

October 2015

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Abu Dhabi powers
up MICE hardware

Khao Yai is one
destination to watch

Honeywell gets great
support in Langkawi

MEET AND PLAY

There is no doubting the effectiveness of forging business bonds over a golf game, and many top golf clubs across Asia are built to facilitate meetings. Even better, some Asian tourism boards are now jumping in to promote meetings on the greens



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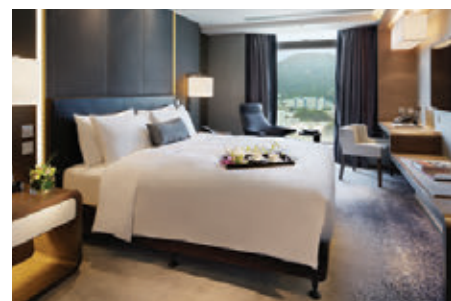
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Golf is gold

For more than a decade the annual IT&CM Asia has been preceded by a friendly golf tournament, an activity that continues to be loved today by both exhibitors and buyers, as it offers participants a chance to socialise as friends in a casual setting, without the pressure of having to seal a deal by the end of the game.

But beyond serving a social need, golf and business make perfect partners in achieving corporate branding objectives (BMW, Volvo and Audi are no stranger to this concept, having hosted tournaments at Mission Hills Haikou), and in satisfying corporate social responsibilities (ACI Singapore, affiliate of the Association Cambiste Internationale, raised funds for several local charities through its ACI Singapore Charity Golf at the Sentosa Golf Club in June).

For incentive winners who are offered a chance to play an exclusive, designer course located in a sophisticated destination, what bragging rights the experience brings!

Such golf events require the use of more than just the course, and many golf clubs in Asia are well positioned to support corporate and private event planners who wish to augment their programme with a friendly game.

In our cover feature this month (*Meet and play*, page 21), we highlight some of the courses in this region that are built with quality accommodation and event facilities, and look at what tourism industry players in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are doing to encourage more golf and business event tie-ups.



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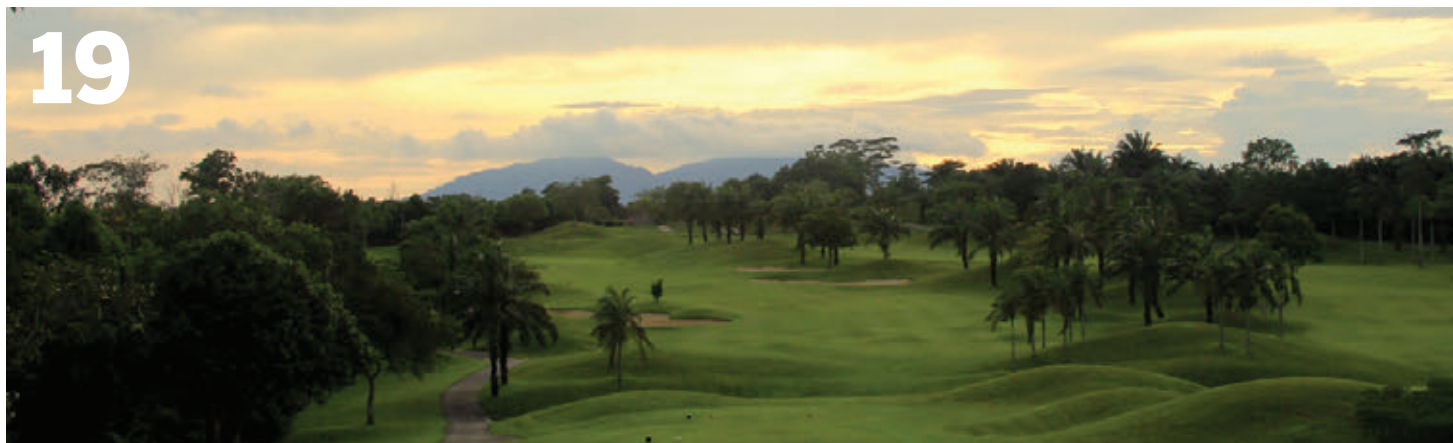
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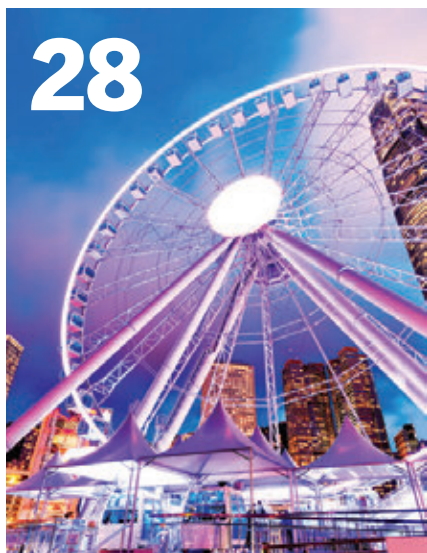
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Abu Dhabi wishes to continue growing its business tourism sector by offering unparalleled event spaces, upgraded leisure facilities and exceptional hotel spaces. By Feizal Samath

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We love

Living it up at South Beach

It is almost impossible to miss the towering development that has emerged in the heart of Singapore's convention hub. Not only is it visually stunning on the outside, the South Beach hotel which opened its doors on September 3 as part of a preview phase is artistic, stylish and lively on the inside.

That's no surprise, considering the big names behind the hotel's design: Philippe Starck, Foster + Partners and Aedas.

All 654 guestrooms and suites are large and well furnished with Philippe Starck's quirky yet functional furniture pieces. We love the secure ladies-only floor with rooms that come with splashes of pink and feminine touches. Female travellers will appreciate the extensive range of toiletries and female butler service.

The South Beach emphasises on imaginative social spaces, and the result is plenty of chic locations that allow hotel guests to connect with friends and business partners, or simply relax alone.

The two sky gardens on level 18 are a gem, offering an eclectic mix of designer couches, armchairs and stools for one to sit on and admire the breathtaking cityscape. Two infinity swimming pools and a gym complete the suite of facilities on this level.

The dining outlets are attractions themselves, each boasting a unique interior and character. The boldly named ADHD (All Day Hotel Dining) feeds guests all day in an elegant space, while Laugh excites with colourful prints and mishmash furniture. Both can support private events.

The hotel is part of the South Beach mixed-use development which incorporates heritage sites – three army blocks and the well-known Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) Club – along with two new tower blocks. The 34-storey office tower is home to tenants such as Facebook and Expedia, while the second tower houses the hotel and the 190-apartment South Beach Residences, which will only be ready by 2Q2016.

There's also a Court Martial Bar, set in one of the army blocks, and it draws on its court house history to serve concept drinks.

The second 1,200m² army block – South Beach Quarter – will be home to four new F&B concepts by lifestyle group Massive Collection. These include Vanity, a cocktail bar; Vatos Urban Tacos, a Korean-Mexican restaurant; The Armoury, a gastropub with a wide range of craft beers and boutique wines; and a nightclub.

The South Beach's grand ballroom, housed in the final army block, will cater to events such as corporate functions and weddings when completed.

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre makes sound investment

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre has invested RM1.8 million (US\$430,221) in 190 new digital speakers and digital audio processors to raise the quality of event experiences at the Malaysian city's main business event centre.

Norbiha Ismail, the centre's AV manager, said in a press release: "The investment reflects our commitment to continuously upgrade as a means to enrich the client experience and to stay ahead of the curve in today's increasingly technology-driven world. The digital speakers will facilitate clearer projection of voice and sound due to better audio distribution while the digital audio processors will result in increased audio performance.

"The digital audio processors are specialised microprocessors that have been optimised for the fast operational needs of digital signal processing. With this, our clients are assured (that) their audio requests will be smooth and accurate. In addition, digitalising will improve our monitoring and control mechanism, and in turn, help increase productivity levels."

The 190 new digital speakers and digital audio processors are located in the Plenary Theatre, Plenary Hall, conference halls 1, 2 and 3, banquet hall and ballrooms 1 and 2. All audio processors in the exhibition halls have also transitioned to digital with the existing speakers maintained in analog format.

Shangri-La Hotels adds Tangshan to China portfolio

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts has unveiled its newest property in Tangshan, China.

Located in Phoenix New Town, a two-hour drive from Beijing, the 301-room Shangri-La Hotel, Tangshan adjoins a shopping mall and a landscaped park within the Tangshan Kerry Property complex.

Guestrooms and suites, ranging from 45m² to 135m², are furnished with Chinese paintings and local ceramic ware. Within the hotel are an additional 34 apartments styled as studios and one- or two-bedroom apartments.

The hotel has nine function spaces including a pillar-

less 1,800m² ballroom, all equipped with the latest audio-visual equipment.

F&B options include Tang Huang Ge, which serves traditional Jing Dong and Cantonese cuisines; Café Shang, which features international and local fare; and the Lobby Lounge offers an assortment of homemade pastries and cakes.

Hotel amenities, which are available to both hotel and apartment guests, include a health club consisting of a 24-hour gym, yoga and aerobics studio, as well as an indoor heated swimming pool, kid's pool, Jacuzzi, sauna and steam rooms.

Radisson Blu's new meetings push promises enhanced experiences

Creative stimulation is the focus of Radisson Blu's new *Experience Meetings* programme, which was rolled out in August across the brand's properties in Asia-Pacific, following its implementation in other regions last year.

Designed to improve the effectiveness of meetings, the programme emphasises innovations in F&B, changes to the spatial environment as well as advancements in meeting technology.

"We want to offer something different and edgy with our *Experience Meetings* programme, to give meeting planners a bigger bang for their buck," said Sandy Russell, vice president, commercial operations, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, Asia-Pacific.

Experience Meetings features *Brain Box*, a breakout room concept which creates a stimulating atmosphere through the use of bright colours and flexible furniture to boost creativity, encourage active participation and enhance delegate interaction.

Flexibility will be a key tenet of *Brain Box*, according to Russell, allowing different room set-ups. For example, swings hanging from the ceiling could pave for conflict resolution while participants are encouraged to write and draw during meetings to foster discussion. Meeting sizes should not exceed 50 pax in order to harness the creative room

concept effectively, she added.

Another key feature of *Experience Meetings* is *Brain Food*, a culinary concept developed in consultation with nutrition experts and chefs to emphasise the use of fresh, locally-sourced ingredients while maintaining great taste, low fat content and lessened sugar. The result is food that helps delegates experience optimal concentration and minimal fatigue during meetings.

Experience Meetings offers free Internet access as well and automatically purchases carbon credits to offset the estimated carbon footprint of every event. – **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**



The Grand Mansion crafts cultural experiences for guests

Starwood's The Grand Mansion, A Luxury Collection Hotel in Nanjing, China has introduced four new cultural programmes for its guests.

The two programmes to watch for are *Tracing the Ming Guo Architecture* and *Experience of Oriental Metropolitan*.

Guests will get to indulge in a Ming Guo-style lunch for two along with transportation within Nanjing to up to four Ming Guo architectural sites with the first package. The latter package will invite guests to enjoy an Oriental Metropolitan cuisine for two with complimentary access to the museum, which is located close to the hotel.

Both packages include one-night accommodation, daily breakfast for two, complimentary Internet and Wi-Fi, and complimentary soft drinks from the mini bar. Following each stay, guests will also receive a copy of *Under The Phoenix Tree*, a book on Nanjing Republican-era architecture, or *Nanjing – Live Misty in the Six Dynasties*.

Alvaro Rautenberg, general manager of The Grand Mansion, said: "The opening of The Grand Mansion has piqued the interests of discerning travellers who are looking for authentic excursions in China."

Prices vary for each programme.



HOT DEALS



Universal Studios Singapore

Resorts World Sentosa

Bookings for festive get-togethers with associates and colleagues over Christmas and the Lunar New Year at the integrated resort and its new sister hotel, Genting Hotel Jurong, are now open.

Christmas parties start from S\$95 (US\$67.70) per pax at Resorts World Sentosa, and S\$85 per pax at Genting Hotel Jurong. Prices are valid from December 1-30.

Lunar New Year celebrations start from

S\$788 per table at Resorts World Sentosa and S\$688 per table at Genting Hotel Jurong, valid from January 1 to February 29, 2016. A minimum booking of 50 pax applies.

Planners who book by October 31 will get S\$5 off per pax per package when both packages are booked, and a bottle of house wine per confirmed table plus corkage waiver on 10 bottles with any booking. Terms and conditions apply.

Email mice@RWSentosa.com.

Dorsett Hospitality International

Cosmopolitan Hotel Hong Kong, Cosmo Hotel and Dorsett Mongkok, Hong Kong are set to draw more business travellers through Dorsett Hospitality International's newly introduced *Fantastic 4 Business* package.

The package offers free use of a smartphone with unlimited 3G Internet, Wi-Fi hotspot for multi-device connectivity, and local and IDD calls to selected countries, among others.

Breakfast will be provided buffet-style and feature a variety of international cuisines.

Business travellers who book a minimum of three consecutive nights at any of the hotels get a free three-hour-long Plaza Premium Lounge session at Hong Kong International Airport.

Room rates start at HK\$800 (US\$103) per room per night for Dorsett Mongkok's Executive Room, HK\$950 per room per night

for the Premier Room at Cosmopolitan Hotel Hong Kong, and HK\$850 per room per night for the Executive Suite at Cosmo Hotel.

The hotels are also offering the *24-hour Full Stay* programme which allows business travellers to check in at any time of the day and still enjoy a full 24-hour stay before check out. This is subject to availability and requires an advance notice of 72 hours prior to arrival.

Bookings are available from now till March 31, 2016. The promotion includes a 20 per cent off best available rate. Terms apply.

Visit www.dorsett.com.

Hyatt Hotels and Resorts

Hyatt Hotels and Resorts in Thailand is offering two new deals for travel consultants and travellers alike.

Travel trade members can enjoy 50 per cent off Hyatt's daily rate at Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok and Hyatt Regency Hua Hin from September 1 to December 20, 2015. Identification and proof of travel industry employment will be required upon check-in to receive the special rates.

Guests who book a minimum of three nights at the Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok, Hyatt Regency Hua Hin or Hyatt Regency Phuket Resort will get one free night. This offer is only available to guests who book from September 18 to December 19, 2015, and stay between October 1 to December 20, 2015.

Visit www.bangkok.grand.hyatt.com.

Frangipani Langkawi's larger green footprint

The Frangipani Langkawi Resort & Spa, known as a resort with sustainable practices and winner of the Association of South East Asian Nations Tourism Association (ASEANTA) award for the Best Conservation Effort in ASEAN, has introduced more green practices this year.

An aquaponic system was introduced in the treatment pond, and an unused heating tank room was converted into an oyster mushroom farm. Vegetables are grown along pathways to create the ambience of an edible garden.

Resort owner, Anthony Wong, said: "We have seen a growing trend among Asian and European MICE delegates desiring healthy eating, and we try to supplement the resort's restaurant with organic food grown at the resort."

It is also fitting that the resort was the venue chosen for the ASEAN Sustainable Green or Eco-Hotel Course organised by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia from September 7-9. It was attended by 30 delegates, comprising ASEAN National Tourism Organisations and hoteliers.

Wong wanted to show the delegates that going green need not be expensive. He said: "It has a lot to do with design and operations. Sustainable hotel practices (are) necessary to reduce climate change."

Bhaya Classic cruises along Halong Bay with renewed fleet

Luxury cruise operator Bhaya Classic has unveiled a refurbished fleet after five months of upgrading works since May 2015.

All four Bhaya Classic boats, which boast traditional Vietnamese designs, have undergone a major makeover with the interior design of all cabins completely changed, featuring new wooden floors, panels, room decorations and bedding.

In May 2015, Bhaya Classic introduced a new Premium Balcony Cabin option in three new boats (V, VI and VII) to offer passengers a more comfortable and private cruising experience in Halong Bay.

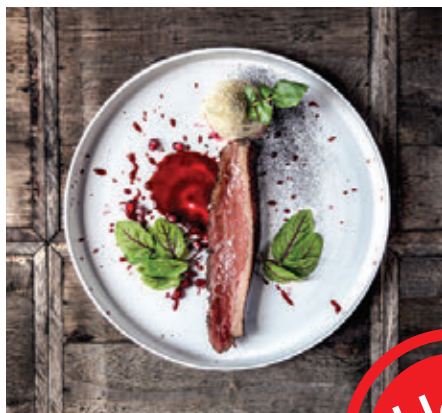
Launched in 2007, Bhaya Classic now boasts a fleet of seven ships with 93 cabins in total.



Bhaya Classic

The House of Sathorn

The heritage mansion finally opens, adding a touch of old-school glamour and inventive cuisine to Bangkok's dining scene. By **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**



Dating back to 1880, the neocolonial villa standing at the Sathorn and Narathiwat junction was first owned by a wealthy businessman, before becoming a hotel in the 1920s and transforming into the Russian Embassy from 1948-1999, before falling into disuse until its newest reincarnation.

After three years of painstaking restoration, the 19th-century mansion – complete with ornate ceilings and green-louved windows – is today, The House of Sathorn, W Bangkok's newest dining destination.

MICE application

The House of Sathorn is bigger than it looks from the outside, comprising four buildings reconfigured as a versatile space that can cater to events of various types, from fancy dinners to boardroom meetings to exclusive functions.

The 99m² Conservatory, nestled at the back of the mansion, is ideal for both meetings and cocktail functions of up to 120 pax with its extended outdoor area. The venue can be hired for functions from 200,000 baht (US\$5,500) and up to 350,000 baht for the entire day.

On the second floor reside Loft 1 and 2 – still under renovation when *TTGmice* visited – which are function rooms featuring four hospitality suites suitable for private dinners and parties.

The Dining Room, with just 40 seats and an open kitchen, makes an intimate spot for business lunches or post-work drinks.

For groups with the budget, the entire house can be booked for 1 million baht, which will include F&B, décor and event organising services from W Bangkok. The buyout of the whole venue will include the use of the 70-seat Courtyard.

F&B concept

The House on Sathorn may be old school

in its architecture but its cuisine is anything but. Turkish chef Fatih Tutak delivers his distinctive Asian-inspired dishes with aplomb, putting tremendous creativity and fun into the dining experience at The Dining Room.

Dishes like Early Morning at Tsukiji Market, a rectangular block of blue-fin tuna served with puréed avocado and fresh wasabi on the side; and Indian Accent, three layers of cauliflower – puréed, pan-fried with curry and dehydrated – plus a dash of yoghurt; are a nod to chef Tutak's globetrotting experiences.

Hunting, inspired by his hunting trip in Germany, is the most visually stunning dish, where a chargrilled duck breast is served with 'blood' splatters of pomegranate sauce and burnt onion 'gunpowder'.

Pier 9 steals the show for me, however. The giant river prawn, which hailed from Ayutthaya, is sweet and succulent, and when savoured with the pumpkin puree delivered a delightful mouthful.

The fun continues with desserts. With the use of liquid nitrogen and fine Okinawan sugar, Take Me Home to Silom elevates the humble Thai streetside grilled banana into a gastronomic treat, ending my meal on a high note.

Service

The service was immaculate, and the waiter serving my table was engaging, spoke perfect English and well trained in his F&B knowledge.

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106 North Sathorn Road, Silom, Bangrak, Bangkok
Tel (66) 2 344 4000
Email thehouseofsathorn@whotels.com
Website www.thehouseonsathorn.com

Opening hours

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Moments to remember

KTO commits more efforts to recovering lost tourists

By Rosa Ocampo

South Korea is sweetening its marketing and promotions aimed at the ASEAN region and China to salvage the MICE market which was nearly halved during the June and July MERS scare.

Underway are a series of roadshows, fam trips and promotions such as subventions, free vouchers, discounts for leisure and business tourists, with even more generous perks and incentives than in the past, revealed Keehun Kim, executive director of Korea MICE Bureau.

The CVB is also dangling the ongoing grand sale in South Korea, with 30,000 shops offering generous discounts till October 31.

Kim told *TTGmice* that many international MICE groups had cancelled in June and July, but business post-MERS is recovering fast and groups had started to return in September.

A positive development is the confirmation of two huge international events for May next year: the Rotary International Convention with 50,000 participants, including 22,000 from overseas; and Nanjing, China's Chung Mai multi-level marketing group with 15,000 participants.

Business events account for eight to nine per cent of total arrivals in South Korea, which plunged 41 per cent in July and 53 per cent in August from a year ago. Total



More being done to bring back a buzz to the country's MICE sector; Myeongdong, Seoul pictured here

arrivals dropped by some 20 per cent in August.

Because of the impact of the MERS scare, South Korea scaled down its total arrivals target from 15.5 million to 15 million this year, but still higher than the 14.2 million total arrivals in 2014.

Meanwhile in the Philippines, Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) is coordinating with 28 travel agency partners and five airlines (Korean Air, Asiana, Jeju Air, Cebu Pacific and Air Asia Philippines) to lure Filipino tourists, business travellers and MICE planners.

Hye Jin Jang, assistant manager Manila office, said KTO is renowned in the Philippines for taking good care of its travel agencies and corporate partners, and its ease of accessibility.

The Philippines is a small but fast-growing inbound market for South Korea. About 400,000 Filipinos visited it in 2014, including incentive groups which doubled to 3,400 from just 1,200 in 2013.

{ In brief }

Hanthawaddy airport further delayed

The construction of Hanthawaddy International Airport near Yangon will finish by 2022 instead, four years after the already delayed completion date, due to problems in obtaining official development assistance (ODA) loans. Located 77km north-east of Yangon, in Bago, the Hanthawaddy airport will be able to handle up to 10 million passengers annually, well above Yangon International Airport's current capacity of 2.7 million. Meanwhile, Yangon International Airport will be upgraded to allow it to handle six million passengers by 2016.

Indonesia grants more visa-free entries

This month will see Indonesia granting visa-free entry to nationals of 47 more countries, including India, Australia and Taiwan, as part of its strategy to lure more tourists to the country. They join the 45 countries currently enjoying the facility, 30 of which were granted last June, bringing the total number to 92.

Please wait to be seated

A number of confirmed bookings for premium economy seats on Singapore Airlines Airbus A380 flights may be rescheduled due to delays in seat installations. According to a press statement, affected travel periods are from September 9, 2015 to January 29, 2016. Travellers affected by the delays will be contacted by SIA officials or travel consultants to provide them with alternative travel arrangements.



Exo Travel expands into Malaysia with DMC acquisition

EXO Travel has added Malaysia to its portfolio with the opening of a local office, following its recent acquisition of Insight Borneo, a Malaysia-based DMC strong in incentive and group travel.

General manager of EXO Malaysia, Nicky Henderson, said: "Malaysia provides the natural centre to EXO Travel's current destinations and allows even greater connected experiences across Asia.

"We are slowly establishing ourselves in Singapore, which will become an important hub in our Indonesia connectivity. Both Singapore and Malaysia offer their own

unique culture, food and heritage touring and given English is widely spoken it allows our guests to gain a deeper insight into the depth of these countries."

EXO Malaysia will also be responsible for handling small-scale operations in MICE and leisure business within Singapore, though opening an office in the city-state is also in the cards.

Insight Borneo is in the process of rebranding to EXO Malaysia, with all details to be finalised by January 2016.

Henderson added: "Our international sales offices are now busy working with

new and existing clients, giving them an overview of the opportunities offered in Malaysia.

"EXO Travel has broad reach across a variety of markets and we expect that in the coming months we can offer the same standards of service, unique product and insightful experiences to our clients. We will focus on what we do exceptionally well, and that is to give every traveller an insider's view of our destination."

Exo Travel is now present in eight other countries across Asia: Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Japan, China and Indonesia. – **S Puvaneswary**



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OPTION 2	ROOM + MEETING PACKAGE + BREAKFAST KRW 230,000 ~	

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Fresh grounds sought for PATA's annual events

By Mimi Hudoyo

PATA is opening up opportunities for destinations beyond the Asia-Pacific region to play host to its annual events.

Explaining the decision, CEO Mario Hardy, who took over the reins of the association on November 1 last year, said: "The whole purpose of us having a travel event is to promote the destination. We were questioned when we chose Bengaluru (for PATA Travel Mart 2015). (The city) may be known as the Silicon Valley of India but there are tourist attractions here waiting to be discovered. Having the mart there is our way of supporting the destination – to promote it to (buyers) who will in turn sell it to their customers."

Hardy pointed out that many travel tradeshows are held in established destinations like Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Hong Kong, and these places "do not need our support".

"However, there are secondary and tertiary destinations that do require support," he remarked.

Pushing more destinations beyond this region to host PATA industry events is an

effort aligned with the association's goal to disperse tourist footfalls, not only to popular destinations in a country but also to emerging ones, as long as they have the capability to handle different events.

Hardy said: "We cannot keep going back to the same places. It is a challenge for a non-profit organisation like ours (and) we need to provide support to our members while making sure that our events are commercially viable."



Hardy: more support for emerging destinations

Thok Sokhom, director of international cooperation and ASEAN at the Cambodia Ministry of Tourism, welcomed the initiative. He commented: "Having a travel event in a new destination will provide an opportunity for us to introduce it (and) exchange experiences with the host country."

Oliver Martin, principal of Twenty31 Consulting Canada, said: "This is the only way to get new and diversified members. If PATA keeps (its events within) existing members, the only destinations that will play host are India and China."

Philippine Arena puts foreign business events on wishlist

A year after its opening Philippine Arena in the outskirts of Manila is embarking on an international marketing blitz to woo foreign meeting and event planners and organisers, with participation in the Philippine MICE Conference (MICECON) 2015 last month being its first step.

Operations manager Enrile L Teodoro said the venue was built and designed to world-class standards by renowned foreign companies. As the country's largest multipurpose indoor arena with a seating capacity for 55,000 pax, Philippine Arena is expected to appeal to international events.

Marketing materials are also prepared for the foreign market.

Acknowledging that the venue's location in Bocaue, Bulacan can pose a challenge, Teodoro said Philippine Arena is building its own transport terminal to improve accessibility from the heart of Manila.

Philippine Arena already has its own



exit on the North Luzon Expressway for quicker access from Manila, and is served by shuttle buses that pick visitors from some points in the city.

Philippine Arena is the centrepiece of a massive multipurpose development called Ciudad de Victoria which also houses the 20,000-seat Philippine Sports Stadium which will likely opened in 2016, while hotels and other tourism-related facilities are being planned. – **Rosa Ocampo**

{ 2015 Calendar }

September 29-October 1
IT&CM Asia,
Bangkok, Thailand

October 13-15
IMEX America,
Las Vegas, US

October 21-23
ITB Asia,
Singapore

October 23-25
SITE Global
Conference,
New Delhi, India

The Star Sydney remakes for stronger positioning among next-gen travellers

The Star Sydney will embark on a A\$130 million (US\$90.1 million) refurbishment of its Astral Tower and Residences Hotel, set to be completed by mid-2016.

The Astral Tower is being repositioned to attract Gen X and experienced business travellers, offering new high-end suites, a club lounge, meeting rooms and a business centre. The hotel will be operational throughout the refurbishment period.

Astral Residences will be aimed at leisure travellers and young professionals, featuring a fresh, minimalist design accentuating the uninterrupted views of the Sydney Harbour.

Additionally, The Darling at The Star has just upgraded its spa facilities, adding a mosaic aromatherapy heated steam room and a saltwater Jacuzzi. A new fitness facility with kinesis walls is also ready for use.

John Autelitano, general manager of hotels at The Star Sydney, said: "The Star Sydney is a pinnacle tourism destination in Australia and a significant contributor to the visitor economy, welcoming over 11 million visitors each year.

"The national and international markets being targeted include generations of people who are increasingly affluent, and as such, are spoilt for choice."

He added that "the enhanced rooms, suites, and business facilities will ensure our competitiveness and attract visitors to the city of Sydney."

Autelitano: the refurbished property will give impetus for more tourists to call at Sydney



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{ Hot moves }



Alfred Paulsen

Alfred Paulsen

Paulsen is now general manager of Dorsett Putrajaya hotel which is opening next month. He was last general manager of Dorsett Grand Labuan.

Anthony Dupont

Indigo Pearl, Phuket has made Dupont its new director of sales and marketing. He was formerly the director of sales on a consulting basis for the launch of Ani Villas' Thailand and Sri Lanka projects, as well as



Anthony Dupont

the COO for Pandaw Cruises in Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos.

Chris Bailey

Centara Hotels & Resorts has promoted Bailey from senior vice president of sales and marketing to COO. Bailey first joined Centara in 2004.

Jack Chua

Staywell Hospitality Group has named Chua general manager of Park Regis Singapore. He joins from Grand Copthorne Waterfront where he was executive assistant manager.



Chris Bailey

Lisa Fitzell

Fitzell, former global land product director at STA Travel, has replaced Maarten Groeneveld as group managing director of Diethelm Travel. She is based in Bangkok.

Nicky Henderson

EXO Malaysia has promoted Henderson from his former position as director of product to general manager.

Patrick Ngiam

Marco Polo Hotels has appointed Ngiam global director of sales. Ngiam



Patrick Ngiam

has over 20 years of industry experience, holding down senior positions in hotel groups like Shangri-La, Four Seasons and Marriott. He was last senior lecturer at Singapore Polytechnic's School of Business.

Peter Haycroft

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre has picked Haycroft to be its new executive chef. He joins the team after 14 years with EPICURE at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, most recently as the director of culinary operations.



Peter Haycroft

Philippe Le Bourhis

Le Bourhis is now general manager of Pullman Bangkok Grande Sukhumvit, which was recently rebranded from Grand Millennium Sukhumvit. He has amassed over 20 years of experience from working at various Accor hotels across South-east Asia.

Santhy Mahalingam

Mahalingam has joined Dorsett Putrajaya as assistant director of catering sales. She was last assistant director of sales at Ibis Style KL Cheras, also in Malaysia.

{ Inspire }

Li Lei Director,
Starwood Sales Organisation Shanghai

You started your career with Starwood as a management trainee. How did the programme help you grow into your current sales specialisation?

I studied tourism management for seven years at Fudan University, Shanghai and I thought I knew everything, but the management trainee programme made me realise there was still so much for me to learn.

I was first placed in Westin Shanghai where I experienced operations, catering and stewardship functions. A year later I went to Singapore and was placed in four departments for six months each – sales, marketing, revenue management and brand management. I performed the poorest in sales but I was determined to change

that. I knew then that excelling in sales would allow me to achieve much more in my career.

And today you lead the Shanghai office of Starwood Sales Organisation. How you've grown! What are you most proud of in this role?

I have been leading the team for the last four years and staff turnover was zero until very recently when one of them left to join a competitor. There were no hard feelings and I even helped to expedite his resignation. The move was good for his career and it brought him back to his hometown where his family was.

Staff loyalty is something that can only be achieved by being a good role model to your staff,

by respecting them, and by paying attention to their career prospects. It isn't enough to simply say that Starwood is a great employer, the manager and the company need to be realistic and look after the employee's wellbeing too.

What advice would you give to someone looking to pursue a career in sales in the hotel sector?

Never give up on your dreams. The hours are long and the pay isn't that high, so your dreams will motivate you to overcome these problems. Also, stay humble and always be willing to learn.





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What a smooth operator



Hiring a professional conference organiser to deal with an event's nitty-gritty is one way to ensure an effortless experience from start to finish. By **Prudence Lui**

Event brief

In 2010, Taiwan won the bid to host NI 2014 at the Nursing Informatics Special Interest Group's General Assembly Meeting held at Medinfo2010 in South Africa.

Staging the first-ever 12th International Congress on Nursing Informatics (NI 2014) required much preparation from the 60-member organising team. Initially a triennial occurrence, it was converted into a biennial event in 2012.

The NI 2014 programme comprised a pre-conference, conference and post-conference. A three-day think-tank forum targeted at the future development of mobile health was also included.

Challenges

The 60-member organising committee was made up of volunteers from hospitals, universities and organisations. They were nurses and were too busy to concentrate on this level of organisation.

Also, conference rooms needed to be changed merely a few months before the event to accommodate the number of people registered, which in turn, affected the budget.

But according to NI 2014's organising committee chairman, Chang Po-lun, it was a

Event
12th International Congress on
Nursing Informatics

Client
Taiwan Nursing Informatics Association

Venue
Taipei International
Convention Center (TICC)

Date
June 22-25, 2014

Number of participants
498 attendees from 28 countries
(237 locals/261 international)

well-planned event and there was no major challenge. The only glitch was the unexpected heavy rain which happened when the international VIPs were invited to ride the metro from the conference site to the gala dinner at Huashan Creative Park.

Chang pointed out the one regret the team

had: "It (was) the heavy rain! We deployed some volunteers to guide the VIPs to the dinner venue once they stepped out of the metro station. However, (the) heavy rain made everything very difficult (and) everybody got very, very wet!"

Solutions

After asking for recommendations from the Taiwan Nursing Association which had experience in organising international conferences, the committee decided to hire Elite Professional Conference Organiser (Elite PCO) to help meet conference goals and share the workload. This way, committee members could also focus on their own work.

Since the committee didn't know how to obtain the necessary budget, Elite PCO connected the committee with some sponsors. Around 30 per cent of the budget was sourced by Elite PCO and most of it came from the Taiwan government.

Key takeaways

It's vital to engage a professional conference organiser as their expertise ensured a smooth running of the event from preparation to implementation.

"NI 2014 was extremely well organised and executed. I want to commend Po-lun Chang, Jessie Kuo and their organising committee for their incredible effort. Even the gift we got as attendees was a very well-designed cup, where the handle is in the shape of the Taiwan. I use it everyday and think of that wonderful experience."

Marion J. Ball, professor emerita, Johns Hopkins University



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Racing against the clock



Organising an overseas incentive in six weeks isn't as daunting when there is good ground support to ensure things run smoothly. By **S Puvaneswary**

Event brief

This April, the Asia-Pacific branch of global organisation Honeywell Building Solutions (HBS) organised the 2015 Circle of Excellence, an overseas incentive trip to Langkawi for its overachieving employees, who were picked from over 10 countries.

Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel (AOS) successfully bid to be the ground handler in Langkawi and helped with the meet and greet at the airport, as well as organised sightseeing tours and dinner functions.

Challenges

The first challenge was the short lead time to organise the event. Pia Harries, executive assistant at HBS, was the sole person organising and had only six weeks to put things together.

She said: "Short lead times have become typical for Honeywell, partly due to internal processes. I have organised numerous events outside of Australia in the past, so I knew the importance of roping in Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) as well as getting a reliable ground handler."

Harries' plans for the delegates to travel on the former Malaysia Airlines (MAS) had to be scrapped after two MAS tragedies, as half the

delegates felt more comfortable flying on SilkAir.

She said: "This was a bit of a blow to the event timeline and budget as it meant an additional two nights hotel stay and meals in Langkawi because SilkAir only flies from Langkawi to Singapore on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. This change meant for the first time in over five years of running events, I had to request a budget increase. Fortunately, my senior managers understood the circumstances and were fully supportive of the change to SilkAir."

For the pre-dinner entertainment on the third day, Harries wanted to create a 'wow' experience. The previous year's incentive event in Thailand had been a real spectacle and she needed to match or exceed that. For the fire and water-themed performance by the infinity pool at Westin Langkawi Resort & Spa, she had to source for 2m-high transparent balls and look for talents who could perform inside these balls that would be floating on water. This was the first time that Wong Kee Yen, AOS's project manager, was putting this act together and her challenge was to ensure that it went well.



Event

2015 Circle of Excellence to Langkawi

Client

Honeywell Building Solutions

Venue

Westin Langkawi Resort & Spa

Date

April 20 - 23, 2015

Number of participants

116

Solutions

Despite the late hotel bookings, Harries described the rates she received as "very good", attributing it to the slowing MICE market.

She added: "With my budget blown on extra room nights, MyCEB's provision of room drop gifts, Malay dancers, Batik painting and partial sponsorship of the dinner was a great help. I could

relax knowing that the entertainment on welcome night was going to be good."

Wong said the balls had to be brought from the capital city while three synchronised swimmers, together with a coach, were brought in from Penang a day earlier to rehearse performing inside a ball. The balls were pumped with oxygen to sustain the performers within.

Key takeaways

Looking back, Harries said: "MyCEB was efficient and easy to deal with. Their reminders and timelines were of great help."

On advice to readers, she said: "If you have any control over timelines, try and have more than six weeks to organise!"

Recalling the performances at the gala dinner, Wong said: "We never used the entertainers before. So we took extra care to check their background and references before engaging them. It was also important to have a rehearsal prior to this event."

"I was really surprised by the popularity of the Batik painting that MyCEB provided. Before we did the event, I was nervous that adult men and women would not enjoy the painting and had MyCEB not generously provided it, I would never have selected it as an activity. To my amazement, everyone loved it."

Pia Harries, executive assistant, Honeywell Building Solutions

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PATA New Tourism Frontiers Forum 2015

"Ecotourism - Transcending Climate Change"

November 25-27
The Oriental Hotel
Legazpi, Albay, Philippines

PATA New Tourism Frontiers Forum 2015, generously hosted by the Provincial Government of Albay, will be held from November 25-27 at the Oriental Hotel Legazpi, in Albay, Philippines. The two day programme will consist of a one day conference, networking events and one day sightseeing tour.

The Forum brings together tourism professionals to share their insights and experiences in marketing and managing tourism growth at a national level to lesser-known corners of the destination, thus ensuring the responsible growth and development of travel and tourism in a sustainable manner. Local communities will economically benefit through the dispersion of tourists to these new frontiers.

Albay is a province of the Philippines located in the Bicol Region in southeastern Luzon Island. The capital of the province is Legazpi City, the regional administrative center of the region, which is located in the southern foothill of Mayon Volcano, the symbol most associated with the province.

Albay is a United Nations Global Model for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation. It is ranked among the 1st Class Provinces of the country and among the fastest growing tourist destination in 2013 with a 66 percent growth.

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Seoul: Your Complete Convention City



New sensation

As glittering new duty-free malls and the Seoul Station Overpass renewal project take shape, visitors can look forward to a brilliant blend of tourism, shopping, culture and urban living

Two recent high-profile developments will give visitors to Seoul a new sensational experience. One concerns the opening of possibly the largest duty-free complex in the world, while the other will transform the landscape around Seoul Station into a cultural and recreational hotspot.

Following fierce bidding, the Korean Customs Service (KCS) granted three new licenses to operate duty-free stores in Seoul to HDC Shilla Duty Free

(a partnership between Hyundai Development Company and Shilla), Hanhwa Galleria Timeworld, and SM Duty Free (a consortium led by Korea's largest travel agency Hana Tour). Korea is the world's most lucrative duty-free market in 2014, accounting for 13% of global revenue.

HDC Shilla Duty Free plans to open the 65,000sqm Shilla I'Park Duty Free mall in Yongsan district this December. Hanhwa Galleria Timeworld is planning a 9,900sqm luxury duty-

New President for Seoul Tourism Organization



The Seoul Tourism Organization (STO) has welcomed its new president and CEO **Byung-tae Kim** who officially took charge on June 29. Kim will work closely with Seoul city to foster growth in the city's MICE businesses, increase visits to Seoul by overseas visitors,

and spur Seoul's competitiveness as a global city. Kim has over 20 years of experience in the travel and culture industries including being the CEO of BT&I, one of Korea's major travel management companies, head of the classical music academy Pung Wol Dang and adviser to the Kim Chong Yung Museum.

free store in the Hanhwa 63 Building, which also accommodates business events, in Yeouido.

SM Duty Free will turn Hana Tour's headquarters in the popular traditional neighborhood Insadong into a giant mall called "SM Duty Free, just a stone's throw from attractions such as Cheonggyecheon Stream and Gyeongbokgung Palace.

While the Seoul Station Overpass project is still a work-in-progress, it is already generating much interest among residents and businesses. Similar to New York's High Line project, the Overpass will repurposed 938m of elevated road into a pedestrian-only zone. The project is expected to boost the local economy, popularize "walking tourism"—it connects many tourist attractions—and revitalize surrounding neighborhoods.



From left: HDC Shilla's new duty free mall Shilla I'Park in Yongsan; Seoul Station Overpass



Yeong Bin Gwan

Distinctly Korean

Outstanding venues that deliver a unique experience in Seoul

→ Yeong Bin Gwan



Traditional spaces in a luxurious setting

One of Seoul's most popular dining venues, Yeong Bin Gwan is an dining/event space located adjacent to The Shilla Seoul hotel. Built in the style of a traditional Korean house, the two-story facility can be used for banquets, parties, and corporate dinners. There are three banquet spaces, seating 150, 160, and 180 respectively. Special events can also be held in the scenic hotel garden nearby.

Yeong Bin Gwan

Address: 249, Dongho-ro, Jung-gu, Seoul
Phone: +82-2-2230-3721
Website: www.Shilla.net
E-mail: linehurt.lee@samsung.com



→ Dugahun

Fine Western dining and art in a traditional Korean house

Dugahun (meaning a very beautiful house in Korean) offers an intimate experience that mixes culture, art, and food. Diners at the restaurant can enjoy Western cuisine inside a beautifully refurbished traditional Korean house and the private room can accommodate up to eight people. Located nearby is Gallery Dugahun, housed in a Russian-style brick building, which exhibits Eastern and Western art pieces.

Dugahun

Address: (110-190) 14, Samcheong-ro, Jongro-gu, Seoul (Jongro Branch)
Phone: +82-2-3210-2100
Website: www.dugahun.com
E-mail: dugahun@dugahun.com

→ Korea Furniture Museum

Beautiful setting for events and dining

The Korea Furniture Museum (KOFUM) provides an exquisite cultural experience in a compound of 10 traditional Korean houses (*hanok*) amid a picturesque setting surrounded by mountain sceneries. More than 14 years in the making, it has wowed visitors with its stunning aesthetics since 2011. In 2012, it topped CNN Online's "13 things you've got to do in Seoul" list. KOFUM has hosted numerous high-level receptions, luncheons, dinners, product launches and conferences. These include the G20 spousal reception and luncheon, piano recital by Lang Lang and Audi's A6 launch event.



Korea Furniture Museum

Address: (136-823) 121, Daesagwan-ro, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul
Phone: +82-2-745-0181
Website: www.kofum.com
E-mail: contact@kofum.com

→ Min's Club



Fusion dining in a historical residence

Built in 1936, Min's Club was originally the residence of a descendant of Korea's last empress. The architect Park Gil-yong was best known for designing Hwasin, Korea's first department store. In 2001, the building was renamed "Min's Club", with artefacts that showcased early 20th Century Korean culture. The fusion Korean restaurant offers a range of Korean and Western dining options, as well as a wide selection of wines and teas. Four private rooms are available, including The Library, which seats up to 10 persons. A garden banquet accommodates up to 100 persons.

Min's Club

Address: (310-110) 23-9, Insadong 10-gil, Jongno-gu, Seoul
Phone: +82-10-2478-5211
Website: www.minsclub.co.kr
E-mail: yeshin9@winenara.com

→ Samwon Garden



Famous Korean barbeque in a delightful setting

Samwon Garden is a star attraction in Seoul's restaurant scene. Established in 1976, it quickly grew to become not only Seoul's largest restaurant but a place serving quality and authentic traditional Korean cuisine. In 2011, the *Michelin Green Guide to South Korea* described Samwon Garden as "the single place to go for Korean-style beef."



There are five dining halls, the smallest seats up to 68 guests, while the largest, 132 guests.

Samwon Garden

Address: (135-895) 835, Eonju-ro, Gangnam-gu, Seoul
Phone: +82-2-6670-3642
Website: www.samwongarden.com
E-mail: info@dinehill.co.kr

→ Mugyewon

A historical venue for business meetings and cultural events

Mugyewon used to be an exclusive entertainment venue for high-ranking government officials. As a place of great historical significance, it has hosted many important national events. One notable example is its role as the meeting place for the landmark 1972 'July 4th North-South Joint Statement' meeting between the two Koreas. The building was moved to its present location in 2010. Today, the Mugyewon is one of Seoul's leading educational and cultural spaces. It is used for business conferences, meetings, and receptions. Cultural experience programs can be arranged.



Mugyewon

Address: (110-818) 2, Changuimun-ro 5ga-gil, Jongno-gu, Seoul
Phone: +82-2-6203-1162
Website: www.jfac.or.kr
E-mail: simgoo@jfac.or.kr

→ Samcheonggak

A mountain retreat in the heart of Seoul

Originally built to host the North-South Red Cross Conference in 1972, this historical venue symbolizes the unification of three poles: "North and South", "Tradition and Modernity," and "Korea and the World." Today, Samcheonggak is a cultural space surrounded by nature, a spectacular backdrop



for any event through the four seasons. Planners can hold a reception, conference or meeting at any of the eight event spaces in the *hanok*-style buildings or outdoor gardens with the support of the facility's professional staff. There is also a Korean restaurant and a garden café that offer traditional tea ceremonies for visiting groups. The eight event spaces include a pavillion and two outdoor areas. They range from 171-709sqm and seat 10-250 persons banquet-style.

Samcheonggak

Address: (136-823) 3 Daesagwan-ro, Seongbuk, Seoul
Phone: +82-2-740-3209
Website: www.samcheonggak.or.kr
E-mail: philotheta21@sejongpac.or.kr

→ Bongraecheon



Royal court cuisine in a regal ambience

One of the best places for an introduction to Korea's royal court cuisine is Bongraecheon on the grounds of the five-star Mayfield Hotel. Staff dressed in the traditional attire typical of royal kitchen workers complete the palace atmosphere. For fans of the Korean drama *Dae Jang Geum*, this uniform will be instantly recognisable. The

menu here emphasizes light and clear tastes—the essence of fine traditional Korean cuisine. There are two halls: One seats up to 40 guests while the other, 20 guests. The venue is recognized by *Zagat Survey* as an excellent Korean restaurant and is certified by South Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism as a restaurant providing an authentic Royal Cuisine Experience.

Bongraecheon (Mayfield Hotel)

Address: (157-290) 94 Bangwhadae-ro, Gangseo-gu, Seoul
Phone: +82-2-2660-9020
Website: www.mayfield.co.kr
E-mail: bongraecheon@mayfield.co.kr

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Seoul:
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A focus on MICE

Seoul's new director for the Sports and Tourism Bureau, Mr. Eui Seung Kim, outlines the city's MICE strategy and shares his recommendation for autumn leisure

Seoul has placed a strong focus on its MICE tourism sector in recent years. What has been the results of that?

The Seoul Metropolitan Government is actively continuing efforts to market Seoul as a top MICE destination. To do so, the city created a Master Plan that was divided into two main phases. The first phase was completed in 2014 and saw the opening of new MICE venues such as the Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP) and the floating islands of some Sevit on the Han River. They now join convention centers like Coex Convention Center, aT Center, and SETEC as some of the city's main meeting sites.

The second phase is well underway with the objective to create a large-scale MICE zone. The upcoming MICE zone is based in the business district of Gangnam, near Coex, and, when completed, will stretch all the way to the Jamsil Sports Complex. New meeting spaces, entertainment venues, and accommodations will be built while existing infrastructure and transportation options will be vastly improved. We plan to implement the latest technology and structure to make it a truly one-stop zone for MICE events.

Has Seoul's tourism industry been responsive to the city's focus on MICE tourism?

Back in 2011, we were

contemplating how to improve and unite the MICE tourism sector and one of the ideas we thought of was the "Seoul MICE Alliance"—a partnership between government agencies and private-sector organizations to enhance the city's global business events competitiveness.

Bringing together this diverse spread of various tourism sectors including hotels, restaurants, performance venues, shopping, and more, has helped us in working together to facilitate a smoother experience for MICE organizers and event participants. Just this year we reached 195 members of the Seoul MICE Alliance and we are increasing in number every year.

Seoul has quite a number of programs it offers for visitors, is there one you think is overlooked?

Seoul has a convenient transportation system that is among the world's top but one of the best ways to see and experience Seoul is by walking.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government operates a number of free walking tours that are themed around historic, cultural, and even ecological focuses. These walking tours are conducted by an expert guide in English, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean and can last anywhere from 2-3 hours and provides participants a fascinating look at some of Seoul's



"The upcoming MICE zone is based in the business district of Gangnam, near Coex, and, when completed, will stretch all the way to the Jamsil Sports Complex."



SEASONAL HIGHLIGHT

"Autumn is an especially beautiful season in Korea and to enjoy the fall foliage, I recommend a visit to one of the palace grounds for a unique scenic experience."

most impressive sites. And I enjoy the fact that the same routes provide a vastly different feel based on Seoul's different seasons. The free tours are on a reservation basis through the Visit Seoul website (www.visitseoul.net) but I truly hope more participants will take more interest in them!

With autumn coming up is there a particular spot you want to recommend MICE event participants?

Autumn especially is a beautiful season in Korea and to enjoy the fall foliage, I recommend a visit to one of the palace grounds for a unique scenic experience.

Changdeokgung Palace, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site, is a great palace to visit for its natural environment and beautiful structures. I would highly recommend booking the Huwon (Secret Garden) tour as it is simply a magnificent site steeped in history and culture.



Some 300 delegates from 40 countries convened in Seoul between June 29 and July 2 to take part in the 2015 World Conference on Business Management (WCBM). The interdisciplinary conference focused on both theory and practice of new ideas and perspectives in the global business and included competitive sessions, forums and lectures.

For the final day of the conference, People and Global Business Association—the event’s hosts—requested a half-day MICE Tour from the Seoul Convention Bureau (SCB) as part of SCB’s support package for international meetings. The tour took participants to various parts of Seoul for a glimpse of the city. The host requested that the course be not too far from the event venue of Marriott Courtyard Time Square.

Based on these conditions, the SCB designed an itinerary that included Seoul Museum of History, Gyeonghuigung Palace, and Tongin Market.

Local flavours

A Seoul Convention Bureau-supported city tour proved a memorable finish to the 2015 World Conference on Business Management

The tour was financially and logistically supported by the SCB as part of a special expansion in qualifications for MICE Tours in June and July including subsidies in the rental of tour buses and the providing of tour guides. Interested business event organizers for business events with more than 500 foreign delegates can apply through the Seoul MICE homepage (www.miceseoul.com).

On the day of the tour, the group was divided into two and led through the museum by guides and given an in-depth look into Seoul’s illustrious history. The groups then proceeded to Gyeonghuigung Palace, just a few minutes’ walk from the museum. At the palace, the groups came together for a photo with a banner provided by SCB.

As a number of the

The Facts

Event name: World Conference on Business Management & Global Great Debate 2015
 Number of attendees: 300
 Host: People & Global Business Association
 Venue: Courtyard Marriot Hotel, Kyung Hee University
 MICE Tour Sites: Seoul Museum of History, Gyeonghuigung Palace, Tongin Market
 Date: June 29–July 2, 2015



participants were Muslims, SCB chose a lunch arrangement that met their dietary requirements.

The historic Tongin Market was selected for its special “lunch box café” where participants were

given a lunch tray and market coins to wander the grounds, and purchase their choice of food and drinks from different vendors.

The arrangement proved a hit! Participants not only explored the market but got to sample a variety of Korean fare that met their preferences.

The feedback from participants and organizers was overwhelmingly positive.

Jellna Chung, Secretary General of People & Global Business Association, commented, “After finding out about the SCB’s MICE Tour program, we were extremely happy to be able to offer our delegates a compact but full tour. The MICE Tour organizers dedicated a lot of attention and effort into the tour and the delegates all expressed a great deal of satisfaction with the tour program and guides.”

New openings

New hotels and venues in Seoul give event planners more options than ever

➔ Four Seasons Hotel Seoul



Opening in late September 2015, Seoul's new Four Seasons Hotel is located in Gwanghwamun, the heart of Seoul with easy access to numerous historic and commercial areas. There are 317 guest rooms including 32 suites, all featuring the new, fully customizable Four Season Bed. Floor-to-ceiling windows let in natural light. The décor is contemporary with Korean accents.

There are seven high-concept, stylish restaurants and bars, a spa and a three-storey health club. State-of-the-art function spaces for business and social events with natural light are also available. These include the 740 sqm grand ballroom and 470 sqm second ballroom.

Four Seasons Hotel Seoul

Address: 97 Saemunan-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea
Tel: +82-2-6388-5000
Website: www.fourseasons.com/seoul/

➔ The Atrium, Millennium Seoul Hilton

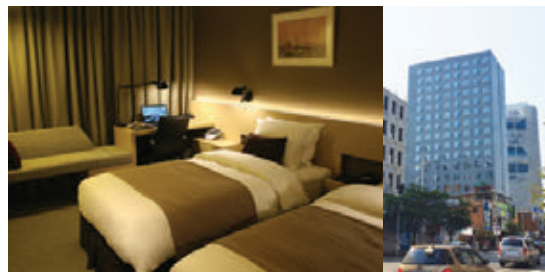
Completed in August 2015, the Atrium is the new meetings and events venue at Millennium Seoul Hilton. It is part of an extensive renovation project that included the opening of Café 395, an update of the hotel lobby, and renovation of hotel rooms that will be fully completed by October 2015. With a glass ceiling skylight and large windows that let in natural light, the space can be customized in a variety of configurations, making it ideal for conferences, presentations, lectures, weddings and large dinners. There is also an outdoor terrace that seats up to 250 persons for banquets. Other meeting rooms include the Grand Ballroom which can seat 200-300, a junior ballroom, and eight additional breakout rooms.



Millennium Seoul Hilton

Address: 50, Sowol-Ro, Jung-Gu, Seoul, 100-802, Korea
Tel: +82-2-317-3200.
Website: www3.hilton.com/en/hotels/south-korea/millennium-seoul-hilton-SELHITW/index.html

➔ Best Western Arirang Hill Dongdaemun



Opened on September 1, 2015, the hotel is a stylish business hotel conveniently located in the heart of Seoul's business and culture district. It offers 190 rooms and a modern business centre. In-room amenities include the 43-inch HD LED TV, dual line telephone system, private safety box and complimentary mineral water and free Wi-Fi and Internet service.

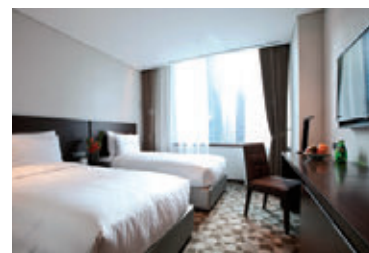
The hotel is 52.5km (70mins) from Incheon Airport, 10.6km (56mins) from Gimpo Airport, 3.58km (10mins) from Dongdaemun Station, 5.9km (23mins) from Seoul Station and 6.28km (18mins) from Myeongdong Station.

Best Western Arirang Hill Dongdaemun

Address: 26, Dongsun-dong, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul, Korea
Tel: +82-2-925-7000
Email: rsvn@hotelahill.com
Website: www.hotelahill.com

➔ Lotte City Hotel Seoul Myeongdong

Opening in winter 2015, Lotte City Hotel Seoul Myeongdong is located between Myeongdong, the business and shopping center



of Seoul, and Cheonggyecheon, an oasis in the downtown area. The 27-storey hotel features 430 guest rooms and a sky restaurant, rooftop garden, fitness centre, café and convenience store. Guest rooms come with views of downtown and free WiFi. Within walking distance are the Euljiro 3-ga subway station and popular areas such as Myeongdong, Cheonggye Stream and Insadong.

Lotte City Hotel Seoul Myeongdong

Address: 22-4, Janggyo-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul, 100-220 Korea
Tel: +82-2-6112-1000
Website: www.lottehotel.com/city/seoulmyeongdong

Seoul Convention Bureau

The one-stop solution provider for MICE planners



Expanded services



In July 2015, the Seoul Convention Bureau (SCB) expanded its services to increase its scope and reach by easing qualification until November. The move will benefit both organizers and participants. Among them:

For international conferences and meetings

- The Seoul MICE Card with 5,000 Korean Won (KRW) charged will be available for participants at events with at least **50 foreigners**
- Support for **100%** of coach rental costs and **100%** of guide costs
- Support for street banners for events with at least **500 foreigners**

For corporate meetings and incentives

- For events with less than 500 foreigners, **30,000 KRW** support per person; events with more than 500 foreigners will receive **40,000 KRW** per person
- Special program for the Welcoming Ceremony with at least **300 participants**.

For exhibitions

- Support of up to **20 million KRW** for the purpose of attracting overseas buyers and overseas marketing

For Host Assistance

- Seoul Welcome Kits for foreigners
- Welcome message at Incheon International Airport
- Seoul Welcome booth at international meetings with more than 2,000 foreign participants

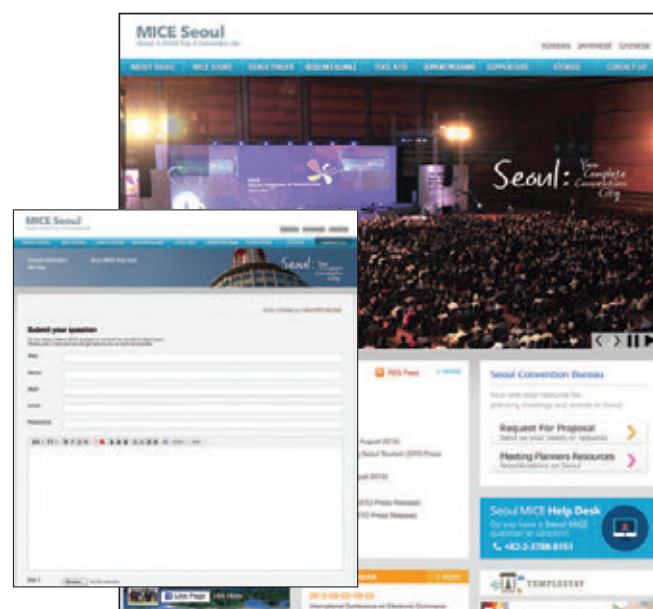
MICE helpdesk and hotline



Since July 10, a new online MICE helpdesk and hotline service (**www.miceseoul.com**) has been providing quick responses to queries from individuals and organizations about hosting an event in Seoul or SCB's MICE support services.

Users can write on the message board or email a question (**hotline@seoulwelcome.com**) which will then be forwarded to the most appropriate party to answer within 24 hours.

For MICE emergencies, the hotline (**+82-2-3788-8151**) is open 24-hours.



Bring your event to Seoul

The SCB's mission is to assist MICE planners achieve success in Seoul. It offers:

- **Financial support** for international events that meet the STO's criteria for each event type
- **Bidding support** for planners that includes bid preparation, site inspections, venue search, city tours, hotel and transportation costs for board members in Seoul plus written or video endorsement by the mayor of Seoul or the CEO of STO
- **Promotional support** includes videos, meeting planners guide book, welcome kits, and airport greeting signs
- **Operational support** The providing of trained, multilingual staff is subsidized by SCB for qualifying business events
- **Other support** available includes tour programs, street banners and financial support towards venue rentals



The Seoul Welcome Kit

CONTACT US

www.miceseoul.com or **mice@seoulwelcome.com**

MEET AND PLAY

There is no doubting the effectiveness of forging business bonds over a golf game, and many top golf clubs across Asia are built to facilitate meetings. Even better, some Asian tourism boards are now jumping in to promote meetings on the greens





Ria Bintan Golf Club welcomes 30 corporate golf groups annually



INDONESIA

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

With Bintan's stretches of sandy beaches, plethora of quality resorts and four championship golf courses, it is little wonder that the Indonesian destination is recognised as a paradise for golfers.

Bintan Resorts International's director of marketing, Asad Shiraz, said: "Bintan's accessibility from Singapore and its award-winning golf courses come together to strengthen our position in providing avid golfers with the perfect golf game and scenic views."

Besides drawing leisure golfers, the destination is actively looking to attract major golfing events and corporate groups that desire a game on the greens in between meetings.

Shiraz noted that the golf clubs in Bintan offer corporate golf packages that come with event management support.

In fact, most of the golf course here are built with function rooms and venues

that can host private gatherings.

Bintan Lagoon Resort, for example, has 470 guestroom, two 18-hole golf courses and an impressive selection of event spaces. Last year it launched a three-storey conference centre that houses a column-free hall for up to 1,300 guests in a standing cocktail setup, a foyer on the ground floor for 500 pax, and an outdoor roof terrace for accommodate 200 guests.

The conference centre comes in addition to eight existing meeting rooms, the largest being able to accommodate 400 pax in a theatre setting.

Having all event and recreational facilities under one roof makes its easy for delegates to shuttle from their rooms to meetings and onwards to the golf course for a game, remarked a spokesperson with Bintan Lagoon Resort.

"With us being the largest MICE facility here, we see high demand from both local and international clients," added the spokesperson.

The resort recently hosted a meeting that included a full day of golf for its 100 participants.

Also popular among corporate groups is Ria Bintan Golf Club, which boasts a 27-hole championship course set amid lush landscapes and natural surroundings.

Harris Farouk Abdullah, resort operations manager, Ria Bintan, told *TTGmice* that some 30 corporate golf groups head to the resort annually.

"Corporate demand is positive," said Harris, adding that greater growth could be expected with the progressive closure of golf clubs in Singapore.

Michael Chiay, senior director, meetings & events, Asia Pacific with Carlson Wagonlit Travel, said: "Bintan is very popular with golfers from Japan and South Korea, as golf is a popular sport (with people from) these countries. It does well as a golfing destination because of its lower costs in comparison with Singapore and because courses are generally open to the public."

So popular is Bintan for golf that bookings must be made way in advance, noted Chermaine Tan, FCM Travel Solutions' senior MICE planner.

Meanwhile, Bintan's golf draws are evolving with the ongoing upgrading works at the Laguna Bintan Golf Club within Banyan Tree Bintan. While the course is being reduced to a nine-hole facility, it will boast a "world-class five-star" golfing experience once it reopens next May.

The 64-villa Banyan Tree Bintan also supports corporate events with a venue that overlooks the island's sandy shores. This space is perfect for business powwows involving 32 delegates.

"BINTAN IS VERY POPULAR WITH GOLFERS FROM JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA, AS GOLF IS A POPULAR SPORT (WITH PEOPLE FROM) THESE COUNTRIES."

Michael Chiay

Senior director, meetings & events, Asia Pacific, Carlson Wagonlit Travel





MALAYSIA

By S Puvaneswary

Iskandar Malaysia in Johor is leveraging its 15 internationally rated golf courses to attract local and international companies to hold their events in the southern state and include golf in their itinerary.

The golf courses in Iskandar Malaysia range from easy ones for leisure seekers to those that are more challenging and suitable for tournaments.

Many of them bear the design hallmarks of golf legends like Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer (the 18-hole championship golf course at Legends Golf & Country Resort), Max Wexler and Akira Mamiya (the 54-hole championship course at Tanjong Puteri Golf Resort), Robert Trent Jones Jr (the 36-hole championship course at Pulau Springs Resort), and Ross Watson (who applied the Risk Reward design principle to the 18-hole international standard golf course at Horizon Hills Golf & Country Resort).

Come 2016, two new championship golf courses will open in Desaru, namely Els Club Desaru Coast and Els Club Desaru Valley, fuelling further interest in Johor as a golfer's paradise.

But rather than see the new additions as a competitor, Joyce Yap, assistant director of sales and marketing at Tanjong Puteri Golf Resort in Pasir Gudang, Johor, opined that both golf courses will complement existing ones. Her reasoning: "The brand will attract golfers to Johor, and other courses will also benefit as golfers love to move around and play on different courses."

In late 2014, the Iskandar Malaysia

"(JOHOR OFFERS) A PERFECT FIT FOR YOUR CORPORATE EVENT JIGSAW – THE CHILDREN ENJOYING OUR LEGOLAND MALAYSIA RESORT, THE WIFE INDULGING IN RETAIL THERAPY AT THE JOHOR PREMIUM OUTLETS AND SPA AFTER, WHILE THE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD MAKING PARS AND BIRDIES AT OUR GOLF COURSES."

Mohammad Rosly Md Selamat

Co-chairman, Iskandar Malaysia Destination Marketing work group

Destination Marketing work group saw the immense opportunity to incorporate golf as a sector to complement the *Family Fun Holiday* promotion theme.

Co-chairman of the work group, Mohammad Rosly Md Selamat, explained: "A plan was drawn up and golf tourism was marketed to both domestic and foreign associations and companies based in Johor, the Klang Valley and Singapore as an add-on to MICE activities in Johor."

Members of the work group comprise representatives from Iskandar Malaysia Development Authority, Johor Tourism, Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia Association of Hotels and representatives from major golf clubs in Iskandar Malaysia.

Said Rosly, "The *Family Fun Destination* would be a perfect fit for your corporate event jigsaw – the children enjoying our LEGOLand Malaysia resort, the wife indulging in retail therapy at the Johor Premium Outlets and spa after, while the head of household making pars and birdies at our golf courses."

"We presented this formula to local DMCs in Sabah and Sarawak and received positive feedback from companies. They

are keen to venture to Iskandar Malaysia for meetings or company events and combine their stay with a family holiday.

"We will make it easy for MICE planners to organise golf tournaments in Iskandar Malaysia."

Rosly, who is also senior vice president, Economic & Investment at Iskandar Regional Development Authority, added that the destination is facing fierce competition from golf courses in Indonesia and Thailand, while Batam and Bintan are favourite playgrounds for event organisers in Singapore.

He stressed: "We need to edge in and get a piece of the cake."

Jef Kong, general manager at Le Grandeur Palm Resort in Senai which offers three golf courses, agreed. He opined: "We need to make Johor easily accessible to Singaporeans. Congestion at the Causeway and the RM20 (US\$5.25) vehicle entry permit fee imposed from October 2, on Singapore registered cars entering Malaysia via the Causeway in Johor Baru and Second Link Expressway in Gelang Patah is not helping. Batam and Bintan are perceived as more affordable destinations compared with Malaysia and with more night activities."

Kong is also seeing a shrinking market of golfers. He said: "The younger generation don't treat golf as seriously and find the game time consuming. An 18-hole course takes about four hours to complete. While it is still a popular game in Japan and South Korea, you see many corporate golfers are middle-aged."

Thus, he finds it timely that the work group has been formed, because collectively the group can come out with new ideas to promote golf as an affordable and healthy sport.

Yap Sook Ling, managing director at Asian Overland Services Tours & Travel, added: "We are hopeful that with specialists among them (in the work group), they will have a strategy to attract the right audience. Perhaps they could do roadshows overseas to target companies and agents that specialise in golf (programmes)."

Play into the sunset at The Empire Hotel and Country Club





THAILAND

By Greg Lowe

Thailand enjoys the hallowed status as the region's leading golf destination on both the leisure and business travel fronts, however, specialists say more could be done by the national convention bureau and Tourism Authority of Thailand to market the sport to international source markets.

While the country has more than 250 courses and hosts a number of marquee annual events, including Queens Cup, Thailand Open, Thailand Classic and Honda LPGA Golf Championships, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau currently has no dedicated programme promoting golf to the MICE market.

"We promote golf as one of the incentive programmes that business travellers can experience in Thailand, along with spas, shopping or CSR (corporate social responsibility)," said Parichat Svetasreni, director of marketing and corporate image at TCEB, adding that the key source markets for combining MICE and golf are Japan, Singapore and Malaysia.

"Normally when (MICE) groups come to Thailand, they have their own organiser create the programme for pre- and post-tours which (could) include (golf)."

Currently TAT handles most of the golf destination marketing though the bureau played a supporting role in the Honda LPGA, from February 26 to March 1, which attracted a range of corporate meeting groups from the auto, finance and insurance sectors.



Plan a golf game and awards gala at Banyan Thailand Hua Hin

"Thailand is by far the largest and most popular golf destination in Asia," remarked Mark Siegel, managing director of Golfasian. "It is among the three best in the world, only surpassed by the UK (British Isles) and Spain in popularity. It offers excellent quality, accessibility, variety, weather, and affordability – all the ingredients of a top golf destination."

MICE currently accounts for about 10 per cent of Golfasian's business in Thailand with the key source markets being domestic and regional countries. While Hua Hin is Thailand's top golfing destination – it also picked up best gold destination 2014 from the International Association of Golf Tour Operators – most of the traffic is leisure. Corporate groups tend to opt for Bangkok and Phuket which are more accessible by air.

"Courses which lend themselves well to MICE groups are Thai Country Club and Royal Gems Golf City in Bangkok and Laguna Phuket Golf Club in Phuket,"

he noted. "In Bangkok, courses with adjoining hotels are not popular for MICE groups as they tend to cater to local golfers and do not have the quality that the best courses and branded hotels can offer for businesses. In Phuket, Laguna has the entire infrastructure to host corporate meetings and incentive groups – so this works out perfectly for businesses."

Stacey Walton, golf club manager and director at Banyan Thailand Hua Hin, feels that smaller MICE groups can easily add an 18-hole game with an award dinner to their itinerary in Hua Hin. "Hua Hin does not have extensive indoor meeting facilities and the MICE sector is seasonal as most of the resorts here are occupied with allotments from November to April by wholesalers," he said.

As a result the property relies on its own sales and marketing team to drive MICE business. "Much more could be done (by TCEB and TAT to promote golf as a MICE activity)," he opined.



GIRL POWER

It isn't just the gentlemen who are playing the links these days. Australian travel specialist, SHE Travels, has a division that is dedicated to arranging ladies-only golf incentive trips.

Offered in partnership with Rhonda Norman, a travel and incentive programme designer, SHE Golfs takes participants to Queenstown, New Zealand where they will learn all about the game from professionals.

The seven-day/six-night incentive experience includes stays at the five-star Millbrook Resort, voted Best Golf Hotel at the World Golf Awards, and the luxurious Hotel St Moritz Queenstown, overlooking Lake Wakatipu to The Remarkables mountain range, as well as three games of golf, daily golf training sessions with professional supervision (maximum of six per group), golf club hire, golf carts, a two-hour spa treatment, yoga classes, meals, transfers, and more.

Visit www.shetravels.net.au for details.

Play the links at some of Asia's best



Banyan Thailand Hua Hin

GREAT FOR GOLFERS:

It is located on the outskirts of Thailand's oldest seaside resort town, just over a two-hour drive from Bangkok, and framed by the Tenasserim Hills which form the natural border with Myanmar to the west and the Gulf of Thailand to the east. The property features an 18-hole championship course designed by Thailand's leading golf architect, Pirapon Namatra, and boasts a total distance of 7,361 yards. The signature 15th hole offers ocean views of Singtoh Island and the course includes a practice range and two large practice greens with bunkers.

GREAT FOR MEETINGS:

Banyan Thailand Hua Hin comprises an all-villa resort and specialist meeting facilities that can cater for groups of 10 to 250 pax. The Conference Suites feature the Koh Tao and Koh Singtoh function rooms which have more than 150m² of combined space and include state-of-the-art audiovisual and video conferencing equipment along with high speed Internet, whiteboards and flip charts. The resort also has a pub, restaurant, clubhouse, spa and fitness suite.

RECENT EVENTS:

Banyan Thailand Hua Hin arranges six to eight golf tournaments a year such as the Mercedes Cup, the BMW national golf finals and the Hyatt Open, many of which attract incentive groups. The events draw about 140 players each and there is little non-golf activity.



Sentosa Golf Club, Singapore



Sentosa Golf Club, main clubhouse

GREAT FOR GOLFERS:

The club, regarded as one of the best golf destinations in Asia, is home to two magnificent championship 18-hole par 72 golf courses – Serapong and Tanjong. Located on Sentosa island, both courses possess fairways lined with lush greenery and scenic coastline views of either the Singapore harbour or South China Sea.

GREAT FOR MEETINGS:

There are meeting rooms that can accommodate an intimate gathering of 10 people or up to 450 people for a standing cocktail party in the Grand Salon. The Grand Salon, the largest venue available, can be split into three smaller spaces. It is outfitted with five projectors and screens, and comes with an outdoor foyer ideal for cocktails or coffee breaks.

Sentosa Golf Club is also home to two celebrated restaurants, Kaiseki Sushi and Il Lido. Chefs at the club are able to customise menus for private groups.

RECENT EVENTS:

Undisclosed



Le Grandeur Palm Resort, Johor, Malaysia

GREAT FOR GOLFERS:

There are three courses to play in, and each offer a different level of difficulty. Allamanda is designed as a resort course, featuring breathtaking scenery of water features, daunting sand bunkers and carefully-manicured Tifdwarf greens hidden among verdant landscaping. Cempaka championship course demands full concentration, measuring 7,156 yards from the pro tees. A more open course, the Melati is carpeted with expansive Tifdwarf greens complemented by neat Serangoon fairways. It plays as a links course with a first-tee only start and is the longest of the three courses at 7,205 yards from the back tees.

GREAT FOR MEETINGS:

Within the club is the Golfers Terrace, an eatery that serves international cuisine. For residential meetings, the four-star Le Grandeur Resort next door offers 330 rooms, Perkasa Ballroom which has room for 350 people, 10 meeting rooms and four F&B outlets.

RECENT EVENTS:

Maybank's Southern Region Golf Tournament for 100 golfers. The event in May sought to raise funds for an orphanage and providing networking opportunities for its officers, clients and vendors.

Le Grandeur Palm Resort, Johor is said to have the only link course in Malaysia



MICE Destinations



The Els Club Teluk Datai, Langkawi, Malaysia

GREAT FOR GOLFERS:

Besides being lauded for its stellar service, the upscale club's 18-hole par 72 championship golf course weaves through a 10 million-year-old rainforest towards the emerald green Andaman Sea. Designed by South African professional

golfer Ernie Els and his team from Els Design, the course reflects Els' personal taste and inspiration gathered by the natural surroundings of Teluk Datai. Shotgun plays for up to 100 players can be arranged here.

GREAT FOR MEETINGS:

Private functions can be hosted on the event lawn or the meeting room which can accommodate a 10-pax board meeting. There are two F&B outlets, Ernie's Lounge & Bar and Hornbill Cafe, which can seat up to 80 people, as well as a driving range

and a tennis court which can double up for teambuilding activities.

RECENT EVENTS:

The Rotary Club of Langkawi held a fund-raising game in April for 73 golfers and 110 diners at the post-game barbeque dinner.

Local investment holding company, Themed Attractions Resorts & Hotels, hosted 20 clients to a round of golf in June. Played in a friendly competition format, the event also served as an opportunity for all to network.



The Els Club Teluk Datai gives off a big easy vibe



Danang Golf Club, Vietnam

GREAT FOR GOLFERS:

This Greg Norman-designed course weaves through natural sand banks close to My Khe beach. Considered one of Vietnam's best, it is a true links course similar to classic golf courses in Scotland, Ireland, England and the Melbourne sand belt in Australia. It is a challenge for top players from the back tees but not intimidating for high handicap golfers when played from the front. The club says the greens are the fastest in Vietnam. The 16th hole, right on the beach and playing towards the Cham Islands in the distance, is regarded as the signature hole for golf in and near Danang.

GREAT FOR MEETINGS:

The club has a restaurant, rooftop terrace, two bars and a café. It also boasts two function rooms. The smaller room can seat 10 people for a seminar while the larger space seats 50-pax theatre-style or up to 180 for a cocktail party and features an outside terrace. An under-road pathway connects the club to Ocean Villas, an all-villa resort with 110 units ranging from one- to five-bedroom villas and a dune villa. Other facilities include a beach club, restaurant, spa and tennis courts.

RECENT EVENTS:

Danang Golf Club has hosted numerous corporate events involving golf and after-golf F&B services for clients including banks, financial services and motor vehicle companies. The club is one two courses that will co-host the Accor Vietnam Masters amateur tournament in September.



Danang Golf Club will co-host the Accor Vietnam Masters



Mission Hills Haikou, Hainan, China

GREAT FOR GOLFERS:

Membership is not required so Mission Hills Haikou is open to all golf lovers



Bintan Lagoon Golf Club is supported by a convention centre



Bintan Lagoon Golf Club, Indonesia

GREAT FOR GOLFERS:

As the only resort in Bintan that offers two 18-hole championship courses, designed by golf legends Jack Nicklaus and Ian Baker-Finch. One of the courses is set against a stunning backdrop of the South China Sea while the other is marked by natural

topography with an undulating landscape for seasoned golfers.

GREAT FOR MEETINGS:

This 470-room resort charms with its manicured gardens and a private beach that stretches nearly 1.5km. Besides its suite of meetings rooms within the resort and even more in its new three-storey convention centre, the resort features a variety of outdoor locations that corporates can utilise for teambuilding activities or dinners. It is possible to even host delegates under the stars for a dinner right at the water's edge.

RECENT EVENTS:

Undisclosed



The stately club house at Mission Hills Haikou

who can play in the largest collection of publicly accessible golf courses in the world.

Only 15 minutes from Haikou Meilan International Airport, the 10 diverse and acclaimed tournament courses by Schmidt-Curley Design, each incorporating the native lava rock formations, are suitable for a range of playing abilities.

The courses offer a challenge for golfing enthusiasts while the less experienced can enjoy some of the most beautiful landscapes

to play on in the Asia-Pacific region. The island's temperate tropical climate is another plus.

GREAT FOR MEETINGS:

Mission Hills Haikou is constructing an energy-efficient and low-emission Town Center, which will feature Mission Hills Lan Kwai Fong Haikou, Mission Hills Huayi Brothers Feng Xiaogang Movie-themed Town, a duty-free shop, and luxury hotels bearing brands like The Ritz-Carlton, Renaissance and Hard Rock brands.

The destination itself is a draw for corporate event. Hainan is known as Asia's sport and lifestyle capital. Apart from world-class golf courses, there are family-friendly facilities for leisure, sports, recreation, entertainment, dining, accommodation, conference, and shopping, as well as the world's largest mineral springs and spa facilities.

RECENT EVENTS:

BMW, Volvo, Audi and Bank of China have hosted golf tournaments at Mission Hills Haikou. Recent tournaments included an industry association celebration for 230 people, a friendly golf tournament for 100 senior management MBA students, and an invitational tournament for more than 80 car owners organised by an famous international motor car company.



Spring City Golf & Lake Resort, Kunming, China

GREAT FOR GOLFERS:

Nestled amid a verdant landscape and adjacent to picturesque Yang Zonghai Lake, Spring City is Kunming's eco-golf sanctuary, less than an hour's drive from the Kunming Airport, and 40 minutes' drive from Kunming city.

Located 1,770m above sea level and surrounded by natural hot springs, Spring City is a world-class integrated holiday resort with more than 400 luxury rooms and award-winning 18-hole championship golf courses including the Mountain Course designed by Jack Nicklaus and the Lake Course by Robert Trent Jones Jr.

The courses offer golfers of every level games filled with challenges and enjoyment. The magnificent 18-hole Lake Course is set on the banks of the Yang Zonghai Lake and is world renowned for its narrow fairways, crisscrossing trenches, strong winds, terraced greens and breathtaking lake views.

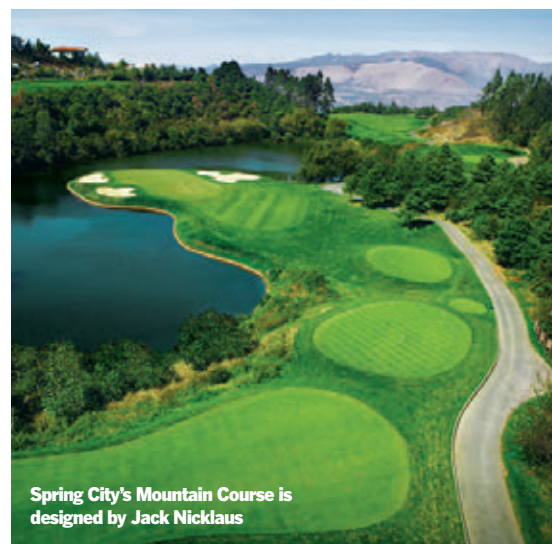
GREAT FOR MEETINGS:

The Clubhouse at Spring City has myriad facilities including an expansive lobby, a lobby bar, VIP dining rooms, spa, tennis courts, a boardroom, a multipurpose function hall, an outdoor terrace as well as a recreation centre with a karaoke room, mahjong room and gym.

Spring City features a variety of dining experiences offering some of the finest culinary selections from around the world. Guests can look forward to discovering the savoury tastes of local Chinese cuisine, or indulge in a variety of eastern and western fares at its restaurant.

RECENT EVENTS:

An exclusive customer golf event by a telecommunications company in June. Some 50 people were in attendance and they stayed three nights at the resort. The event included three rounds of golf, a welcome dinner and a prize presentation dinner.



Spring City's Mountain Course is designed by Jack Nicklaus



Kunming Changshui International Airport is the fourth largest airport in the country

Destination: China

Springboard to eminence

With improved infrastructure and transport links, Kunming is flexing its muscle as China's gateway to South Asia. By **Caroline Boey**

In 2012, Kunming became the permanent home of the China-South Asia Expo, an important platform for the partnership between China and South-east and South Asia.

This year's event was attended by 80,000 delegates from more than 20 countries. It occupied all 13 of the column-free exhibition halls of the new Kunming Dianchi International Convention and Exhibition Center (DCEC), which just opened in June. When DCEC is completed by mid-2016, there will be a total of 23 exhibition halls.

According to a DCEC spokesman, three large-scale events have taken place so far. From November 13-15, Kunming will host the China International Travel Mart – for the ninth time – and it will also take place at DCEC.

Apart from DCEC, the RMB37 billion (US\$5.81 billion) “city-within-a city” project will be ready in three to five years and comprise offices,

residences, a 1,300-room Holiday Inn opening in 2017 and a theme park.

Mu Jiansheng, director, Exhibition Department, China Council for the Promotion of International Trade Yunnan Sub-Council, said DCEC was built to serve the whole of China, and for Kunming to become the gateway to South-east and South Asia.

“There are already some 50 exhibitions each year in Kunming where the key industries are timber and motor. With the opening of DCEC, which is four times bigger than the Kunming International Convention and Exhibition Center, we can now raise the profile of smaller events and host mega events for the tobacco, sugar and alcohol industries.”

Domestic MICE groups now dominate in Kunming and they make up 80 per cent of demand.

Meanwhile, a number of MICE partnerships have been formed to boost MICE in Kunming and Yunnan. Mu said eight MoUs were inked during the 11th China Expo Forum for In-

ternational Cooperation, which was held in Kunming earlier this year.

The MoUs signed were between CVBs such as the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, organisations such as the Asia Federation of Exhibition and Convention Association, SACEOS (Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers) and Thai Exhibition Association, other convention and exhibition centres in China, and Hannover Milano Fairs Shanghai.

Mu added that the establishment of the Kunming Exposition Affairs Bureau in November 2013 would help forge links with international MICE events and organisations in the industry.

Yunnan Provincial Tourism Development Committee's (YPTDC) marketing division director, Oliver Huang, reiterated that Kunming and Yunnan's goal is to attract more MICE business. He said: “We want more direct international flights.”

As such, there are now 12 airports in Yunnan with another four under construction and being planned. This makes Yunnan the province with the most number of airports in China.

In November 2014, SriLankan Airlines started flights from Colombo to Kunming Changshui International Airport. In December 2014, China Eastern Airlines launched the first intercontinental direct flight between Kunming and Paris. More recently in June 2015, China Eastern started flights between Vancouver and Kunming, via Shanghai.

YPTDC recently asked SilkAir to consider adding direct flights between Singapore and Lijiang International Airport, in addition to the carrier's four weekly flights to Kunming.

Jim Burton, area general manager, Yunnan Cluster, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), Greater China, said infrastructure in the capital is improving. Burton has been based in Kunming for the last four of his 11 years in China.

“The airport is already starting to expand. There are now two runways and another two are being planned. By the end of the year, the Metro Line No. 3 will open from the airport to the Holiday Inn Kunming City Center and the journey will take 20 minutes.

“High-speed trains from Shanghai to Kunming will (also) be introduced next year, cutting travel time from 1.5 days to eight hours, and there

will also be links to Chengdu, Hangzhou and Nanchang.”

The increase in the number of international hotels in and around the city, with the addition of more IHG hotels and chains such as Accor, Angsana, Hilton and Wyndham, is expected to raise Kunming's profile.

In April 2014, the local five-star Bank Hotel was renovated and rebranded as the Crowne Plaza Kunming City Center. The Holiday Inn Kunming City Center was also renovated and reopened in December 2014. InterContinental Kunming, located in the National Tourism Area of Dianchi, opened in 2013.

Burton said: “Four years ago, IHG only had one hotel in Yunnan. There are now seven and 10 more are in the pipeline in Kunming and elsewhere. New brands such as Hualuxe and Holiday Inn Express will (also) be introduced,” he added.

Commenting on the developments, Jennifer Salisbury, founder of International Marketing Consultancy covering Beijing, Hong Kong and Australia, said Kunming has a great opportunity for extensive multicultural links and trade exchanges being located so close to many South-east Asian countries.

“There is a great potential to link direct flights from Kunming to some of China's leading trading partners, which would really improve access for events to be run in the city,” she added.

Quick facts on Kunming Dianchi International Convention & Exhibition Center (DCEC)

- DCEC is within a 30-minute radius of Kunming's city centre, Chenggong District, and the Airport Economic and Technology Development Zone.
- Opened in June 2015
- Indoor exhibition space spans 300,000m². There are 23 column-free exhibition halls offering 200,000m² of space; 10 with pillars
- Outdoor exhibition space spans 100,000m² and can accommodate 15,000 standard booths
- There are 73 conference venues
- There are 45 meeting rooms of various sizes, a 1,620m² multi-functional hall, 12 ballrooms of various sizes, and a 250-seat auditorium providing 100,000m² of space.

{ Spotlight }

Major attention on minorities

MICE groups interested in the culture of Yunnan's minority groups can spend half a day exploring the colourful and vibrant Yunnan Nationalities Village in Kunming, located near the scenic Dian Lake.

The sprawling 514ha attraction, comprising a commercial centre, performance theatre, villages, squares and large outdoor spaces, is suitable for various teambuilding activities. Situated just across from the village is the Yunnan Nationalities Museum.

At the village, representatives from the 25 ethnic minority groups will be dressed in different colourful costumes, headwear and accessories. Their culture and customs are also depicted in static displays and live performances.

Visitors can watch Achang women make glutinous rice cakes, enjoy Mosuo singing and dancing, and play traditional games that test one's shooting skills and throwing accuracy.

Photo opportunities abound and MICE delegates can also don minority groups' costumes.

Rental rates to organise teambuilding activities for about 100 people are

around RMB30,000 (US\$4,700) for four hours.

Kunming CITS has organised many teambuilding programmes at the large Harmony Square for China-based companies.

Activities suggested by Kunming CITS include a Bamboo Pole Dance competition, a treasure hunt with a Chinese lesson thrown in, and the Big Eater Challenge – groups are given money and they have to use it to buy the most number of snacks within a given budget.

For ease of access, there is a helicopter landing field in the village, and MICE groups can use the service for transportation or sightseeing.



{ Insider }

Lu Hao Shuo, deputy general manager of Kunming CITS, suggests three activities visitors can do in Kunming

A day on the green

There are more than 10 golf courses around Kunming within a 30-minute drive radius. Spring City is an award-winning golf course and Stoneforest International Country Club has a golf course designed by Brian Curley.

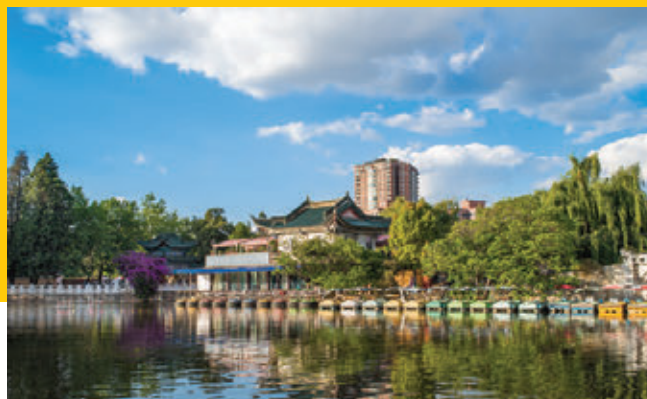
Tea appreciation

Yunnan is famous for its Pu'er tea. In Kunming, groups can observe a tea ceremony and learn the proper way to make tea. If visiting the southern part of the province, such as Pu'er and Xishuangbanna, they can visit plantations, workshops, factories and tea shops. There, they will learn how to pick tea leaves, process them and make tea on-site.

Join the locals

Start the day early and head to Kunming's Cuihu Park to join local residents at the park to practise tai chi, jog or perform sword dances. Stroll along the Nine-Bend Bridge, which zigzags over the lake, and take in the lively scene.

The scenic Cuihu Park is a welcome respite in the bustling Chinese city





estherpoon/23RF.com

Hong Kong appears to be losing its sparkle among meeting planners

Hong Kong on sale

Meetings in this Asian financial hub are now cheaper, as hotels slash rates to curb falling demand, writes **Prudence Lui**

It has been a challenging year for Hong Kong hotels due to a worrisome combination of dwindling arrivals from China and steeper competition from neighbouring destinations like Japan.

The Holiday Inn Golden Mile, for example, has seen its MICE business falling from 2.5 per cent of total business between January and July in 2014 to just 1.6 per cent. A more significant drop was seen in the corporate meeting segment while business from the incentive segment remained flat, noted general manager Anne Busfield.

Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees Hotel in To Kwa Wan reported a 20 per cent dip in year-to-date MICE business this year, while Courtyard by Marriott Hong Kong Sha Tin saw a 30 per cent decline in business.

Hotels have reacted by slashing room rates and rolling out attractive packages for meetings and events.

The Holiday Inn Golden Mile is

dangling a 20 per cent discount on its events packages. For as low as HK\$1,612 (US\$208) per person per day, excluding service tax, corporate groups can enjoy accommodation in a deluxe room and use of a conference room from 09.00 to 17.00.

To further sweeten the deal, the hotel is giving guests the option of a buffet breakfast for HK\$120 (plus 10 per cent service tax) or an upgrade to an Executive Club Room with Executive Club Lounge access – provided a minimum of 10 rooms with 10 meeting delegates is achieved.

For the period of August to December, Courtyard by Marriott Hong Kong Sha Tin brought the price of its residential meeting package down to HK\$1,288 (plus 10 per cent service tax) from HK\$1,488.

Busfield said these “reasonable rates and value-adds” are a “positive step for attracting MICE business into Hong Kong”.

While average room rates at

Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees Hotel had fallen 17 per cent compared in the past year, the price of its meetings packages has risen some five per cent for the summer.

General manager Christina Cheng remains positive and prefers to be “cautious on rate strategy”. She believes that 2016 will bring positive growth.

However, DMCs in Hong Kong expect to see even greater discounts going forward.

MV Destination, general manager, Clemson Lo, said: “Hotel owners have been making good money (all these years) and have been increasing rates. Hong Kong has become one of the most expensive destinations in the region. It will take time for the market to recover and I think rates will go further down for another year before returning to a reasonable level in two years’ time.”

Destination Management Company-The DMC’s managing director, Jenny May, observed that “hotels are suffering and offering special packages and deals”.

“We are seeing lower room rates, (complimentary) upgrades, reduced meeting package prices and so on. It seems that whatever you ask for, as long as it is within reason, the hotels will agree to them just to get the business,” May said.

But putting Hong Kong on sale is not an instant solution to the destination’s weakening demand.

Busfield said: “With large-scale incentives and conventions planning at least six to 12 month ahead, these promotions may not be able to address the present occupancy shortfalls in most hotels.”

May agrees, saying the attractive rates and offers are not enough to get all clients to give Hong Kong a nod.

“Nine out of ten times the client opts for another destination,” she lamented, blaming the lack of attractive experiences in Hong Kong for turning clients away to destinations like Bali, Singapore and Dubai.

She said: “There’s just nothing new to do here. What’s more, overseas visitors are put off by all the negative publicity arising from incidents like the Occupy Central protests and fights in the Legislative Council, the influx of Chinese travellers, and the number of shops now selling gold, cosmetics and milk powder. Sadly, it seems that it doesn’t matter how low the hotel rates go, clients just don’t want to come here anymore.”

{ Insider }

Cary Chiu, general manager of PC Tours and Travel, offers three must-try activities

Hong Kong is your restaurant

Hong Kong is a gourmet paradise that nurtures versatile and outstanding culinary outlets, so a dine-around programme is a great way to sample all its delights. Such programmes are particularly great for large groups, as delegates can be split into small teams and sent off to explore different hotspots such as Lan Kwai Fong in Central and Knutsford Terrace in Tsim Sha Tsui.

Go sight-seeing

I recommend a private tour to Ping Shan Heritage Trail in Yuen Long which takes half a day. This includes strolling to the old ancestral hall and the two-storey Old Ping Shan Police Station which has been converted into a gallery for the local Tang Clan.

Learn to cook

Six Senses Cooking Studio is a good place to learn how to cook Cantonese cuisine. The chef will walk participants to a local wet market to pick fresh produce, and then lead a DIY cooking class at its studio in Kwun Tong. This activity is also ideal for teambuilding.



{ Spotlight }

There's room outside

The recent opening of The Terrace, an outdoor venue on the second floor of The Harbourview hotel in Wan Chai, was met with much excitement among event planners. New outdoor event space has been lacking for some time now in the district, and it is challenging to secure attractive venues with sea views for small groups.

The Terrace is seen as a solution to these woes, as it offers unobstructed views of the Wan Chai waterfront and is a flexible space for up to 50 guests in a theatre setup or 80 people for cocktail receptions.

The 100m² venue is directly connected to the hotel's existing Function Room 1 and 2, allowing event planners more space should they have larger groups.

The Terrace comes with a wood panel floor, well-knitted turf and much greenery,

making it a suitable venue for garden themed parties in the day and at night.

Meanwhile, all its six function rooms on this floor were recently refurbished as part of the hotel's plans to improve its business events product. Besides a hardware boost, the hotel has also invested in partnerships with several teambuilding companies to offer tailor-made programmes for its corporate clients.

One of the programmes on offer is an African drum course.

General manager, Harrison Leung, said: "What sets us apart from the big players is in our subtle offerings. Many venues have only four walls, but half of our space enjoys natural daylight and faces a harbour."

The hotel is able to host teambuilding groups of 60 pax.

{ Talking numbers }



10.4

The percentage decline in Hong Kong's overnight visitor arrivals in 1H2015, to 801,808. Longhaul markets performed the worst, recording a 17.7 per cent fall in footfalls



16

Hong Kong's ranking on ICCA's top city charts for 2014. It hosted 98 international meetings organised. In 2013, Hong Kong stood in the 21st spot





Destination: Thailand

Quiet and powerful

Khao Yai's power lies in its natural attractions

Khao Yai, known more for its lush national park, is one destination to watch for business events, thanks to a new convention centre and local suppliers who are joining forces for promotion. By **Greg Lowe**

The Erawan shrine bombing in Bangkok on August 17 had sent a ripple of shock through Thailand's tourism sector, cost the country's tourism industry 64.3 billion baht (US\$1.8 billion) and 1.33 million visitors, according to an estimate shared by the Ministry of Sports and Tourism in September.

Swooping in quickly to stem losses in MICE business, the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) implements a series of security measures to ensure event planners and their attendees are safe and feel so. These measures include 24-hour assistance services at the TCEB Counter at Suvarnabhumi Airport, police escort for large groups of event attendees between the airport and the hotel, a dedicated MICE Lane at the airport's immigration checkpoint, expense support for the engagement of security personnel for senior executives, and extra security support for general visitors.

And to regain confidence among travellers and business event organisers, TCEB has three campaigns ready for the 2016 fiscal year, from October 2015 to September 2016.

The *Visitor Promotion (ASEAN + 6)* campaign is aimed at building delegate numbers from the 10 ASEAN nations as well as Australia,

New Zealand, China, Japan, South Korea and India.

The second campaign, *Thailand Connect ... Connect beyond the Capital*, incentivises event planners to explore different destinations in Thailand. Perks are offered for organising events in designated MICE cities – Bangkok, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, Phuket and Khon Kaen – although the extent of support depends on the fulfilment of certain conditions, such as group travel being conducted between now and December 2016 via domestic flights operated by an airline that is a marketing associate of TCEB.

The final campaign, *Thailand BIG Thanks!*, is aimed at drawing mega corporate events to the country. Budget support will be offered throughout the 2016 fiscal year. Backing this campaign is TCEB's attendance at seven international trade shows that specialises in business events.

Groups still considering Thailand may be won over by TCEB's recent move to promote Khao Yai as an alternative or extension to Bangkok. Reports of surges in hotel occupancy from destinations such as Chiang Mai in the immediate aftermath of the attack showed that many people still wanted to visit Thailand even if they wanted to avoid the capital.

And hardware developments in Khao Yai, to which the bureau took 31 media and buyers in July as part of the *Thailand CONNECT The World* fam trip, are adding to its appeal.

Located just over 200km north-east of Bangkok, Khao Yai is home to Thailand's oldest national park which is part of the Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

There are 184 hotels with a total of 7,024 rooms, according to TCEB. While many of the properties are small, there have been some key openings recently, including the 115-key Botanica Khao Yai. This hotel is supported by its older sister property, The Greenery Resort, which has 256 keys. The two hotels provide access to six restaurants and bars, some of which can be converted into events and meetings spaces. Groups of 40 pax or more can use the custom catering services.

Kirimaya Golf Resort & Spa in the vicinity provide more accommodation and recreational options.

More importantly though, the new Khao Yai Convention Center (See *Spotlight*) has given the destination true power to court business events.

The full opening of Scenical World, tabled for later this year, will see the arrival of Khao Yai's first modern integrated resort.

This development has helped put the destination on the radar for MICE groups, opined Parichat Svetasreni, director of marketing and corporate image at TCEB.

"Khao Yai, is a new destination for meetings and incentives, especially for business travellers who want to stay in a nature place. With its close proximity to Bangkok, pristine settings, great variety of accommodation options and attractions, Khao Yai is becoming an emerging destination that can cater for corporate meetings, incentives travel, teambuilding activities, and pre- or post-show tours," Parichat added.

While more work needs to be done to promote the destination, the development of facilities and attractions – including Farm Chockchai, Scenical World, Granmonte Asoke Valley and Farm Mor Por, as well as the likes of Midwinter Green and other large-scale dining venues capable of accommodating groups – has helped bolster the area's offering.

Khao Yai is becoming more popular, especially with the domestic market who go there predominantly

for seminars, as groups increasingly seek alternatives to beachside options near Bangkok such as Pattaya, which suffers from its sleazy reputation, or Hua Hin, remarked Tony Soorangura, associate managing director of NS Travel & Tours.

"People are bored with beach destinations like Pattaya and Hua Hin so they seek out something green," Soorangura explained, adding that declining budgets for MICE groups makes destinations reachable by road from Bangkok increasingly attractive.

"During this period of economic downturn, groups tend to have less budget so they afford flights to remote areas," he said. "Pattaya and Khao Yai attract groups for different reasons. Pattaya can be done in two days/one night while Khao Yai normally takes three days/two nights, which is a big difference in terms of budget for MICE clients, especially for very big groups."

Khao Yai still faces a few issues beyond the three-hour drive from Bangkok, due to its popularity with the domestic market many local

shops and some attractions are only open on the weekend. And the lack of destination promotion within the international trade means that many DMCs focused on long-haul markets remain lukewarm about its potential to compete with the likes of more established MICE destinations.

Nevertheless, Christopher Cribbs, general manager at Botanica Khao Yai Resort which is part of Scenical Development, said the local trade is now collaborating more closely to promote the destination and leverage the opening of Khao Yai Convention Center.

"There's been a change in mindset among some of the properties here," he revealed. "Ever since Botanica Khao Yai Resort opened I have been reaching out to the other resorts and attractions that are suitable for MICE groups. There's now a much more collaborative spirit among the trade, we all know we can do better by collaborating in our efforts to promote Khao Yai as a destination for leisure and MICE."

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{ Spotlight }

Conventional power

The new Khao Yai Convention Center in one fell swoop placed the destination on the country's map for both domestic and international groups.

The facility features two standalone buildings with a combined space of about 3,200m², in addition to another 1,600m² in the outdoor plaza which connects the two buildings. It can accommodate a maximum of 3,080 people at one time.

There are seven rooms for meetings and banquets, ranging in size from 128m² to 240m² and capable of accommodating between 40 (u-shape) to 200 pax (theatre style). The outdoor plaza can

be used for cocktails, coffee breaks and other activities.

The two-storey Convention Hall houses the exhibition hall and the grand ballroom.

The ballroom, located on the upper floor, features 1,560m² of flexible space which can seat 930 guests in a classroom setting and up to 1,300 pax theatre-style. It features 7m high ceilings and state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment. Since its opening the venue has been used for a number of events including live concerts with Carabou, one of Thailand's most famous bands.



The ballroom can also be divided into three smaller spaces.

The exhibition hall offers 960m² of space with a maximum capacity of 600 people, with an additional 954m² of foyer space.

Khao Yai Convention Center makes a great option for event planners looking for alternative venues away from the busy Thai capital. There is no other modern meetings facility within a few hours' drive of Bangkok besides Pattaya.



426.7

The amount in millions of baht (US\$11.8 million) that is generated by the meetings segment during the first half of the 2015 fiscal year, according to the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau



359,953

The number of international visitors who set foot in Khao Yai in 2014, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand

{ Insider }

Amanda Hyndman

General manager, Mandarin Oriental Bangkok, shares three of her favourite activities in the Thai capital city

Gallery hopping

I love the burgeoning art district of Silom and Charoenkrung and I highly recommend the regular gallery hopping nights (www.facebook.com/galleryhoppingbkk). On these nights, more than 10 galleries and art spaces stay open until at least 23.00, with special events to showcase both local and international artists. All the galleries are within walking distance or a short fun hop on motorcycle taxis or tuk-tuks.



Serindia Gallery

Riverside walk

My Sunday walk starts at sunrise, with a 5km walk from Mandarin Oriental Bangkok's Sala Rim Naam restaurant to the majestic Wat Arun temple. The route is designed to give you a view of Bangkok's most spectacular landmarks and temples, through the city's historic streets. Lasting 75 minutes, the walk is adorned with classic colonial style buildings, temples, wet markets and even traditional medicine souks, affording a glimpse into the cultural riches and local life along Bangkok's fascinating canal maze. You can also discover Bangkok's 24-hour flower market, Pak Klong Talad, located in the city's historic quarter.

Temple tour

For a business traveller with limited time, sightseeing in the capital is not complete without a visit to the city's majestic temples. I recommend the Grand Palace followed by Wat Pho and Wat Arun. Avoid the crowds by visiting in the afternoon. Catch the Chao Phraya Express Boat from the public pier by Saphan Taksin BTS station at 14.30, reaching the Grand Palace by 15.00. Walk around until closing time at 16.00, and then onwards to Wat Pho to make merit at the biggest sleeping Buddha. If you're tired, have a Thai massage here.



Big ambitions

The capital of UAE wishes to continue growing its business tourism sector by offering unparalleled event spaces, upgraded leisure facilities and exceptional hotel spaces. By **Feizal Samath**

The Emirates Palace, one of the luxurious five-star offerings in the city

Abu Dhabi is rolling out efforts to entice more business travellers to the region with a host of events lined up in the next few years.

Ranked among the top 100 busiest global meetings destinations in the ICCA global city rankings, efforts are underway for Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), to leapfrog into the top 50 within five years.

According to a spokesperson for Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), authorities are adding more diverse products, driving more effective stakeholder coordination, and expanding local, regional and global marketing initiatives. However, no further details were offered when asked.

Last year, the city surpassed its 3.1 million guest target with significant growth recorded in occupancy and revenues. The exceptional 2014 performance reflects the heightened

awareness of the city's world-class tourism offering, industry officials said.

Wealthy, with deep pockets and oil reserves assured to run even after 2100, the city has witnessed a sizeable growth in business events over the last five to 10 years.

"As the capital of the UAE, Abu Dhabi is (the) centre for many businesses and governmental authorities. With its convention and conference facilities, and wide range of cultural and trade opportunities, the emirate is an attractive destination for MICE business," says Stefan Fuchs, general manager, Jumeirah at Etihad Towers.

Official data shows that the number of events taking place in the emirate has grown steadily from a mere four in 2005, to 24 in 2013. Last year, the figure dropped slightly to 22.

"Within these events we find huge diversity, with the UAE capital hosting everything from intimate events

for between 50 and 150 people to (large) gatherings," said the TCA Abu Dhabi official.

Business tourism has been identified as a key economic driver for Abu Dhabi.

Studies commissioned by TCA Abu Dhabi and the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC) show that the economic impact from business events in Abu Dhabi is set to rise by approximately seven per cent per annum on average up until 2020. These reports indicate that the direct economic impact is expected to reach Dhs5.1 billion (US\$1.38 billion) by 2020.

The ADNEC is Abu Dhabi's premier events venue with 133,000m² of event space, and is located within easy reach of the international airport. The centre is also surrounded by superb hotels, including two on the ADNEC site.

Meanwhile, the Al Ain Convention Center, sited 90 minutes from Abu

Destination: UAE

Dhabi, offers 20,000m² of exhibition space and capacity for more than 7,000 delegates.

As of mid-2015, Abu Dhabi has 160 hotels and hotel apartments, making up 28,374 rooms, compared to 150 hotels and 26,001 rooms during the same period last year. Luxury hotels like Emirates Palace and Jumeirah at Etihad Towers – to name just two of many – offer world-class event venues in addition to accommodation.

Also on offer are leisure facilities like Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, Yas Waterworld and the Yas Marina Circuit – home to the Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

In 2014, Abu Dhabi hosted its largest incentive from China, where 14,500 resellers of Nu Skin cosmetics were in the UAE capital as part of the company's *Top Achievers* programme. It was the largest incentive trip in the company's history, and the longest and largest outbound incentive travel group in China's direct selling industry, according to officials.

Top upcoming conferences include the World Halal Travel Summit & Exhibition – the largest-ever Halal travel event – in October 2015 with over 1,000 delegates; the Arab world's largest international gastroenterology meeting in 2016; and the World Road Congress and the World Energy Congress in 2019.

Apart from MICE events, the UAE capital is also a draw for film production crews across the world. Authorities recently closed deals to

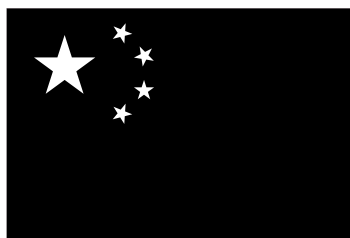
Abu Dhabi's futuristic-looking Etihad Towers



facilitate the production of a new blockbuster Bollywood film *Dishoom* scheduled to film this year. Major productions filmed in Abu Dhabi in

recent years include *Furious 7*, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, and global television programmes like BBC's *Top Gear*, and *The Bold and the Beautiful*.

{ Talking numbers }



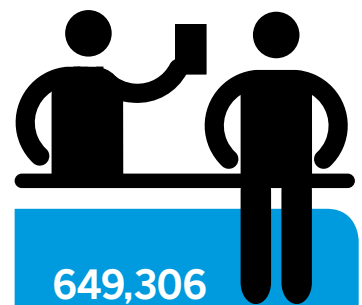
72

The percentage rise in Chinese arrivals from January to June 2015 compared to the same period in 2014. However, room nights per Chinese guest fell to 1.46 from 1.78 in 2014



1.98 million

The number of hotel guests from January to June 2015, rising by 17 per cent when compared to the same period in 2014 – due to the awareness and diversification of products



649,306

The number of UAE visitors which accounted for 33 per cent of total arrivals from January to June 2015. In second place with six per cent of inbound traffic was India with 127,312 arrivals

Dubai: city of superlatives

This vibrant global hub and business epicentre is determined to attract more business travellers with a plethora of activities, entertainment options and world-class exhibitions. By **Feizal Samath**

Apart from hosting a multitude of international events, Dubai is paying a lot of attention to growing home-spun events in order to attract more business travellers from around the region.

The city is focusing on three key objectives: maintaining market share in existing source markets, increasing market share in markets which it has identified as having high growth potential, and increasing the number of repeat visitors by planning to allow visas with multiple entries.

Authorities say they are aiming to grow in-house exhibition and fairs like Arab Pharma and Arab Health, increase the number of visitors and make them truly international events.

With 200 nationalities among its 2.2 million population, Dubai is one of the most attractive and multicultural destinations enhanced by a wide range of facilities and entertainment options.

However not lost – in the plethora of facilities – is support for international visitors seeking active, teambuilding programmes. Since September 2014, Dubai has stepped up promotional activities such as organising regular fam tours for MICE buyers.

According to Steen Jakobsen, director, Dubai Business Events - The Official Convention Bureau: “Dubai is an ideal destination for incentive groups thanks to its robust leisure offer, year-round sunshine and fantastic vibrant calendar of concerts and sporting events.”

He said its world-class infrastructure, superb service level and professional DMCs offer excellent value for money for groups looking to reap the benefits of exciting and well-executed incentive programmes.

The many options to engage teambuilding visitors range from snow skiing at Ski Dubai – the world’s largest indoor snow park – to playing team-based camel polo at the Dubai Polo Equestrian Club.

For a more adrenaline-fuelled experience, incentive groups can do



sophiejames/123RF.com

laps in supercars around the Dubai Autodrome or learn how to skydive at Skydive Dubai. Other options include treasure hunts around Downtown Dubai, home to Burj Khalifa – the world’s tallest building, and Dubai Mall, the world’s largest shopping and leisure complex.

Other activities include dolphin experiences at Atlantis The Palm Dubai or various desert-based activities such as falconry, dune bashing and desert rallying in 4WD vehicles.

Also opening soon is the IMG Worlds of Adventure, touted the world’s largest indoor theme park. Other entertainment parks slated for a late 2016 opening date are Legoland Dubai, Bollywood Parks Dubai and Motiongate Dubai.

As for hotel options, many in the three- to four-star category that are ideal for small groups will be added over the next year. Hotel room capacity in Dubai currently stands at 93,000 rooms, where some 8,000 were added to the current stock last year.

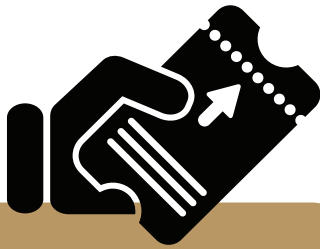
The top source markets for Dubai today are Saudi Arabia, India, the UK and China (in that order of priority). While Dubai is the most popular tourist destination in the UAE, its main competitors for international events in the Asia-Pacific and African regions are Sydney, Melbourne, Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo, Beijing, Johannesburg and Istanbul.

Often, Dubai works with other emirates. Last year, Dubai, together with Abu Dhabi and Sharjah, jointly hosted 14,500 resellers from Nu Skin Cosmetics China, and the event generated an economic impact worth US\$80 million.

Both Dubai and Abu Dhabi will be jointly hosting EXPO 2020, which is expected to attract 25 million visitors, where 70 per cent are from outside the UAE. Another upcoming event Dubai is preparing for is the gigantic influx of 16,000 guests who are attending the Society of Petroleum Engineers Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition in September 2016.

Adrenaline-filled experiences can be had by incentive groups in Dubai

{ Talking numbers }



1.8

The number of visitors from South Asia last year, up 14.4 per cent from 2013 – the highest growth among other generating regions in the world



18

The number of overseas offices by Dubai's Department of Commerce Marketing and Tourism. The most recent ones were opened in Sydney and Mumbai



284

The number of new aircraft – 83 Airbus and 201 Boeings – on order by Emirates to be delivered by 2020, which would then make it the world's largest airline

{ Insider }

Justin Jacob, managing director of Connect World Tours, highlights two interesting experiences that must be had in Abu Dhabi

Visit the city's iconic landmarks

Traditional attractions that characterise Abu Dhabi's past as well as its present include the working heritage village out on the breakwater, the dhow wharves at Mina Zayed port and the colourful local souks. The visually-stunning Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque on the outskirts of the city is a must-visit.

Test-drive a Ferrari California

Launched in May, this test-drive experience at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi is a world's-first for the brand.

It offers everyday folks the chance to tootle around Yas Island's roads in a supercharged convertible that is capable of reaching speeds of 100kmh in less than four seconds. Drive the car that's been dubbed "Most Stylish Car of the Year" and "Convertible of the Year". Enjoy a one-on-one experience with an expert Ferrari co-pilot, or ride with a couple of friends or colleagues in the car of your dreams.

From left:
Ferrari California;
Sheikh Zayed Grand
Mosque's opulent
interior



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Waterview Room



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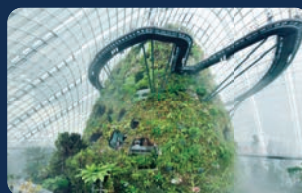
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Celebration of Chrysanthemums 24 Sep - 10 Nov • Flower Dome

Enter the moon gate to discover a tea house, painted lanterns and amazing ozukuri chrysanthemums.



OCBC Skyway and the Supertrees

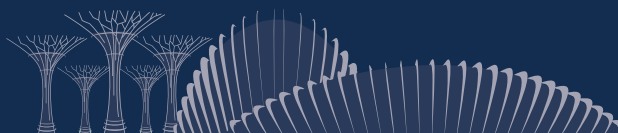
22 metres above ground, it's the place to view Singapore's skyline. At night, watch the Supertrees come alive in a light and sound performance.

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