleyball, beach clean-up, harvesting herbs from the resident herb garden to create personalised salads and other dishes, brief sessions of neck, body and foot massages, and sunset beach barbeques.



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The colourful street market in Ximending, Taipei reflects Taiwan's fun nature

Carrots for corporate groups

New grants and incentives are being dished out to MICE planners to get their nod towards Taiwan as a destination of choice, writes **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Believing that event planners could use some help to make their destination of choice more affordable, Taiwan has launched a new series of support this year that includes complimentary cultural performances and souvenirs, as well as event planning assistance.

First-time incentive groups with at least 150 delegates will get to enjoy a free gala dinner, while financial grants ranging from NT\$30,000 (US\$1,000) to NT\$200,000 are also dished out.

Aimed at international enterprises and associations, these subventions will be available through 2016.

Thomas Tsou, secretary general, Taiwan Convention & Exhibition Association, an organisation whose mission is to promote Taiwan's economic development, establish a

cohesive MICE industry and assist the government in setting exhibition policies, said: "These subsidies will be a good motivation for companies to choose Taiwan because they are always looking for ways to control their budget."

Tsou is quick to add, however, that Taiwan is "already an affordable destination" for business events.

"Our ultimate goal is to make Taiwan as attractive as possible," he explained.

And it seems that Taiwan is on the right track with its tourism objectives. The destination crossed the eight million mark in arrivals last year, up from 7.3 million in 2012. Business travel footfalls have risen too, from 890,000 in 2012 to 930,000 in 2013. Taiwan Tourism Bureau expects arrivals to hit nine million by the end of 2014.

With business travellers spending approximately 10 per cent more than leisure travellers, Tsou believes that more must be done to develop Taiwan's MICE industry.

He cited Taiwan's infrastructure and high service standards as the destination's strengths.

In Taipei, hardware is constantly improving. Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, Taipei splashed NT\$1.5 billion (US\$50 million) on an extensive refurbishing project; Westin Taipei gave its room and lobby facilities a facelift; Grand Hyatt Taipei recently completed phase one of a landmark renovation.

New in the city is the Mandarin Oriental Taipei, lauded as one of the most upscale hotel in Taiwan. The 303-key hotel features a versatile range of event spaces including the Grand Ballroom, a 960m² space for up to 1,200 guests.

Besides the availability of MICE-friendly hardware, Jason Yeh, CEO of TaiwanLook DMC, said Taiwan's "remarkable cultural heritage and many resplendent natural sites" can support purpose-built group programmes.

He added that popular incentive activities include city treasure hunts where one of the 'treasures' to be found are Taiwan's widely celebrated street food in the night markets.

And eating is just what 100 delegates of My Tours Indonesia's first incentive group to Taiwan will be doing when they descend on Taipei at the end of this year.

The agency's director, Christovel Panggabean, said: "There are two things Indonesians love the most – food and shopping. We have heard so much about how Taiwan has some of the best street food and it is time for us to taste it for ourselves."

Also playing a part in boosting Taiwan's branding is the *Super Team in Asia* competition. Launched in August by Meet Taiwan and Taiwan External Trade Development Council, the competition called on participants from companies in Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia to create their dream incentive itineraries in Taiwan and act as ambassadors for the destination in their own countries.

Commenting on the initiative, TW MICE Event & DMC's sales director, Stacy Yang, said: "It is good to have more of these (activities) to raise awareness of Taiwan because (of strong competition from) neighbouring destinations."



Taipei.

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Ideas Three days in Taipei

Day1 Start your first day in Taipei with a trip to the top of its tallest building, the Taipei 101. The world's fastest elevator whisks you to the 89th floor where an audio tour points out some of the city's major landmarks through panoramic windows. Share your memories with loved ones back home by mailing a postcard from one of the highest mailboxes in the world.

Then, head down to Taipei 101 mall for a little shopping, before regrouping and moving on to the nearby Chiang Kai Shek Memorial for a picnic lunch in the park.

Now that you've had an survey of the city, get a sampling of Taiwanese cuisine with a visit to the Shilin Night Market for a dinner of inexpensive and delicious street food.

Day2 Taiwan has a very rich

history, one you can explore today with a morning visit to the National Palace Museum. Considered one of the best museums in the world, the National Museum displays a collection of art, artefacts and relics spanning 8,000 years.

After lunch, spend the afternoon exploring one of Taipei's many temples. Longshan, the most popular, is a Taoist temple dating back to the early 18th century during the Qing Dynasty.

As evening approaches, catch a cab to the Elephant Mountain trailhead for a short hike to watch the sun set behind the iconic Taipei 101.

Day3 Get an early start for a day of hiking in Yangmingshan National Park, where you'll find high peaks, rolling hills, waterfalls and mountaintop meadows waiting to be explored.



Taipei 101

In the evening, relax those tired muscles with a soak in the famous Beitou Hot Springs. If you are interested in the long history of thermal spas in Taipei, make sure to visit the Beitou Hot Springs Museum before heading home.

Itinerary by Viator



Explore a tasteful, old side of modern Taipei

The 200-year-old Jinshan Old Street, located in New Taipei City, is loved for its street food and casual local eateries, medley of traditional temples such as Ci Hu Temple and Kuan An Temple, and hot springs. Jinshan Old Street is busiest on weekends when locals and tourists alike flock in to feast on cheap local delicacies and pick up dried marine produce.

In the mood for arts

Housed in a once disused dock-side warehouse that has since been transformed into a hub for design and contemporary art, Pier-2 Art Center in Kaohsiung City plays host to numerous contemporary art and design exhibitions, music festivals and pop-up shows.

The visually engaging exhibits and sprawling grounds make Pier-2 Art Center an increasingly popular attraction among locals and tourists alike.

Spice up your palate

Balle Balle Indian Restaurant & Bar is one of the relatively new Indian restaurants to emerge in Taipei. Located close to Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall MRT station, the restaurant specialises in Punjabi cuisine and offers both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes. Reservations are recommended, as it can pack out quickly during meal times. Balle Balle can also be booked for private parties.

Write to balleballetaipei@gmail.com for more information.



Purrfect flight

All-female incentive groups may fly into Taipei in style this December when Taiwanese airline EVA Air rolls out nine Hello Kitty-themed chartered flights from Singapore to the Taiwanese capital.

Passengers on these flights will enjoy the full Hello Kitty treatment, from being given a Hello Kitty boarding pass and baggage stickers upon check-in, to Hello Kitty pillows and Hello Kitty-shaped food during the inflight meal service.

Limited edition Hello Kitty duty-free products will be available onboard too.

Get around in a green, healthy manner

Business event delegates who are extending their stay in Taipei may want to take advantage of the city's new *Travel by BMW* campaign which encourages tourists to get around by bus, bicycle and metro or on foot.

The campaign highlights Taipei's tourist-friendly infrastructure including 12 new metro lines, 4,000 public buses and more than 190 YouBike rental spots. The latter allows visitors to rent a bicycle from any rental spot closest to their starting point and return it to any station upon arrival at their destination.



Standing firm

Despite a dip in arrivals from top source market China, Vietnam manages to register growth in total international footfalls. **Greg Lowe** reports

Vietnam's tourism industry is posting steady growth despite anti-Chinese riots in May which dampened the performance of a destination that was already faltering due to structural issues such as deteriorating product quality and a lack of strategic vision at the administrative level, travel specialists say.

Arrivals from China, the country's key source market, still rose 26 per cent in the first seven months of the year, according to Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT). In July, however, they declined 28.8 per cent on the same month a year earlier, showing the heavy price the industry has paid as a result of violent protests in response to Beijing's expansion in the South China Sea.

Edouard George, president of Phoenix Voyages Group, said there has been some recovery since May with more requests for longhaul MICE business, though regional corporate travellers remain cautious.

"VNAT is trying hard to restore confidence (in the destination) but with limited effects. Everyone was caught by surprise (by the riots). Hopefully, we will see more action towards the third and fourth quarters," said George.

Given the poor relations with China and a lack of tourism infrastructure and product diversity, Vietnam will find it increasingly difficult to compete with regional destinations unless VNAT develops a clear strategy for the industry which includes high-quality marketing campaigns and efforts to attract higher spending visitors, said Pham Manh Ha, CEO of Luxury Travel Vietnam.

"Our government should focus more on investment and comprehensively upgrading infrastructure... VNAT should focus on strategic planning to develop tourism before even (increasing fees)," Pham urged. "Raising (visa) prices without upgrading service quality will reduce the number of visitors to Vietnam. Look at the oth-

er South-east Asian destinations like Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore – they always have policies to encourage tourists for each season. These policies (come) from their government (so ours needs to play a more active role)."

Some industry players take a more positive view of the sector's performance.

Josephine Lim, vice president global sales Asia Pacific and regional director Southeast Asia at Preferred Hotel Group, is confident Vietnam will reach VNAT's target of 8.2 million visitors by 2015, mainly thanks to an increase in air access.

During the first seven months of the year international arrivals rose 15.6 per cent to 4.9 million over the same period the year before, according to recent data from VNAT. Figures had risen steadily from January to April, with both month-on-month and year-on-year increases for every month except March. Then after the fracas in May, foreign visitors declined each month when compared with the previous year, falling 4.9 per cent in June and 14.2 per cent in July. Cumulative year-to-date growth remains positive thanks to strong performance in the first four months of the year.

Leisure and business travel have been equally affected by the troubles, with the former dipping by 15.4 per cent to a total 2.9 million tourists in the first seven months and the latter declining 13.9 per cent to 815,000.

Overall the hotel sector, which STR Global data shows has 494 properties with 47,770 rooms, remained steady with slight increases in both average daily rate and RevPAR despite a slight dip in occupancy.

There are another 44 hotels with 9,499 keys in the pipeline.

"There is an increasing supply of new room inventory into the country, with both international and independent hotel brands planting flags in gateway and secondary cities," said Lim. "This reflects the potential that multinational companies and interna-

tional tourists see in Vietnam as both a business and leisure destination of choice in the region."

Lothar Pehl, senior vice president, operations and global initiatives, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Asia Pacific, observes similar trends.

"Short-haul Asia business continues to grow year-on-year with markets such as South Korea and Japan leading percentage growth. In the longer-haul markets, we are seeing growth from Russia and Australia."

MICE travel to Vietnam was also on the rise, he said.

Vietnamese tourism players are calling for the government to improve infrastructure; pictured below, Saigon Notre-Dame Basilica in downtown Ho Chi Minh City



Ideas Three days around Hanoi



JW Marriott Hanoi Hotel opened in late-2013 to offer 450 rooms and 17 meeting venues

Day1 Check into JW Marriott Hanoi Hotel and head straight to a cooking course to master the art of making *goi cuon*, traditional soft spring rolls, and other local delicacies.

After lunch at JW Cafe, take a trip to downtown Hanoi and see Hoan Kiem Lake, the pagoda and remains of the giant turtle which once inhabited the waters. A rickshaw tour of the Old Quarter will follow. Later,

travel on foot to St Joseph's Cathedral and spend an hour browsing local shops and drinking Vietnamese coffee.

Welcome the evening at Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi Hotel, one of the city's most iconic properties – first with cocktails at Le Club, then with dinner at Spices Garden Restaurant.

Day2 Leaving the hotel early in the morning, you will make your way to Hoa Lu, the capital of Vietnam in the 10th and 11th centuries. A coffee break will be taken along the way.

Visit the Temple of Dinh Tien Hoang, built to honour the first emperor of the country, then walk to the nearby Temple of Le Dai Hanh. Both temples provide classic examples of architecture from the era.

Continue on to Ninh Binh province, a journey which takes about 45 minutes. Embark on a 15km cycling tour of the local area, travelling

around the lakes and stopping off at Bich Dong pagoda, a 15th century structure built into the mountain and caves.

Lunch will be had at a local restaurant.

Later, journey by sampan along the Ngo Dong River and through a limestone gorge and cave complex at Tam Coc.

At 16.30, transfer back to Hanoi and proceed to dinner at Quan An Ngon restaurant in downtown Hanoi.

Day3 Transfer to Van Phuc village, which has been renowned for its fine silkmaking for the past millennium. Most of the local community is involved in the trade and visitors can watch the entire process from silk extraction, to dyeing and weaving.

After lunch at a local restaurant, transfer to Ha Thai village, an epicentre of artisans who produce Vietnamese lacquerware. After this, return to hotel and the rest of the afternoon is free for you.

Dinner tonight is at Club Opera, an upscale Vietnamese restaurant.

Need to know



New InterContinental hotel arrives in Nha Trang

Located a 40-minute drive from Cam Ranh International Airport, the beachfront InterContinental Nha Trang features 279 rooms and suites, three F&B outlets, Spa InterContinental and three outdoor pools. A MICE team is at hand to help clients make the best use of the facilities which include seven meeting rooms, pre-function space and a grand ballroom. The latter is said to be the city's largest pillarless grand ballroom.

VietJet connects Taipei with Ho Chi Minh City

Come December 12, Vietnam-based carrier VietJet will begin five-times-weekly flights between Taipei and Ho Chi Minh City.

The new service will operate on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. Flights depart Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat International Airport at 14.30 local time and touch down in Taipei Songshan Airport three hours and 25 minutes later.

Return flights leave Taipei Songshan Airport at 20.00.

Hoi An offers a new spot for rejuvenation

Perfect as a reward for business warriors, the newly-opened Alma Courtyard Hoi An features a number of spa journeys that will rejuvenate the mind, body and soul.

Presenting an all-inclusive spa concept, the resort is set around a courtyard with stunning terraced pools and lush tropical gardens and offers 145 rooms, a spacious spa with 40 treatment rooms and two restaurants.

A luxurious taste of Vietnam

Remote Lands, a luxury travel specialist, has launched its Vietnamese Culinary Journey tour this year which gives food lovers the chance to spend up to 14 days immersing themselves in local cuisine, from grazing at local markets such as Ben Thanh Market in Ho Chi Minh City to dining in top restaurants. Other tour highlights include a cooking class with a top Vietnamese chef and visits to the Red and White Sand Dunes in Mui Ne.





John Autelitano



David Coppens



Jeff Cheng



Becky Ip

Australia

Staging Connections

Western Australia has appointed **Matt Simpson** creative consultant and multimedia manager to lead a change in creating exceptional event experiences. He brings with him a wealth of experience in digital technologies including his role as creatures effects videographer on set for the Harry Potter movie franchise.

The Star in Sydney has appointed experienced hospitality executive, **John Autelitano**, as general manager of hotels. He will manage the property's five-star The Darling and Astral Towers and Residences.

Belgium

BCD Travel has appointed **David Coppens** to the new role of executive vice president, global operations. Coppens, who reports to global COO Mike Janssen, previously served as senior vice president of performance solutions for EMEA.

Cambodia

Pieter Van Der Hoeven has been promoted to general manager of **Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor** in Siem Reap and **Raffles Hotel Le Royal** in Phnom Penh. He has more than 25 years of experience in the industry, spanning brands such as

Grand Hyatt, Anantara, The Peninsula and Six Senses.

China

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has appointed three new general managers at its properties in China – **Jeff Cheng** at **Fairmont Yancheng Lake**, **Graham Hewitt** at **Fairmont Nanjing** and **Philip Smith** at **Fairmont Chengdu**. Cheng was last hotel manager at Fairmont Nanjing, while Hewitt has over 25 years of hospitality experience, gained from working with The St. Regis Beijing, Le Meridien Angkor, Royal Orchid Sheraton and Sheraton Wenzhou. Smith joins from Fairmont Yangcheng Lake where he was general manager.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong Tourism Board has appointed **Becky Ip** as deputy executive director, replacing Daisy Lui who has retired. Ip joined the bureau in 1999 and has more than 20 years' experience in business management and marketing in Greater China. She was last regional director of Greater China, heading the marketing for both the mainland and Taiwan offices.

Indonesia

Carlos Monterde, formerly hotel manager of

Fairmont Singapore, is now general manager of **Fairmont Jakarta**.

Macau

Dominique Berhouet is now general manager of the new **Crowne Plaza Macau**. The 15-year veteran of InterContinental Hotels Group was last opening general manager of Crowne Plaza Hong Kong Kowloon East and Holiday Inn Express Hong Kong Kowloon East.



Dominique Berhouet

Singapore

Scott Murray is now hotel manager with **Fairmont Singapore**, replacing Carlos Monterde. Murray brings with him over 20 years of experience working with hospitality groups including InterContinental and Banyan Tree.



Scott Murray

Shirlena Tan has been named regional director of sales and marketing of **Furama Hotels International Development**. The 20-year hospitality veteran will lead the operation, strategy and management of the sales and marketing team in the Asia-Pacific region.

Thailand

Paresa, a luxury hotel in Phuket, has made **Dawid Koegelenberg** its new general manager. Koegelenberg managed Six Senses Koh Samui for two years before his move to Paresa.

The Ascott Limited has made **Christina H Bartz** director of sales and marketing for its Thailand properties. Bartz last held the position of vice president sales and marketing with Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts in Thailand.

Wuthisak Pichayagan has risen to the position of general manager at **Centara Hotel & Convention Centre Khon Kaen**. Wuthisak previously served as executive assistant manager for food and beverage at Centara Grand Mirage Beach Resort Pattaya.

Event experts, corporate travel managers and MICE sellers from around the world gathered at **IT&CM Asia** and **CTW Asia-Pacific** last month to explore new business avenues. Photos by Patrick Tan



Epic India's Nupur Malhotra and Eventworld UK's Michael Packford



Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau's Lee Sheau Fen, Faveeza Shahnaz Mohd Amar, Zulkefli Sharif, Tuty Elyanie Medali and Nurul Nadiah Basiran



Tomera Conference & Incentive Czech Republic's Amal Kottnerova, Air Safety Equipment US' S Rajan and Hyderabad Convention Visitors Bureau India's Jalil Khan



MICE Hubs Travel and Tours Malaysia's Konrad Ong, Accenture India's Amarnath Lal Das, Budget Tour Planners Singapore's Emmy Tan and Accenture India's Manjunath Shetty

Below: Communications & Training Italy's Gianna Brunet and Tripware MICE Italy's Daniela Linda Mengoni



Emerson Network Power Philippines' Abegail Jamito and OCBC Bank Singapore's Hung Ling Tsong



Oracle Corporation Singapore's Michelle Tan, Atmel Malaysia's Janice Chuah and Gemalto Singapore's Jean Bey

What's next?

A look back at 2014 – In the final issue of *TTGmice* for 2014 we get the industry to recall the best moments in the business as well as greatest boo-boos. The issue will also spotlight **Hong Kong, South Korea, Malaysia, the UAE and the US** and show you what's brewing in these destinations.

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