

April 2016

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Feeding the new breed of delegates

When I got married in 2011, my husband and I chose to host our banquet at My Humble House, one of Singapore's top fine dining Chinese restaurants then (it has since closed its doors here, focusing its operations in Jakarta, Tokyo and Beijing), instead of a ballroom in a hotel where banquet meals are mass-produced in a central kitchen.

My Humble House's raison d'être is to delight its guests with quality food, and we knew our guests would be well taken care of.

What drove our decision was this: our family and closest friends, like us, are avid travellers and lovers of good food. We've dined at some of the loveliest restaurants – fine-dining or otherwise – and we wouldn't agree to settle for average food at an important event.

Convention centres today are increasingly seeing event organisers who share this mindset, who demand excellent meals at dining functions that will impress their well-travelled delegates as much as the pertinent content fielded at the conference or exhibition.

Besides the quality of meals, convention centres today must also be prepared to serve a diverse world audience that requires halal, kosher, gluten-free, allergen-free, low-calorie, low-salt and low-sugar options. With increased attention being paid to the environment, requests for sustainable food options are also not uncommon.

The business events environment is competitive enough among convention centres and hotels with large function spaces. With event organisers increasingly looking to deliver a memorable dining event, convention centres today also risk losing revenue from dining functions to unique venues and upmarket caterers.

In our cover story this issue (*The art of feeding delegates*, page 18), we find out how dining function needs are evolving and what some convention centres in Asia are doing to perfect their F&B operations and service in order to satiate a more discerning hunger.



TTGmice, endorsed by the Asian Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus, is published by TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd, and is mailed free-of-charge on written request to readers Asia-wide who meet a set of predetermined terms and conditions. Annual airmail subscription charges are US\$70 (Asia) and US\$90 (elsewhere). All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher.

MCI (P) 165/08/2013, KDN
PPS1140/09/2012(022844), ISSN 0218-849X
Printed by KHL Printing Co Pte Ltd, 57 Loyang Drive,
Singapore 508968.



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Stronger penguin presence

Phillip Island, located just 90 minutes from Melbourne, has long been a favourite on the itinerary for business events hosted in Victoria. In fact, every week, at least one MICE group pays a visit to watch the famed parade of little penguins as they make their way from the ocean to their burrows.

The good news is the Penguin Parade became a whole lot more accessible last

November with the launch of *Penguins Plus*, a new 300-seat platform and an underground viewing area for up to 70 people that doubles as a cocktail function space.

Less than a five-minute drive away is the Nobbies Centre, which as of December 2015 is home to an interactive new exhibition called Antarctic Journey.

The joint venture between the World

Wildlife Fund Australia and Phillip Island Nature Parks tells the story of the landscapes and wildlife along the journey from Phillip Island to Antarctica via the Southern Ocean. Augmented reality technology transports visitors to the southernmost continent where they will be met by friendly fur seals and other sea life that jump out of the water.

Singapore Expo amps up Wi-Fi service

More than 15,000 active devices can now concurrently access seamless connectivity at the Singapore Expo, following the venue's upgrade of its Wi-Fi infrastructure.

Two high-speed fibre broadband connections and the most advanced wireless access points have been installed, among other enhancements, to all 10 exhibition halls at Singapore Expo and 32 meeting rooms at MAX Atria. Both are designed for optimal performance due to continuous operation, and workload generated from concurrently active devices.

Aloysius Arlando, CEO of SingEx Venues, said: "With Wi-Fimax, we now offer event organisers, exhibitors and delegates highly flexible and customisable Wi-Fi access; and not just limited to basic Wi-Fi services normally provided by some venues."

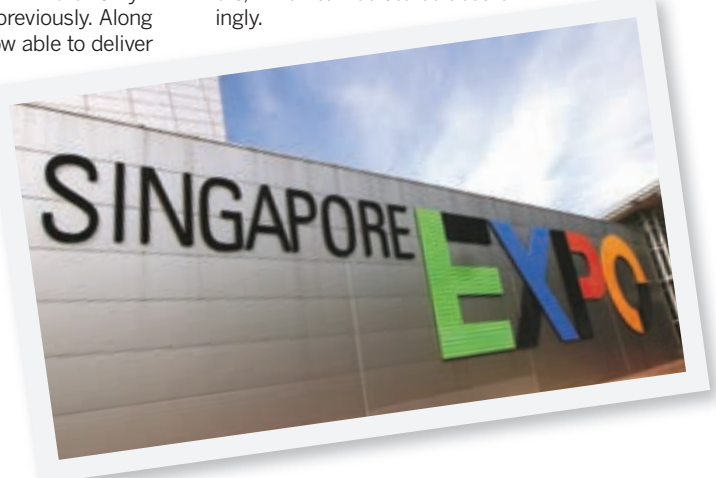
Michael Lim, director of human resource

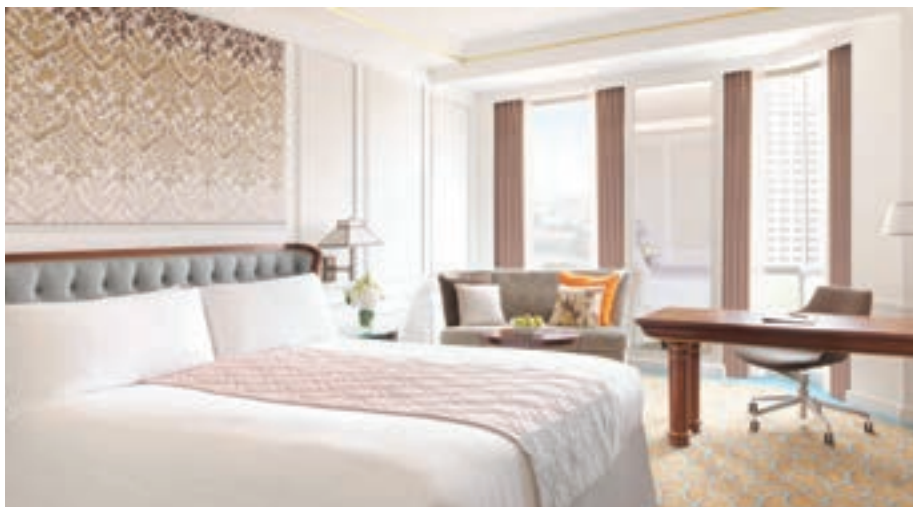
and information technology, SingEx Holdings, said: "The system is part of an upgrade that extended the Wi-Fi service to cover both the entire Singapore Expo and MAX Atria. Only the MAX Atria was covered previously. Along with this upgrade, we are now able to deliver higher user densities and bandwidth."

The complimentary Wi-Fi service is suitable for webmail, social media and normal Internet browsing. Event organisers who require higher bandwidth of over 2Mbps have the option to increase the bandwidth according to their requirements.

According to Lim, depending on the exact

requirements such as bandwidth and the number of concurrent devices, the venue can work out a package for event organisers, which can be scaled accordingly.





InterContinental Singapore completes renovation works

InterContinental Hotels Group, in collaboration with design firm Fbye International, has completed a major five-year renovation of InterContinental Singapore.

The redesign sees the enhancement and continuation of the hotel's colonial and Peranakan heritage theme, with the hotel lobby, lobby lounge, all-day-dining restaurant Ash & Elm, and the 316 tower rooms and suites overhauled.

Fbye also previously redesigned the hotel's executive club lounge, 67 shophouse-style guestrooms and suites, as well as Cantonese restaurant Man Fu Yuan.

SIA first to operate international flights from Canberra

From September 2016, pending regulatory approval, Singapore Airlines (SIA) will ply the Canberra-Singapore and Canberra-Wellington routes four times weekly each, making it the first carrier to operate regularly scheduled international flights from Australia's capital city.

Flights depart Singapore at 23.00 on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, and will arrive in Canberra at 08.35. The flight will then leave Canberra for Wellington at 09.50 and arrive at 15.05 on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays.

Return flights will depart Wellington at 20.15 on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, and arrive in Canberra at 22.05. On the same days, the flight will leave Canberra at 23.30 and land in Singapore at 05.50.

A Boeing 777-200 comprising 38 business class seats and 228 economy class seats will operate on the routes.

Tickets have gone on sale from January 25, with economy fares starting from S\$650 (US\$452) all-inclusive for Canberra-Singapore return and S\$469 all-inclusive for Canberra-Wellington return. Business class fares start from S\$3,166 all-inclusive for Canberra-Singapore return and S\$1,450 all-inclusive for Canberra-Wellington return.

Singapore Airlines' partner Virgin Australia will also codeshare on flights between Canberra and Singapore.



Qingdao gets second Grand Mercure property

The 508-room Grand Mercure Qingdao Nanshan Resort has opened adjacent to Qingdao International Exhibition Centre, boasting its own selection of venues that can support a variety of events.

Meeting planners can choose from eight function rooms, two boardrooms and two pillarless Grand Ballrooms that can accommodate up to 1,000 guests.

Guestrooms spot contemporary interiors and are fitted with modern facilities, including a minibar, complimentary Wi-Fi connection and a flatscreen TV.

Dining options include Sunshine Global Western Restaurant, Linhai Xuan Chinese restaurant, and the Lobby Bar and Cigar Bar.

Business travellers can choose to unwind at the resort's fully-equipped gym studio or take a dip in the pool and relax in the sauna. The resort's private stunning beach is located within walking distance, where guests can enjoy relaxing strolls and breathtaking scenery.

Dubai's ibis One Central opens

AccorHotels has added a new property in Dubai with the opening of ibis One Central. The property is next to the Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Part of the Dubai Trade Centre District, the hotel will target a mix of leisure and MICE travellers coming to the UAE.

It offers 588 guestrooms, five meeting rooms that can accommodate up to 200 people, on-site restaurants, and an array of amenities including free Wi-Fi, gym access, underground parking, and a complimentary shuttle bus service between the hotel and selected attractions in the city.

Coex gets Muslim-friendly with provision of prayer room

Coex convention and exhibition centre in Seoul has become the first venue of its kind in South Korea to offer a prayer room for Muslim visitors.

Explaining the move, Bo Kyung Byun, president and CEO of Coex, said: "As the number of our internationally oriented exhibitions has increased, so too have the numbers of our Muslim guests. We want to make sure our international guests feel at home at Coex, no matter where they are from."

The new prayer room is located on the third floor of Coex and features separate rooms for men and women. To accommodate daily prayer schedules, the room is open from 03.00 to 22.00.

Other prayer necessities, including Qu'rans, clocks, carpets and a Qibla which indicates the direction towards Mecca, are also provided for the convenience of Muslim guests.

"This prayer room not only offers convenience to (Muslim event delegates) coming to Coex, but also encourages cultural exchange in the fields of trade and tourism," said Mohammed Chraibi, chief director of the Korea-Arab Society.

Avani to join properties along Chao Phraya river



The picturesque banks of Bangkok's Chao Phraya river will see the addition of Avani Riverside this month.

All 248 rooms and suites in the hotel will offer stunning views of the river and the city, as will the Grand Ballroom which sits on the 10th floor. The event venue spans nearly 4,500m² and boasts its own open-plan kitchen and the highest ballroom ceiling in Bangkok.

Also looking to charm event planners is Attitude Bar and Restaurant on the rooftop of the 26-storey building. Featuring a designer infinity pool and city panoramas, the venue is ideal for private parties and sunset drinks.

Other dining facilities at Avani Riverside are Long Bar, Skyline and Pantry.

Business travellers will appreciate computer connections and open meeting spaces in the lobby, as well as a complimentary shuttle boat service that connects the hotel with the BTS skytrain station and pier at Saphan Taksin.



HOT DEALS

Pan Pacific Hotels Group

Residential meetings held at any participating properties under the Pan Pacific or Parkroyal banner from now till the year-end will stand to benefit from a variety of perks that will increase in numbers along with the size of the group.

The limited-time *Meeting Delegate Package* features complimentary use of a meeting room from 08.00 to 17.00, morning and afternoon tea break with snacks, coffee or tea, lunch, Wi-Fi access, as well as executive meeting setup with flip chart, stationery and bottled drinking water.

Meeting groups can choose to enhance their experience with a variety of options including one complimentary room for every 15 payable

rooms with a maximum of two complimentary rooms per night, and a three per cent discount on the master bill excluding taxes.

Groups with at least 15 delegates and 10 rooms can pick one of the many privileges, while those with at least 30 delegates and 20 rooms can enjoy two. Larger gatherings involving at least 45 delegates and 30 rooms can choose any three perks, and those 75 delegates and 50 rooms or more can benefit from four.

Bookings must be made by April 30, 2016 and meetings must be held by December 31, 2016. Other terms apply.

Email exceptionalmeetings@pphg.com.

Bintan Lagoon Resort

The property in Bintan, Indonesia is dangling a free full-day meeting with coffee breaks

and other perks to groups that are staying overnight at the complex.

Priced from S\$160 (US\$114) nett per person per day, the *Meet for Free* package includes a night's stay in a Deluxe Room with buffet breakfast, two-way ferry service, return land transfer, Wi-Fi access, complimentary use of a meeting room plus two coffee breaks with two snack items, and buffet lunch. Terms and conditions apply.

Meeting planners can also choose from a list of complimentary add-ons, such as 80 balls swing at the driving range, 15 minutes on the Ninebot trail and access to Powerhouse Gym.

For an additional S\$90 nett per pax per day, groups can add an unlimited golf games to their itinerary.

Email jaclyn.tan@bintanlagoon.com.



A meeting room in Pan Pacific Tianjin; Bintan Lagoon Resort



Staging Connections unveils LED wall at Crown Melbourne

Staging Connections recently announced the launch of a new audiovisual innovation at Crown Melbourne – the VuePix E series Pro LED Wall. The 52m² LED Wall has been added to the Palladium ballroom, and promises to deliver “a revolutionary visual experience of unmatched colour, brightness and intensity”.

The impressive 14.4m by 4m display comprises over 500,000 individual LEDs and will be a perfect addition for event organisers looking to impress. Staging Connections' team of in-house multimedia designers can create custom content to leverage the power of the LEDs.

With a brightness rating of over 3,500 nits (10 times the brightness of an average home television), the LED Wall can provide animated backgrounds for a wide range of performances. It can also be stacked as a complete wall or as a series of smaller displays.

The LED wall will be used in conjunction with the existing Meyer Sound's horizontal array loudspeaker system to provide a premium event experience.

Sheraton Bali Kuta Resort rolls out new experiential meeting programmes

Five new packages for meetings and events are now available at the 203-key Sheraton Bali Kuta Resort, offering activities that range from engagement with the Balinese community to customised teambuilding experiences.

Aimed at enhancing the delegate's experience, these packages are: *Share Your Plate* programme where guests create a meal with unknown ingredients which will then be shared with children from the local orphanage; a 15-minute post-lunch activity with Sheraton's fitness team; a three-minute SHINE Spa massage session during coffee breaks; a selection of power bars and candies at the refreshment lounge; and an After Work Happy Hour session where beers and cocktails are served at the refreshment lounge. Prices per pax vary.

These packages come with use of the hotel's meeting spaces, complimentary microphones, a projector, conference sound system, clutter-free meetings setup, stationery, candies and bottled water.



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Australian, New Zealand event buyers gain more interest in Asia

By Rebecca Elliott

Accessibility, relative affordability and culture are among the factors driving MICE planners from Australia and New Zealand to choose Asian destinations for their events, according to hosted buyers at AIME in Melbourne.

Debra Grandidier from Brisbane-based Events and Leisure, who has events in Vietnam and Thailand later this year, said these destinations seem to offer the same products for less money than in other countries. "With our dollar being great value in Asia at the moment it's exactly the destination people are looking for," she said.

Although Erin Gillin, who represents Strata Community

Australia, has yet to book business offshore, she told *TTGmice* that she is surprised at the capacity available in Asia and with destinations being a short trip away, the region was a logical option for events.

Hot Events New Zealand's business director, Victoria Wales, opined that improved air access to Asia, as well as culture, food and safety, were driving Asia's popularity among corporate clients.

"Asia is perceived to be safer now than Europe," Wales said.

However, she found it challenging to negotiate with Asian suppliers.

"We find we struggle with flexibility of suppliers, but we work with preferred



Vietnam is deemed great value for money; Ho Chi Minh City Hall pictured here

ones now and that's how we've gotten around it," she remarked.

Strengthening trade links between New Zealand and China are also helping

to raise outbound MICE demand for Asia, observed Mark Ferguson, a travel trade specialist who will join Extra Mile in New Zealand next week.

ICCA, MCI launch global destination sustainability index

Association, event and communication management company MCI has partnered ICCA Scandinavian Chapter to launch the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index.

The index, which is the first sustainability ranking for event destinations worldwide, aims to promote sustainable growth of international meeting destinations by highlighting best practices and responsible business tourism.

It will evaluate the sustainability performance of cities and bureaus in four key areas: city environmental strategy and infrastructure; city social sustainability performance; industry supplier support; and convention bureau strategy and initiatives.

Guy Bigwood, group sustainability director at MCI,

said: "Our vision is to have over 100 cities benchmarking and collaborating together by 2020. I am pleased to announce we have 25 Scandinavian cities based in Finland, Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Sweden, as well as our first wave of global cities including Barcelona, Geneva, Stuttgart and Sydney."



Sirk: limelight on sustainability efforts

Martin Sirk, CEO of ICCA, commented: "The unique feature of the GDS Index is that this is a bottom-up phenomenon, driven by the destinations themselves.

"We believe this is an excellent platform for leaders in sustainability from every region to showcase their policies and good practices, and for any destination to swiftly improve their competitiveness," he added.

Poor world economy hurts Malaysia's BT performance

Malaysia's travel industry is feeling the effects of the global economic slowdown, and players interviewed are bracing themselves for a tough year ahead.

While the oil and gas related industries and the banking sector are harder hit by global economic movements, Foo Sze Zhaun, business development manager of Corporate Information Travel, said business travellers going for trade fairs and exhibitions in Europe have picked up slightly for the automotive, publishing and industrial machinery sectors.

Foo added that corporate demand is shifting from long-haul to regional destinations.

Syed Razif Al-Yahya, group managing director of Sutra Group of Companies, said the group's revenue from government and corporate travel is

expected to drop by 40 per cent this year.

After witnessing reduced government travel budgets and delayed corporate payments, Syed intends to mitigate the impact by courting the leisure travel segment, which currently comprises only 10 per cent of the group's total business.

Malaysian hoteliers are also tweaking their target markets and products to ride out the economic storm.

Pullman Kuala Lumpur Bangsar's general manager, Eric Tan, said the property will target more regional travellers, while Dorsett Kuala Lumpur is giving itself an edge in the competition for business travellers by collaborating with Zuger International and equipping guestrooms with smart-phones that afford guests free 3G connectivity, local calls and SMSes. – S Puvaneswary



Tan: focus on regional sources

Incentive business booms for Melbourne

By Rebecca Elliott

The Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) has named 2016 one of its “strongest years yet” in terms of incentive business, announcing an increase of 42 per cent in secured events on the previous financial year-to-date.

Speaking at AIME in Melbourne in February, MCB CEO Karen Bolinger said the team had been focusing on securing larger groups and that the increase could be attributed to the in-market staff.

“We have representation in Shanghai and Kuala Lumpur and they are continuously on a plane – it’s about getting to corporates direct,” said Bolinger.

“When you’re knocking on their doors they really start to notice and think yes, we should be looking at Melbourne.”

Bolinger said business had been secured from China, New Zealand, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and India, with two major groups including China Life Insurance for 500 delegates and Taiwan Life Incentive for 600 delegates, both of which will be held later this year.

Bolinger confirmed that over the next two years, seven new hotels will open across the city, creating an addition-

al 1,400 rooms, or seven per cent more capacity to the additional inventory.

She added: “2016 and beyond are significant years of important development for Melbourne and Victoria (state). This will all really support the flourishing business events sector.”

MCB has also brought back its *Melbourne Values You* programme which offers “unique and exclusive” Victorian value-adds for key decision makers

looking to host an incentive or corporate meeting.



Bolinger: good help from earnest in-market staff

CWT reports increase in 2015 new business sales

Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) has reported a strong financial year in 2015 despite a continued challenging economic climate.

The company grew its new business sales to US\$1.7 billion and achieved an overall sales volume of US\$24.2 billion, reflecting the significant curtailment in travel expenses by energy customers. Excluding the impact of the energy portfolio, transactions increased by 1.3 per cent.

North American transactions rose 1.1 per cent while transactions in Europe, Middle East and Africa declined by 1.2 per cent. Latin America volume dipped 7.8 per cent due to the weight of the energy sector and the economic recession in Brazil. Asia-Pacific volumes were stable.



Anderson: success in focusing on technology and in-market growth

CWT’s app, CWT To Go, also posted a strong year in 2015, with a 62 per cent growth in user registrations to 560,000. In early 2015, CWT launched fully integrated mobile hotel booking in 17 markets, achieving approximately 35,000 hotel bookings and US\$10 million in sales.

CWT Meetings & Events business division recorded a 12 per cent growth globally, reflecting the trend of global companies

seeking new opportunities to consolidate, make effective use of their budget spend and improve their meeting and event delegate experience. The division organised over 27,500 meetings and events around the world for more than 1.2 million delegates in 2015.

Douglas Anderson, president & CEO of CWT, remarked that “2015 was a challenging year for the industry overall given the continued sharp fall in energy prices and oil in particular. We nevertheless delivered solid results.”



More visitors and secured deals at Singapore Airshow 2016

The Singapore Airshow 2016, which took place at the Changi Exhibition Centre from February 16 to 21, saw strong visitor numbers from both the trade and consumer segments, as well as an increase in amount of deals made at the show.

A total of 50 deals were concluded this year, a 14 per cent increase over the 2014 edition, with 10 of the deals amounting to US\$12.3 billion in value. The other 40 deals, announced by 20 companies, had undisclosed values. Eight MoU signings were also made, double that of the previous show.

Trade attendance from February 16 to 19 saw a seven per cent increase compared to 2014, while public visitorship from February 20 to 21 maintained at 80,000. In total, Singapore Airshow 2016 welcomed over 130,000 visitors.

Exhibitor highlights included having nearly 60 companies taking part in the French pavilion this year, the largest French presence ever at an airshow outside of France. Meanwhile, more than 140 exhibitors represented the US and host country Singapore had 36 companies exhibiting at its pavilion, an increase from 29 in 2014.

“We are pleased that the fifth edition of the Singapore Airshow has received such strong support from both trade and public visitors alike,” said Leck Chet Lam, managing director of Experia Events, organisers of the Singapore Airshow.

Singapore Airshow 2018 will be held from February 6 to 11 at Changi Exhibition Centre.

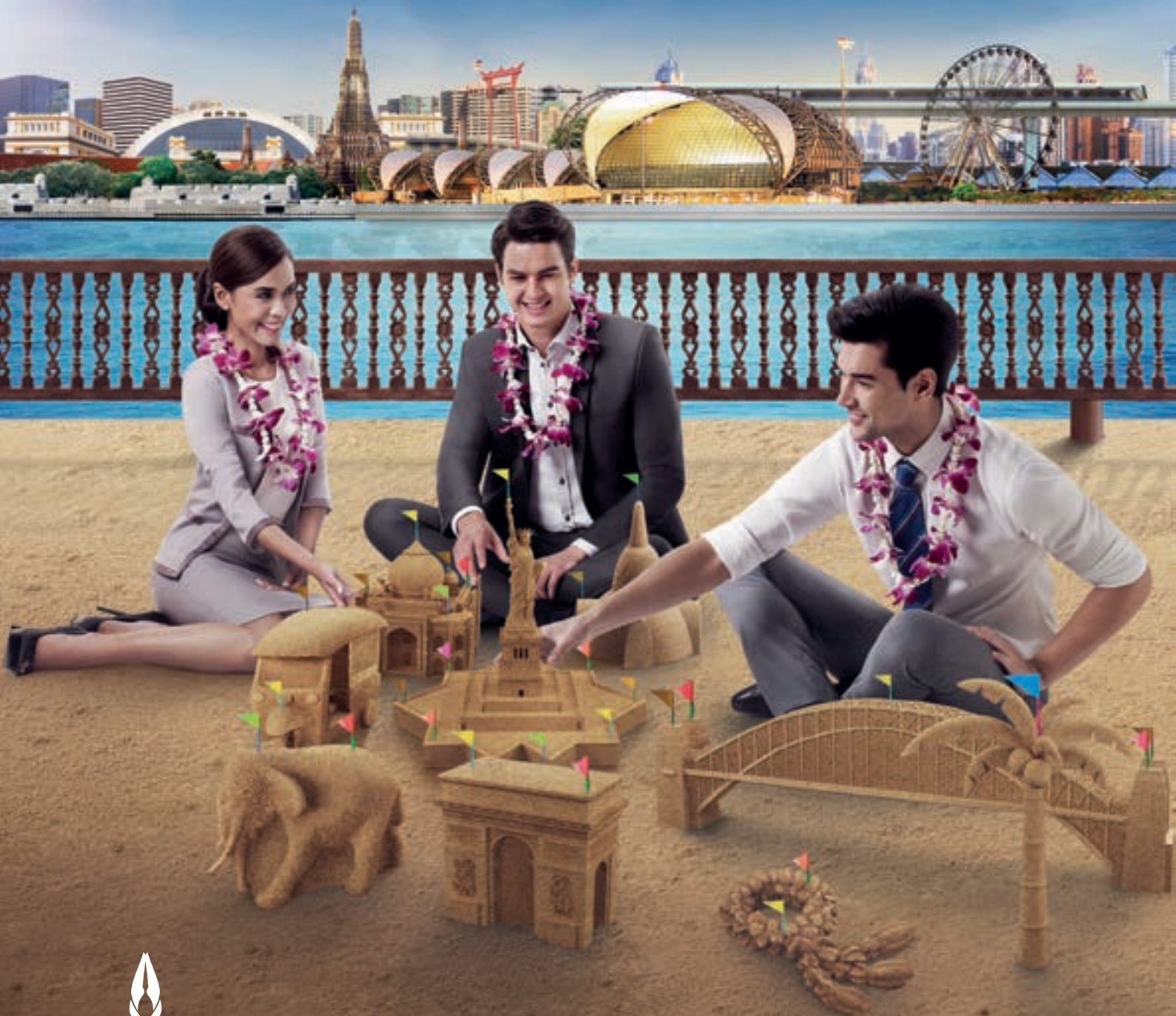
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The Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) is welcoming the world with open arms this year under the campaign *Thailand CONNECT: Our Heart, Your World*, to emphasise the professionalism and passion with which business events are served up in the country and its prime position as a hub of business and travel in South-east Asia.

Connecting to Thailand

Whether it's for exhibitions, conventions, meetings or incentives group, Thailand has an abundance of destinations from white-sand beaches to vibrant metropolises, to cater to an array of themes and activities including CSR outings, teambuilding playgrounds or the lap of luxury for top delegates.

Meetings and incentive organisers can take their pick from the big five destinations in the kingdom - Bangkok, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, Phuket and Khon Kaen - or shake things up with a trip to the next wave of up-and-coming Thai cities like the luxurious Hua Hin, adventure-filled Krabi or culturally rich Chiang Rai.

Connecting to Asia

Located in the heart of one of the world's most thriving economic regions today, Thailand

is a gateway to South-east Asia's vibrant markets with its air accessibility and state-of-the-art technology.

Regional economic giants like Singapore and Indonesia are no more than a few hours' flight away at best, making Thailand an ideal centre for exhibitors, organisers and trade visitors to access the ASEAN Economic Community and a dynamic platform for forging new professional relationships throughout Asia.

Connecting to business... with a smile

At the core of Thailand is its renowned warmth and hospitality, the 'Thai-ness' that won it the moniker Land of Smiles.

While Thailand already boasts of a strong business events curriculum and internationally acclaimed business events courses, the creative, can-do spirit of the Thais and impeccable service standards put the kingdom ahead of the competition when it comes to MICE.

A warm Welcome Package to Thailand

THAILAND is kick-starting a host of promotional packages for MICE planners

& delegates that choose Thailand as MICE destination.

Specifically targeted at business travellers, TCEB has rolled out the *Thailand CONNECT Welcome* package that bundles a BTS Connect Smart Pass, free Wi-Fi at locations throughout Bangkok, and many other privileges in central Bangkok accessible through the Ratchaprasong District card.

Moreover, TCEB's *Thailand CONNECT Beyond the Capital* package is an exclusive promotion on domestic partner airlines for international corporate clients, delegates and planners to experience the warmth of the Thai people and the majesty of its long history by travelling beyond Bangkok to explore the rest of the country.

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More Indonesian top achievers getting a sweet Swiss treat



The picturesque Chur, Switzerland

By Mimi Hudoyo

Switzerland has recorded strong incentive growth from Indonesia last year despite the challenging global economic situation and Indonesians' diminished buying power due to an unstable rupiah against the US dollar.

Explaining the increase in incentive group numbers, Ivan Breiter, Switzerland Tourism's director of South-east Asia, said: "There are many companies in Indonesia that have not done incentive trips before and are only starting to do so now. Switzerland is often chosen for top-tier (achievers) because of its reputation as a quality destination."

Total arrivals from Indonesia, including MICE and leisure, grew by 20 per cent in 2015, a record increment for the market, according to Breiter. That made Indonesia Switzerland's third largest South-east

Asian source market, overtaking Malaysia.

Dominique Oi, MICE manager of South-east Asia, Switzerland Tourism, told *TTGmice* that the bureau was "happy to see the performance from Indonesia last year".

Oi added: "We had groups coming in even until December, many of which had at least 100 pax. We are expecting another good year in 2016, as we have seen enquiries coming in as early as January."

Switzerland Tourism was in Jakarta for a sales mission in February, an exercise that brought 36 MICE sellers to meet with Indonesian outbound agents specialising in both MICE and leisure.

The bureau took the opportunity to introduced a new online tool for MICE planners, which provides information useful for proposals. Download the tool at www.MySwitzerland.com/meetings.

SriLankan Airlines scraps plans to cut Europe flights

Industry players in Sri Lanka are elated that SriLankan Airlines will not be scrapping all flights to Europe, a move earlier considered due to losses made from the routes.

The national carrier had considered pulling out of Europe, with the exception of London, to cut losses while consolidating on profitable routes like India and the Middle East.

"This is a very positive move and shows the government is listening to the industry," said Hiran Cooray, president of the Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL).

SriLankan Airlines will still discon-



tinue flights to Rome but continue flying to London, Paris and Frankfurt, while flight capacity to the Middle East will be increased.

Ajit Dias, chairman, SriLankan Airlines said these frequencies will continue for awhile and there are no more plans to reduce frequencies.

"We are also talking to several other airlines on code-sharing arrangements (to cover sectors that the airline doesn't fly to)," he said. – **Feizal Samath**

{ In brief }

Green light for more US-Haneda flights

An agreement to increase flights between the US and Haneda International Airport in Tokyo has been reached between the US and Japan.

According to a statement from the office of Brian Schatz, the US Senator for Hawaii, the agreement results in two new flight slots between the US and Haneda while also converting the four existing nighttime flights into daytime flights.

Air carriers will be able to bid for the new flight slots in the coming months.

Ascott fast-tracks China expansion

Ascott has partnered with Dongfu Investment Development, a real estate subsidiary of China's largest state-owned construction, and infrastructure builder China State Construction Engineering Company, to advance its presence in China.

Kicking off the Ascott-Dongfu partnership is a management contract for the 148-unit Citadines Guoxitai Xi'an, slated to open in 2018. This adds to Ascott's portfolio of more than 14,000 units in 24 cities owned and operated in China.

Ascott has further plans to leverage the partnership and expand in cities such as Shanghai and Jinan as it advances towards its target of 20,000 units in the country by 2020.

MCB to get a new operation model

The Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) will join forces with the state's tourism body Visit Victoria later this year, but just what that new business model looks like remains a mystery.

Last August, the Victorian Minister for Tourism and Major Events John Eren announced a "once-in-a-generation shake-up" of the tourism and major events sector, creating a new entity, Visit Victoria, to bring Tourism Victoria, the Victorian Major Events Company and "a new conventions division" under the one umbrella.

The announcement stated that the merger "will end inefficiencies and duplication".

MCB CEO Karen Bolinger said discussions are ongoing with Visit Victoria as to how MCB will sit within that portfolio.

{ 2016 Calendar }

April 6-8

IT&CM China,
Shanghai, China

April 25-28

Arabian Travel Market,
Dubai, UAE

April 19-21

IMEX,
Frankfurt,
Germany

**May
18-20**

WTM Connect Asia,
Penang, Malaysia

Luxurious integrated resort, Wynn Palace, will be unveiled in 2016



Elevated Meeting Experience at Wynn Palace

Wynn Resorts is proud to announce a whole new hospitality experience with the launch of Wynn Palace, the company's first luxurious integrated resort in Cotai, in 2016.

The surprise for guests starts with them making a breathtaking journey across a stunning Performance Lake – think plumes of water dancing with balletic grace – via a dragon SkyCab into the heart of the US\$4.1 billion, 28-storey resort.

Guests then check into spacious and elegantly furnished spaces, taking their pick from 1,700 rooms, suites and villas commanding sweeping views of the captivating Performance Lake and Cotai landscape.

Gastronomic desires can be satisfied easily from the variety of F&B options: offering Chinese, Japanese and international cuisines. Be it casual, contemporary or fine, remarkable cuisines created by passionate chefs are served in extraordinary environments.

Versatile Meeting Facilities

Meeting facilities across 26,300 sq ft. of multi-purpose space are aplenty and highly flexible at Wynn Palace, catering to the varying needs of

business guests. A dedicated team of experts makes it their business to design and deliver bespoke events for guests. What makes it even more special having your event hosted in Wynn Palace is having an exclusive consultant, culinary team and florist to help personalizing your event. To do more than just imagination, Wynn Palace has set up an Events Studio for privileged guests to preview every detail of your events.

4 meeting rooms provide 10 flexible configurations. The 17,400 sq ft. pillarless Grand Theater Ballroom lends a touch of drama to any business event with its theatrical-standard stage. This ballroom has the capacity to seat up to 960 people banquet-style, and is convertible to meet different event styles and sizes.

Last but not least, all spaces are well equipped with advanced technology, including sophisticated audio-visual devices as well as broadband and wireless Internet capabilities.

Perfecting the art of work and play

Of course, Wynn Palace's offers are not limited to the above. Other treats include a luxurious



Wynn Macau Ballroom

spa, an opulent beauty salon, a well-equipped fitness center, and the 200,000 sq ft. Wynn Esplanade housing the most luxurious brands. Guests can indulge in retail therapy from the latest in luxury accessories, jewellery and exquisite timepieces.

Right in the heart of Cotai, highly accessible

Conveniently located in Cotai, the highly anticipated Wynn Palace is just a few minutes' drive from Macau International Airport and the Taipa Ferry Terminal. Complimentary shuttle bus services are also available for guests arriving from Gongbei Port of Entry and both Macau Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal and Taipa Ferry Terminal.

Led by a team of experts, the resort's facilities and activities are crafted in perfection to pamper all guests with the best of best. This luxurious integrated resort encapsulates every guest's dreams into one place with its spectacular range of entertainment, shopping and gourmet heaven, and top-notch facilities for the any event – meeting, convention, wedding and more. Regardless it is for leisure or business, Wynn Palace is the ultimate choice for you and everyone.



Guests can make a journey across Performance Lake by SkyCab



Tulips created by artist Jeff Koons

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Tourism New Zealand, Dynasty Travel join hands to win planners' hearts

By Karen Yue

Tourism New Zealand and Singapore-based Dynasty Travel International has inked an agreement to promote The Land of the Long White Cloud for business events to corporates in Singapore.

The partnership will see Tourism New Zealand providing priority support to Dynasty Travel's destination promotion and sales efforts, in the form of training sessions and fam trips for the travel agency's MICE specialists, destination marketing materials and sales support during client pitches.

Edward Kwek, Tourism New Zealand's business events manager South & South East Asia, told *TTGmice*: "This partnership is a pilot project, with both of us committed to attracting corporate clients to New Zealand over the next one to three years. Because corporate events are less seasonal, this move will help draw events to

New Zealand during the shoulder periods of April to June and September to October."

Alicia Seah, Dynasty Travel's spokesperson, said New Zealand was its "most improved destination in 2015".

"Leisure bookings for New Zealand rose

10 to 15 per cent last year, largely due to the increased air capacity from Singapore. We believe that the strong interest in New Zealand among Singapore holidaymakers will translate to the same interest in the destination for (business events). After all, New Zealand is regarded as an aspirational destination," Seah elaborated.

Air New Zealand and Singapore Airlines had launched codeshare flights on January 6 last year, operating one daily return service per day each on the Singapore-Auckland and Singapore-Christchurch route.

Seah expects New Zealand to do even better among business event planners in Singapore this year, thanks to additional



Kwek: more business is expected to come



Auckland, New Zealand

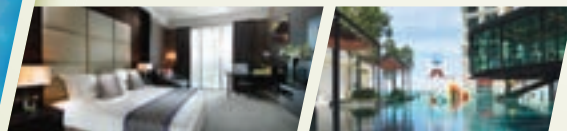
capacity from Singapore Airline's upcoming four times weekly Singapore-Canberra (Australia)-Wellington (New Zealand) service in September.

While Kwek was unable to offer a projected increment in Singapore MICE arrivals as a result of the partnership with Dynasty Travel, he is certain of more leads going forward than the current three to four the tourism bureau gets every month out of the Lion City.



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Cancer congress picks KL

KUALA LUMPUR Malaysia has triumphed over India in the bid to host the 2018 World Cancer Congress (WCC) and the World Cancer Leaders' Summit.

With this win, it is the first country in South-east Asia to host such a prestigious medical forum.

Slated to take place in October 2018, the congress is expected to attract more than 3,200 cancer experts from 11 countries who will convene in Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC).

"Hosting the congress in Kuala Lumpur will bring the highest scale of awareness to policy makers and influence cancer policies regionally to support a cohesive approach to cancer issues," said Rafidah Aziz, principal patron of National Cancer Society Malaysia (NCSM).

She added that the impact will be far-reaching, saying: "(Hosting the WCC) would spur activity in regional



National Cancer Society Malaysia's Clare Ratnasingham and Rafidah Aziz celebrate the bid win with Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau's Ho Yoke Ping

cancer associations, increase government spending on programmes against cancer, heighten awareness on cancer prevention, and facilitate collaboration within the regional cancer community."

Ho Yoke Ping, general manager – business events at Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB),

added that the event will create "immense publicity and global visibility for Malaysia" and raise awareness on Malaysia's work on cancer control and prevention.

With 40 per cent of delegates expected to be from Malaysia, Ho added: "It is an excellent platform for Malaysia to engage and network

with the rest of the world and to discuss best practices with experts from other countries."

Explaining how Malaysia came to be selected as host destination, Clare Ratnasingham, vice president of NCSM, said: "Both NCSM and MyCEB spent almost seven months preparing for the bid presentation at WCC 2014 in Melbourne.

"The final decision on which country to host WCC 2018 was made after Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) visited the two bidding countries, India and Malaysia."

Other government agencies involved in WCC 2018 and the World Cancer Leaders' Summit include the Ministry of Health, the National Cancer Institute, the Ministry of Women, Family & Community Development, the National Population & Family Development Board and the Ministry of Tourism & Culture. – **S Puvaneswary**

Geneva's ITU has faith in Bangkok

BANGKOK Plans for a major telecoms gathering in Bangkok at end-2016 are signalling renewed confidence in the Thai capital for hosting big meetings, sources have told *TTGmice*.

The Geneva-headquartered International Telecommunication Union (ITU) will host its ITU Telecom World 2016 at Bangkok's IMPACT Arena, Exhibition and Convention Centre from November 14 to 17, said Negar Takesh, head, marketing communications service of ITU Telecom World.

Although Takesh has acknowledged Thailand's "past political situations and natural hazards" and that these "could change quickly", she said these risks were already factored in when planning the event.

While she shared that risk mitigation procedures were in

place, Takesh did not detail what these were.

Thai MICE specialists are jubilant that ITU has decided to take its global gathering to Bangkok, and are expectant of busier days to come after years of political strife, bomb incidents and floods that have stunted the potential growth of the country's MICE sector.

Ianic Menard, vice president of sales, marketing & distribution for AccorHotels, Upper Southeast Asia, which has more than 20 properties in the capital city, commented: "The event is a sign of increased confidence in Thailand as a MICE destination. We're hopeful that ITU Telecom World, with its audience of public and private innovators and affiliation with the United Nations, will be followed by many

such events in the Kingdom."

Hosting the meeting is expected to generate some 400 million baht (US\$15.8 million) for the country's hospitality and tourism sector, noted Sumate Sudasna, president, Thailand Incentive and Convention Association, who made this calculation based on the per capita expenditure of 100,000 baht for up to 4,000 participants staying an average of four nights.

He said delegates could use an estimated 16,000 hotel rooms and extend their stay to other destinations in the country for pre- and post-show programmes.

"We believe decision-makers of events will be more confident in Thailand, and trust that ITU Telecom World 2016 will add weight to that perception," said Sumate.

– **Michael Mackey**

KW Conferences brings ENT event to Hyderabad

HYDERABAD India based KW Conferences has won the bid for the 14th Asia Oceania ORL-HNS Congress 2019 which will coincide with the 71st Annual Conference of The Association of Otolaryngologists of India, taking place in Hyderabad from January 9 to 13.

The PCO has tied up with the Association of Otolaryngologists of India and the Asia Oceania Association of Otorhinolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery Societies to organise the congress.

The bid for the event – regarded as the region's foremost ENT scientific gathering – was first initiated in Taiwan, where the congress was last held in March 2015.

More than 5,000 delegates are expected at the event.



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The art of feeding event delegates



As more dining functions become an integral part of the complete business event, convention centres must perfect their F&B operations to satiate demanding organisers. We find out what the new needs are and which centres in Asia are muscling up their culinary creativity and catering prowess

*By Karen Yue, Rebecca Elliott, Paige Lee Pei Qi, S Puvaneswary,
Mimi Hudoyo, Rosa Ocampo, Prudence Lui*

Convention centres have for years now recognised the need to be more than a provider of event space. The more competitive ones of the lot have invested in technology to enhance event organisers' delivery of events and delegates' experience, in sustainable capabilities to reduce their impact on the environment they operate in and at the same time, satisfy a growing number of clients who prefer to work with green partners, and in building an in-house team of event specialists who can add another dimension of operational support for their clients, among other areas.

These days, convention centres in Asia are sharpening yet another aspect of their service delivery – food and beverage.

Bruce Winton, general manager of the new Marriott Grand Ballroom (MGB), a convention centre that opened last year which has already earned a reputation for being one of the Philippines' largest convention venue for up to 5,000 pax, said this evolution is necessary for convention centres to do well going forward.

"In this age, organisers favour one-stop-shop kind of venues that hotels have an advantage in. Gone are the days that a function room will be offered bare; requirements are now built-in. Organisers' considerations are highly dependent on the venue's completeness against their checklist. Innovation is top of mind when it comes to catering, lighting and sound equipment, event coordination, room accommodation, etc," remarked Winton.

It is this need for a complete service that renders a basic catering service at convention centres obsolete today.

Convention centre chiefs opined that the new importance placed on quality dining functions within a larger business event stemmed from organisers' need to deliver a strong and memorable overall experience for their delegates.

Renato Padilla, general manager of

Philippine International Convention Centre (PICC) in Manila, said: "With the goal of mounting uniquely creative and memorable events, organisers and clients are more demanding in terms of the quality and variety of food and service."

"Even corporate functions are becoming themed events. We have to be prepared with an inventory of chairs, linens, flatware and décor to match the clients' desired theme. On certain occasions, even the food servers have to dress to the theme," added Padilla.

Food is now an "integral part of events" and not just a secondary consideration for event organisers, according to Arun Madhok, CEO of Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre.

"Event attendees have come to expect good food and organisers are looking past traditional catering (to focus on) innovative experiential dining concepts to complement their event themes," Madhok remarked.

Adelaide Convention Centre CEO, Alec Gilbert, agree. "Planners are aware that food and beverage can be the maker or breaker of large-scale events, and the importance of getting it right and providing a unique experience is paramount," he said.

A taste of the destination

Adelaide Convention Centre has been seeing an uptick in requests for customised menus and a need for menu design to be themed, often based on the uniqueness of local produce.

Gilbert said: "When (event guests) taste our food, it may be the first opportunity they have had to taste the produce and wines from South Australia. As a centre, we provide the window to what the state has to offer, and therefore it is important that we do it right. Guests are looking beyond the menu and wanting to learn something about the food, culture and traditions of the host destination."

Suntec Singapore's Madhok has also no-

ticed a growing appetite for local favourites during dining events.

"We see an increasing demand for menus with a local flavour, for delegates who may not be able to experience the local culture due to their tight schedule (during the event period)," he said, adding that the centre is able to include traditional *teh tarik* (pulled milk tea), for instance, in the menu at clients' request.



Adelaide Convention Centre offers South Australian wines to introduce delegates to the local food culture

Colin Yeoh, group director of food & beverage operations, Sunway Hotels & Resorts Malaysia, which manages the Sunway Pyramid Convention Centre within the Sunway Resort City, noted that requests from event organisers to "feature and prepare local cuisine and present it in novel and creative ways" are on the rise.

"Their intention is to showcase the diversity in Malaysian cuisine and to create unique experiences for their delegates during their short stay in Malaysia," Yeoh said.

He added that Sunway's diverse culinary team is also capable of creating "enticing menu selections with an array of Malaysian, regional Asian, Middle Eastern and Western cuisine that will take diners to a special place and time, one plate at a time".



"We need to provide the theatre. Live cooking stations, (event themes) with respect to food presentation and furniture, visual effects through lighting and customisation of menus are designed to provide that unique experience."

Alex Gilbert

CEO, Adelaide Convention Centre



Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre boasts the largest kitchen in the Southern Hemisphere and a 'made fresh in house by hand' food philosophy



Adelaide Convention Centre is telling stories of Australia's food producers to quench delegates' thirst for knowledge of the host destination's food culture

"We firmly believe that great food brings people together. Culinary excellence fosters networking, making events more meaningful for attendees."

Arun Madhok

CEO, Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre

More servings of interaction please

Convenient dining options are in demand, discovered Marina Bay Sands' (MBS) executive chef, Christopher Christie, as organisers and event delegates seek to pack more networking opportunities into the programme.

"As networking plays a pivotal role in every meeting, we see a growing demand for easy grab-and-go snack items that are convenient for meeting delegates," Christie said.

To address this need, Christie and his team will set up themed pop-up cafes within the convention centre, an arrangement that allows delegates to network while filling their tummies.

Sharing the same observations, Ad-

elaide Convention Centre's Gilbert said "there is less of the three-course, sit-down menu and more techniques being employed in the menu designed to stimulate interaction among delegates".

Besides connecting with one another, delegates at dining functions are also increasingly desiring interaction with the kitchen, found Peter Haycroft, executive chef at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC).

He said: "They are very interested in where their food as come from, how it is cooked and how it is served. This has led us to invest in live cooking stations."

Diverse diets

Dining events at convention centres are becoming more complex, a change catalysed by an increasingly diverse event audience with different dietary requirements and preferences.

The kitchens of convention centres must now accommodate dietary preferences, not just dietary restrictions.

"Healthy options – as opposed to dietary requirements – will be very popular this year," said MCEC's Haycroft.

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre Malaysia, which has been fielding more requests for healthy dishes and beverages, has started to include a wide selection of such options in its banquet menus, Day Conference Packages, TenOnCall offerings and public catering outlets (West Wing Café and Park View Deck), revealed executive chef, Richmond Lim.

In 2015, Adelaide Convention Centre introduced a new food philosophy: *Soils*

and Seasons. It was designed to tell the story of South Australia's farmers, fishers, growers and wine makers, which Gilbert said was helping to build the centre's reputation around the world.

The new International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney) unveiled its own food philosophy too this February. *Feeding your Performance* promises to feed its event delegates fresh, healthy food to nourish the body and mind.

CEO Geoff Donaghy said executive chef Tony Panetta had worked with nutritionists and regional suppliers in New South Wales to develop an "industry-first approach to cuisine".

The new food philosophy spans ICC Sydney's retail outlets and events.

At PICC, requests for halal, kosher, vegetarian, gluten-free and nut-free meals "are not uncommon", according to Padilla.



Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center serves up local specialities at dining events

“As many events now have a diverse delegate profile, and lifestyle choices have evolved with the times, organisers now ask for a variety of meal choices that were not usually requested for in previous years,” said Padilla.

When the new Marriott Grand Ballroom was built, it included 15 kitchens to support each event space and to satisfy the growing need for quality food options of a wide-ranging variety. These kitchens are staffed by a multiracial culinary team to ensure authentic flavours. It will soon have a halal certified kitchen to support the increasing number of events from the Muslim community.

Besides requests for foods prepared with less cream and fat, some organisers are also enquiring about sustainable food options, noted Yasinta Hartawan, general manager-operations of Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center.

Celebrity status

The plethora of cooking TV shows and expansion of celebrity chef restaurants across the world are influencing how people dine and raising their expectations of dining events they attend.

Sharing his observations with *TT*



Requests for sustainable food options are on the rise

Gmice, Adelaide Convention Centre's Gilbert, said: “Both clients and delegates are becoming far more discerning in terms of the quality and presentation of meals. Expectations are much higher and the lines between quality function catering and restaurant a la carte catering are blurring.”

Gilbert believes that the “prevalence

of cooking shows on TV and the rise of celebrity chefs” are effecting these changes in dining function requirements, and noted that convention centres today must be proactive partners with the client in order to create a successful event.

Richmond Lim, executive chef at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre Ma-



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The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali provides unique dinner venues to business events hosted at the Bali International Convention Centre next door

“Holding events – especially branded ones – in restaurants and bars have become more fashionable compared to banquet halls (in convention centres) which will need additional decoration to create an atmosphere.”

Alexander Dietzsch

EAM food & beverage,
The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali

laysia, agrees, saying: “Some organisers want us to replicate the taste of dishes they personally like at fine dining restaurants for their banquet event.”

Lim added: “But it is not that simple to replicate because fine dining restaurants usually cook for 60 to 80 people, whereas banquet events at the centre may be for up to 6,000 pax for a sit-down dinner or 12,000 for a standing buffet. We have to be able to deliver food at the right speed, time and temperature.”

Varied venues

The quest for a spectacular dining experience is also impacting organisers’ choice of venue.

For convention centres that are part of an integrated development complete with hotels and attractions, such a request can be easily satisfied.

“There is a growing trend for organisers with more than two consecutive days of events at the centre to look for dining venues (elsewhere),” said Sunway’s Yeoh.

“With all our facilities, from the convention centre and three hotels with more than 1,400 (keys), to the theme park and Sunway Pyramid Shopping Mall – all within walking distance and linked by covered walkways – we are able to offer convenience and comfort to event organisers and take away the hassle of planning transportation for medium- and large-scale events,” said Yeoh.

Meetings have been hosted on Sunway Lagoon’s man-made beach and Sunway Pyramid Shopping Mall’s skating rink.

“Our F&B team always promote our hotel venues to clients (who desire alternative venues to convention centre ballrooms,” said Alexander Dietzsch, executive assistant manager food & beverage of The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali, which manages the Bali International Convention Centre next door.

“We have created customised packages for all our hotel venues, and they can cater for groups. We frequently have corporate groups joining our Sunday Brunch when their meetings fall over a

weekend,” Dietzsch added.

Business events taking place at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre, part of the MBS integrated resort, can utilise the complex’s impressive collection of 10 celebrity chef restaurants.

Christie, said: “Our clients can choose to host their networking events over celebrity chef dine-arounds where guests can taste multiple award-winning flavours in a single night, or commission a celebrity chef to create a menu for a sit-down dinner.

“Our clients recognise that when they do an event at MBS, it is not just an event space or technical expertise that we can provide, but a holistic end-to-end experience which includes creating culinary magic when needed.”

For instance, as Christie explained, one of MBS’ specialities is themed dinners, which are easily done in ballrooms and staff are on hand to support world-class entertainment acts that clients increasingly bring in to jazz up their evenings.

“Having the option to dine poolside or at the lagoon at The Venetian Macao is as important as the food we offer,” remarked Gene Capuano, vice president of convention and exhibition operations.

To keep meeting groups on site, Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center, which is

Marina Bay Sands promises an end-to-end experience including delivering culinary excellence; ASEAN Para Games closing ceremony



not part of a mixed-used complex, has resorted to pitching its public spaces. Taman Jepun, a courtyard between halls one and two, has become an ideal venue for a Balinese-themed dinner or reception.

“Its green surroundings, architecture and the Balinese gate make a dramatic backdrop for any event,” said Hartawan.

PICC chooses to take advantage of its vast grounds – a rarity in Manila – by adding a second outdoor venue, The Garden, to support afternoon and sundown gatherings. The Garden offers 2,946m² of space with 47 plant species, park benches and a centrepiece koi pond. PICC’s other outdoor venue is The Courtyard, which can take 860 pax for a cocktail party.

Investments in technology

Several convention centres in Asia have spruced up their kitchen to better cater to the new breed of demanding dining events.

According to Lim, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre has acquired a reputation for being able to deliver five-star banquets for large volumes of people, and that is due to the investments made in kitchen technology. The centre’s kitchen is now fitted with touchscreen ovens with USB ports and other upgraded equipment.

“It is important to keep up with kitchen technology as it will allow us to prepare food more efficiently. Productivity is very important in this business and something we strive for every day,” Lim said.



Sunway Pyramid Convention Centre, part of the larger Sunway Resort City, is able to grant unique dining venue options to event planners

MBS’ kitchens – 48 in all – are equipped with “high quality culinary equipment such as combi-ovens, induction stoves and sous vide machines for precision cooking”, said Christie.

But more critical to the success of a banquet is the essence of timing, remarked Christie, especially when it comes to serving a hall filled with thousands of hungry people.

He pointed out that MBS’ dynamic team of 400 culinary staff and 120 banquet operations personnel is a key component for flawless execution.

Suntec Singapore modernised its three

kitchens in 2015 with the installation of state-of-the-art ovens which allow its chefs to maintain a high food quality even when cooking in large quantities.

“All our gas stoves were also replaced with induction stoves, which is in line with our sustainability goals, and more importantly, they are safer for our chefs,” said Madhok.

PICC has recently invested in top-of-the-line kitchen equipment and in-house facilities with its exclusive caterer, Via Mare, one of the country’s foremost catering service provider with 40 years of experience under its belt.

“We believe a memorable culinary experience should go beyond just tastes and flavours. (It should) satisfy the five senses to make an impactful impression.”

Richmond Lim

Executive chef,
Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

How planners did it



Clockwise from top left: Marriott Grand Ballroom and how it presented international cuisine in an interesting way during MICECON 2015; Pacific World Singapore used cultural activities to keep delegates in one location before dinner is served

A cultural lure

Pacific World Singapore organised a conference in Sands Expo and Convention Centre for 750 attendees from an international agricultural firm two years ago, and there was a three-hour gap between the conference and dinner. As the client wanted to contain all attendees in the venue before dinner, a few challenges surfaced.

Linda Low, manager of strategic partnership and product marketing, Pacific World Singapore, said: "It was difficult to find an appropriate holding area to adjourn the group to, and to keep them engaged during waiting period. Furthermore, there was a turnaround time of three hours to convert the room from conference set-up to a banquet setting."

The decision was eventually made to use the foyer outside of the ballroom as a holding area for the attendees. This helped to minimise movement of the group.

To entertain them during the three-hour wait, Low said cultural activities were set up in

booths placed around the foyer. These activities gave attendees a taste of Asian cultures and encouraged interaction at the same time. Hostesses were also dressed in costumes of different ethnic groups in Asia.

Low said: "While dinners in ballrooms are common, what was satisfying from the event was the pre-dinner interaction and cultural experiences which was the client's objective."

Themed for variety

The annual Philippine MICE Conference (MICECON) is the country's largest MICE event and one that is aimed at showcasing the destination's capability in hosting international events.

The edition in September 2015 made use of its various dining functions to inject excitement into the two-day conference, according to Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) chief of marketing and promotions, Susan del Mundo.

Working with the Marriott Grand Ballroom,

the convention centre where MICECON was held, the TPB rolled out thematic coffee breaks, a 1960s themed lunch function and a colourful dinner party.

For the lunch event, cushions were strewn around low tables, and they were matched by gay bunting and other decorations typical of the Philippine fiesta. Participants were asked to come dressed in 1960s fashion, and entertainment echoed that era.

For the dinner party, an array of international food was served, including a huge vat of paella. There was also cheese, a tapas bar and other beautifully bedecked buffet stations. Cubic seats lit in various hues lend colour to the venue, and MGB utilised its 176 programmable pillar ceiling lights to enhance the ambience.

Delectable food that were creatively presented, excellent entertainment that is second nature to Filipinos, and dazzling lighting effects combined to make MICECON 2015 memorable and experiential, said del Mundo.



Above: Streetmosphere performers inject fun to a Tupperware convention. **Below from left:** The Westin Resort Nusa Dua takes dining events onto the beach; Bali Nusa Dua Convention Centre executes a traditional dinner

Convention centres get creative

Meetings under the sun

The Westin Resort Nusa Dua, which manages the Bali International Convention Centre next door, has played up its location in a sunny resort paradise by arranging meetings outside of the convention centre.

It had a meeting venue set up on the beachfront, with sun beds lined up to face the speaker. It also did a corporate gathering in a picnic set-up with blankets, cushions and well-stocked picnic baskets.

A promised beer garden

At the Professional Conference Organisers Association Conference in November 2015, the Adelaide Convention Centre used a beer garden concept to showcase increasingly popular craft beers from South Australia, collaborating with a range of local microbreweries. The concept changed the format of a traditional banquet and encourage more interactive among delegates.

Dine all over Australia in one location

During the Australian Tourism Exchange

held at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre in June 2015, it wasn't just Melbourne's cuisine the culinary team had to showcase to the 10,000 delegates from 38 countries over four days. In line with Tourism Australia's *Restaurant Australia* campaign, the food and beverage offering illustrated the unique cuisines of each state and territory, with produce flown in from all over Australia.

The centre's chefs and procurement team worked closely with each state's tourism authority to not only source and order produce from their region, but also develop creative menus for eight concurrent cocktail functions.

A feast for all senses

A private New Year's Eve event held last year at the Grand Ballroom in Sands Expo and Convention Centre in Singapore saw a lavish sit-down dinner for more than 2,000 guests. Apart from platters of seafood served, guests were also treated to a cheese and chocolate buffet at the Grand Ballroom foyer while they watched fireworks through the towering glass façade.

An international affair

A Tupperware convention at The Venetian Macao Cotai Expo required the venue to provide its 8,000 guests with eight different menus to showcase eight different cultures including Macanese, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Singaporean, Thai and Indian (both vegetarian and Jain). Some 800 tables were spread out over 40,000m² of exhibition hall space, and country flags were flown over each area to identify the different dining speciality. Colours LEDs to light up pillars provided extra colour differentiation for the various areas.

For entertainment, The Venetian brought in *Streetmosphere* roaming performers and singing gondoliers.

A local touch

The Kompas Gramedia Dinner for Asia Pacific Media Forum 2014 held at Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center was executed in *Lesehan* style, an informal Javanese concept which sees guests seated on the floor at low tables. Food stalls were set up around the event space.



Time to shine

An upcoming convention centre, more international branded hotels, a larger airport and better air links will change Cebu's fate, writes **Rosa Ocampo**



Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino is one of the few hotels in Cebu that can support mid-sized business events

Several developments taking shape in Cebu will help the Philippine destination realise its dream of becoming a business events hub in two years' time.

A soon-to-come convention centre will address the city's lack of large-scale venues, while more international hotel chains are eyeing Cebu for their next portfolio expansion which will quench the city's thirst for global brands.

Walid Wafik, vice president-general manager of SMX Convention Centers, told *TTGmice* that SMX Convention Center Cebu, slated for an end-2017 opening, will be able to accommodate up to 5,000 pax.

SMX Convention Center Cebu will also have an arena for huge concerts and similar events, as well as a hotel that has yet to be branded, Wafik revealed.

Due to the absence of a convention centre in Cebu, industry sources said the destination has had to reject big events. Mid-sized gatherings in Cebu are usually held in the meeting

facilities of hotels such as Radisson Blue Cebu, Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino, and Shangri-La's Mactan Resort and Spa, Cebu.

The growing presence of global hotel chains seeking to add properties in Cebu is a much needed development in a province where the majority of hotels are family-owned.

Dusit International will open the 295-key Dusit Princess Hotel Cebu in 2018 and is looking to add another in Cebu's Oslob resort town, while Asian hospitality chain Plateno Hotels Group is shopping for new opportunities in the province.

Jean-Luc Kebers, managing director of 3D Hospitality Bridge, said interest from foreign hotel investors is good for the industry because it creates competition with local developers.

These hardware developments bode well for Cebu's business events sector, and they complement the ongoing expansion of Mactan International Airport which will have a second passenger terminal by 2018,

said Mary Grace Paulino, tourism officer of the Cebu Provincial Government. The new terminal will double the airport's capacity to 12 million passengers yearly.

International air links are also being improved. In March Philippine Airlines began direct flights from Los Angeles; Emirates connected Dubai with Cebu via Clark International Airport; EVA Airways launched services from Taipei; XiamenAir started direct services from Xiamen, China.

Matt Poonin, manager sales and marketing, Travelite Travel and Tours, is confident that the new services will boost arrivals from the US, China, Taiwan and Europe especially the French, Dutch, German and UK markets, aided by the new Emirates service.

Poonin told *TTGmice* that before Emirates had begun its Dubai-Cebu service, a French automotive distribution company had approached Travelite for a series of incentive trips in Cebu for April 2016. Participants will fly from Paris via Dubai, a popular transit point for European travellers today.

Alice Queblatin, managing director of Southwind Travel & Tours (Cebu), expects more MICE groups from the Middle East to come on the wings of Emirates' new service as well as plans by Qatar Airways to resume direct services between Doha and Cebu this year. Qatar Airways used to serve this route until five years ago.

Kebers expects Cebu to grow as the main gateway to the Philippines.

"Cebu is strategically located as you pass it to go to Bohol or Siquijor in the Visayas and to Siargao in Mindanao," said Kebers.

He added that "many flights from Manila and China (come through) Cebu" and that "will help solve the (congestion at) Manila's Ninoy Aquino International airport".

Jerrie Mendoza, sales manager of Waterfront Hotel & Casino, believes that the recent infrastructure developments will attract more business events from South-east Asia and change the MICE profile that is now dominated by the domestic market.

Meanwhile, a MICE task force is being considered to further harness business amid the positive developments in Cebu. If that pushed through, the team would comprise the Department of Tourism, the local government and private sector players.



{ Insider }

Ann Olalo, director of sales and marketing with Radisson Blu Hotel Cebu, recommends three must-dos in her city

Marvel at Cebu's ancient Christian landmarks

Visit the huge Basilica del Santo Niño and the 595-year old Magellan's Cross in front of it. Both landmarks bear testament to the city's Christian faith, a heritage from Spain.

Chow down local eats

Try Cebu's famous *lechon* (whole pig spit-roasted over charcoal) and mangoes.

Go shopping

Make time to shop for local souvenirs and Cebu delicacies such as dried mangoes and other dried fruits, dried seafood, cookies of varied ingredients, and more.



Magellan's Cross, planted by European explorer Ferdinand Magellan in the 16th century

{ Spotlight }

Celebrating Cebu's craft

Destination Specialists (Cebu) Inc. has begun offering a customised arts and crafts tour to highlight the province's renowned artisans and their products ranging from export-quality furnitures to dried mangoes.

MICE and inbound manager Merlyn Eborá said the bespoke programme – which is fast gaining popularity among corporate groups – is not merely a tour; participants can also craft their own accessories and ship purchases back home.

The tour includes a stop at the factory of world-renowned furniture maker and manufacturer Kenneth Cobonpue, whose unique pieces grace the homes of royalties and celebrities worldwide. Over 300 craftsmen make upmarket products for his eponymous brand Kenneth Cobonpue and Hive, a collection of Filipino and international designers.

Another interesting activity is the visit to Alegre guitar factory to see the intricate processes involved in assembling the string instrument. Skilled

artisans make high-quality guitars that are exported to the US, Canada, Japan and other countries. Participants are also introduced to the assorted types, designs and sizes of guitars.

The tour then goes to the production facilities of Kor Landa Accessories, formed more than 30 years ago by French custom jeweller Jean-Daniel Christin. Kor Landa produces mainly fashion jewellery for export. They are made of natural materials like wood, mother of pearl and stones, and sometimes synthetic produce.

The Cebu experience wouldn't be complete without visiting the factory of leading dried mangoes exporter Profoods International in Mandaue City. Participants will see how the fruits are selected, prepared, ripen, peeled, sliced and packed. There is also a mango museum and a shop offering discounted buys.

Eborá said other arts and crafts facilities can be included in the programme, depending on participants' interest.



From left: Alegre guitar factory, Kenneth Cobonpue showroom

{ Talking numbers }



15,000

The minimum number of participants at the International Eucharistic Congress held in Cebu City in January



4.47

The number in millions of tourists targeted to arrive on Cebu shores in 2016, including 2.54 million foreigners



Bintan Lagoon Resort has stepped up hardware improvements to keep itself fresh and attractive to leisure and corporate guests; Nelayan restaurant (above) is its newest dining destination

Building a paradise

Major developments in two new districts in Bintan are spurring existing properties to spruce up, benefitting the destination as a whole. By **Karen Yue**

The masterplans of both the Lagoi Bay and Treasure Bay integrated resort areas in Bintan bore promises of a massive uplift for the Indonesian resort destination when they were announced years ago.

Although details of what's to come have changed over time – for instance, Treasure Bay's developer Landmarks and world renowned wellness brand Canyon Ranch have called off their partnership to build a luxury resort on the island barely two years after the plan was announced on June 13, 2014 – and opening dates for many of the new hardware have been delayed, the developments are enough to spur existing tourism suppliers into revamping their own offerings for a better fight.

At press time in March, new tourism infrastructure that are already in operation include The Canopi and Crystal Lagoon in Treasure Bay. Meanwhile in Lagoi Bay are the Swiss-Belhotel Lagoi Bay, The Sanchaya, the Air Adventure Flying

Club, Flyboyz Beach Bar, Plaza Lagoi shopping mall, Bintan Marketplace and Lake Lagoi.

Both The Canopi – which features 41 safari tent-suites – and the Crystal Lagoon, both of which sit side by side, have hosted several teambuilding groups (see Spotlight, page 31).

Swiss-Belhotel Lagoi Bay, which presently offers 130 keys including 60 twin-share rooms, is equipped with function spaces. The Diamond Ballroom can seat 400 pax in theatre-style and be divided into three smaller venues. Four other smaller function rooms are available, along with a rooftop pool deck which has been a hit with planners for networking parties with up to 200 guests.

By the end of 2Q2016, a second hotel tower will open with 27 one- and two-bedroom apartment-style guestrooms and more restaurants.

“Being new is an advantage but we could do with more traffic,” commented Imelda Chen, the hotel's sales and marketing manager.

Function rooms now see a 50 per

cent occupancy monthly, with most meetings being held over weekends.

Chen said most events are by companies based in Singapore, although domestic meetings conducted by Indonesian telecommunications firms and banks are substantial too.

To enhance the stay experience for hotel guests and to encourage longer stays, Swiss-Belhotel Lagoi Bay has built an entertainment centre with a 30-seat movie theatre which can be hired for seminars and presentations, and a games area offering console games, foosball table and pool table.

A fishing facility on the edge of the serene Lake Lagoi, within walking distance from the hotel, is new too. A friendly fishing competition for groups can be organised there.

The hotel is also expanding its fleet of watersports equipment to include jetskis and banana boats.

Chen said the hotel can arrange simple teambuilding activities such as cooking classes and towel-folding classes in its function rooms, as well as Segway and hoverboard trails around Lake Lagoi.

For planners who require a more opulent option for C-level guests, they now have The Sanchaya (see Checking in, page 32).

Fay Gauna Luge, director of sales and marketing with The Sanchaya, said the 30-key property has welcomed teambuilding groups, corporate meetings and incentives since opening in December 2014. The

“With the opening of the new private international airport in Bintan (slated for early 2018), and the better connectivity it will offer to major metros in Indonesia, we hope to attract a lot more domestic corporate meetings and incentive travel business.”

Asad Shiraz

Director of marketing, Bintan Resorts International



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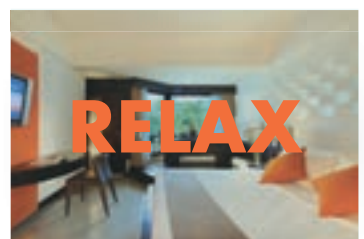
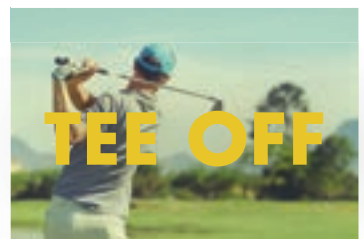
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Destination: Indonesia

average size of these groups was 40 pax, with the largest being a 55-pax gathering in April last year.

"We don't get massive groups because we don't have that many rooms and our twin-share villas are in Hollywood twin setup," Lague explained. To help secure larger corporate groups, she has been pitching to planners the possibility of splitting delegates across a few hotels.

"There is a cooperative culture among hotels in Bintan and we refer business we aren't able to take on to one another," she remarked, adding that hotels collaborate on recreational activities too.

She said: "We work closely with Nirwana Gardens in organising ATV and elephant rides for our guests. A segment of the Crystal Lagoon is reserved for our guests during the monsoon season when our beach is closed. And since we do not have a kids club, we point our guests to The Canopi where plenty of suitable activities are available."

While chiefs of existing resorts recognise the intense competition the new developments bring, they agree that fresh products will help to raise awareness of Bintan.

"(They) create a buzz for Bintan and boost tourist arrivals," remarked Gerald A Hendrick, vice president, business development and hotel operations, Bintan Lagoon Resort.

Agreeing, Alpha Eldiansyah, general manager of Banyan Tree Bintan, expects stronger arrivals to the island, as well as more repeat visitors and longer stays at his property and Angsana Bintan as a result of guests wanting to experience all the new attractions.

"Bali went through a similar transition and became a world renowned resort destination with its own char-

acter. Bintan now has the potential to grow into a more comprehensive MICE destination while retaining the rustic charm and rainforest setting that makes it such an attractive getaway," said Eldiansyah.

But Bintan's established players are not content to let the newbies get all the attention.

Asad Shiraz, director of marketing with Bintan Resorts International (BRI), which markets Bintan's tourism developments, told *TTGmice* that "existing resorts are responding by upgrading their facilities and enhancing their appeal by adding new recreational choices to their resorts".

Indeed, Bintan Lagoon Resort has been undergoing an intensive renovation since 2015, starting with a rebranding in July, upgrading and enhancements to Silk nightclub and Terrace Sports Bar, and boosting its Wi-Fi system. It opened Powerhouse Gym and Jungle Gym for kids. Soon to come is a refreshed Kopi-O restaurant and monthly activities for guests.

Hendrick said: "These works have positioned the resort as a trendsetter in Bintan."

The 20-year-old Nirwana Gardens complex has also refreshed the rooms in Nirwana Resort Hotel's west wing in 2015 and opened the new PADI-certified Max's Dive Centre in November.

Further renovations will be made to the east wing, Banyu Biru Villas, Indra Maya Pool Villas and Mayang Sari Beach Resort, while the complex's Internet will be powered up with fibre-optic cables and guests will get 1MB of complimentary usage.

Recreational offerings will be enhanced too, with new and upgraded sports equipment coming online. One of the latest fun offerings at Nirwana Resort Hotel is the guided sunset and sunrise tours on ATVs and Ninebots, allowing participants to enjoy the surrounding nature in style.

Walid F Birak, general manager of Nirwana Resort Hotel, said: "MICE groups need activities, and our resort has many to offer. But to truly grow our corporate event business, we need the help of an international airport. The current domestic airport operates only three domestic flights a day."

The airport in question is the Bintan Resorts International Airport, whose opening date has shifted to early-2018 from 2015. Gallant Venture, which leads the project, is in "various discussions with airlines, airport operators and other related businesses at present", said Shiraz, who added that construction is now progressing "at a fast clip".

{ Talking numbers }



1,300

The size – in hectares – of Lagoi Bay which will house resorts, residential villas, a variety of attractions as well as retail areas



338

The size – in hectares – of Treasure Bay which will comprise water attractions, resorts, a private mangrove park, and more

Conduct a presentation at Swiss-Belhotel Lagoi Bay's new theatre



Tourism players in Bintan are also urging a much stronger destination marketing effort to highlight the new and improved Bintan.

Lague said: "My biggest obstacle is the impression business event planners have of Bintan. But Bintan today is different. Before, the mangrove was its only attraction. Today there is so much more to do and see."

When asked what BRI is doing to change and improve consumers' perception of Bintan, Shiraz said: "We will have to relentlessly promote all the new aspects through all channels at our disposal and within our reach."

He added: "Bintan is not a 'side-destination' of Singapore. It is an equally attractive partner – if not different. Bintan adds to the appeal of a Singapore programme by giving it a beach holiday dimension, a nature escapade dimension and an Indonesian cultural dimension, just to name a few."

{ Spotlight }

Crystal clear adventures

The new Crystal Lagoon in Bintan's Treasure Bay integrated resort complex is both an eye candy and a gem of a playground for corporate groups seeks active fun for teambuilding programmes or pre/post-meeting get-togethers.

Equivalent in size to 90 Olympic swimming pools, the lagoon is South-east Asia's first and largest recreational sea-water body that uses a unique and patented water purification system. The eco-friendly technology uses 100 times less chemical products than conventional swimming pools and consumes only two per cent of the energy needed by conventional filtration pools.

Besides its sustainable draw, Crystal Lagoon is set to excite event planners with its myriad of fun water sports. Thrill seekers can swim, wakeboard on a cable ski circuit, kayak, ride a paddleboat, go water-ZOVing (water-walking in an inflated ball) and fly nine metres up in the air on a hydro-powered Jetovator, among many other activities.

The clear blue waters is also adorned with a floating inflatable bouncing water-park that provides hours of fun.

The white sandy beach around the lagoon is great for volleyball, and numerous sun loungers allow participants to take a rest and get a tan.

And since the Crystal Lagoon is man-made, it remains safe for users during the monsoon season.

Singapore-based teambuilding specialist, The WOW Experience, is able to support corporate groups looking for fun at the Crystal Lagoon.

Should corporate groups desire to meet before the games, The Canopi, a collection of safari tent-suites located along the Crystal Lagoon, offers a rustic function room that is good for 70 pax in a classroom setup.

According to Jasvinder Kaur, spokesperson of Landmarks, the developer of Treasure Bay, The Canopi has hosted several corporate groups for three-day/two-night teambuilding programmes which included water games at the Crystal Lagoon as well as other activities such as trekking and mangrove tours.

"These groups are mostly 50-pax in size because The Canopi has only 41 tent-suites," she said, adding The Canopi has been seeing "very strong interest"



from leisure travellers across the weekends, corporate groups and even public event organisers.

"There have been requests for us to add more tent-suites, and this is something we will consider," she said.

{ Insider }

Anshuman Narayan, estate manager of The Sanchaya, recommends three things to do in Bintan

Go flying

Capture a bird's-eye view of scenic Lagoi Bay by taking to the sky in an open

cockpit ultralight seaplane with Air Adventures Flying Club. You can feel the adrenaline coursing through your veins as the aircraft takes off and you will be in awe of the spectacular views.

Go play on the lawn

Make a roquet shot during the quintessentially British sport of croquet on our manicured lawn overlooking powder-white sands, palm trees, aquamarine waters and picturesque islands. Make the most of Bintan's glorious year-round tropical climate by escaping to a bygone era playing croquet or pétanque, with tea, Pimm's or pastis as refreshments.

Go see the fireflies

Cruise down Sebung River by night and experience the mangrove forests' serenity. Known as lightning bugs, the fireflies are literally the stars of the show, collectively twinkling like Christmas tree lights. Brimming with stars, the night sky over Bintan is also brilliant.



Checking in

Five-star, 21 villas and nine suites
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www.thesanchaya.com

The Sanchaya



FACT FILE

Maximum pax for meetings

75 pax, theatre-style in The Dahlia

Minimum pax for meetings

10 pax, banquet in the Decanter

Meetings handled

Two successive half-day meetings by a watch retail company with eight people; a half-day meeting by a mining company with 20 people

VERDICT



An impressive property with beautiful venues and wide-open spaces that can add value to any corporate event.

Karen Yue

Sitting on a powder-white sandy beach that leads into a sparkling, blue sea, and framed by swaying coconut trees and neat shrubs, The Sanchaya could trick its guests into thinking they are somewhere in the Maldives.

With its elegant colonial-style architecture and handsome interior decor that features stylish custom-made furniture and countless beautiful artefacts from around the world, The Sanchaya lends a glamorous touch to business events involving high profile guests.

Meeting facilities With polished timber floors, beautiful black and woodgrain lattices on its walls, and shelves that hold South-east Asian art pieces, The Dahlia resembles the living room of a well-travelled master. It is the hotel's only meeting room and can host up to 75 people theatre-style or 48 for a banquet.

When the meeting is done, delegates can enjoy a tippie or two on the terrace or manicured lawn right outside.

Planners, however, are not restricted to just The Dahlia. The Salon and Library, boasting a selection of rare books and offering tantalising sea views, is an impressive venue for coffee breaks and breakouts. Tucked within this venue is the Decanter, the estate's wine cellar and wine and cheese tasting area. Private dinner parties for 10 are welcomed here and wine pairing dinners can be arranged.

The Sanchaya's private, pristine beach welcomes social functions for up to 50 guests, and the hotel will happily arrange a themed dinner with exquisite table setting and butler service. At the end of the event, guests can write their hopes for the company on a small card and attach it to a *kongming* lantern before releasing it into the starry sky.

Rooms While The Sanchaya sits on more than 9.6ha of land, it only has 21 villas and nine suites. Guests are therefore promised the luxury of space and serenity while at the same time, prompt attention from the service staff when that is needed.

Guests can choose to stay in suites within The Great House (the main building where guests facilities are) or in a villa. There is a selection of colonial-style villas with one- and two-bedroom options, and one-bedroom Thai-styled villas. The 240m² two-storey beachfront Vanda Villa is the most luxurious option.

My one-bedroom seaview villa was sublime and I particularly loved the idea of having more than 1,000 movies to watch on the Apple TV, in the comfort of my super king size bed. Alas, with several meetings to attend during my stay, I was only able to watch half a movie.

Also charming is the complimentary selection of snacks and beverages, and a generous pot of rich hot chocolate that come one evening.

F&B The all-day dining outlet, Dining Room, offers a semi-buffet breakfast which allows me to pick fresh fruits and cereal off a line and order my main course from a menu of various egg dishes and other things. What enchanted me most was a lady in traditional dress who came by to offer me a drink from her basket of *jamu* concoctions.

The poolside Tasanee Grill serves Thai cuisine while The Bar is the perfect place for a nightcap.

Other facilities There is a 50-metre infinity pool, a gym, the Sanchaya Spa with indoor and outdoor treatment rooms, a croquet lawn and an archery field.



A stable foothold on top

The island nation is the top Asian city in ICCA's 2014 list

Thanks to numerous large-scale events and high-profile conference wins, the country's ranking looks solid in the face of global headwinds. By **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Singapore continues to outshine its Asian counterparts with its accolade of being the top Asian city to be ranked among the top 10 convention cities in the world by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) in 2014.

Steadily maintaining its position as Asia's Top Convention City for 13 consecutive years while finishing seventh in the overall ranking of convention cities, Singapore hosted 142 ICCA events in 2014, a dip however, from the record 175 ICCA events held in 2013.

Singapore put forth another stellar performance in 2015, with STB supporting more than 350 business events in 2015 – a 27 per cent year-on-year increase from 2014. This resulted in 287,000 visitor arrivals, a year-on-year hike of 0.3 per cent.

According to Jeannie Lim,

executive director, exhibitions and conferences, conventions and meetings, Singapore Tourism Board (STB), Singapore welcomed the prestigious World Confederation of Physical Therapy Congress last May – the first time it was held in Asia – which saw more than 4,100 participants from 114 countries.

Returning to Singapore last October, after 12 years, was the world's premier financial services event Sibos 2015, which attracted 8,200 delegates from all over the world, making it the largest Sibos event in Asia-Pacific.

Sven Bossu, head of Sibos, said: "What made us return to Singapore was the city infrastructure that has luxurious conference halls and leisure amenities near to one another, allowing us to enhance our event."

"For instance, the Gardens by the Bay is close to our event venue,

Marina Bay Sands, allowing us to organise a 5km fun run and walk before the start of the day. This gives delegates a chance to better know each other in an informal setting that may potentially lead to a business partnership," Bossu added.

According to Vincent Yap, assistant director, institutional division of MCI Group Asia Pacific, 2015 has been a "full year for MCI" with a good run of association events.

Explaining the appeal of the destination, Yap said: "Apart from the easy access, stable political structure and vibrant economy, most MNCs have a local presence in Singapore, which helps to provide an attractive proposition for association conferences, as they seek corporate sponsorship to fund the event."

Hailing the new Global Association Hubs Partnership with Dubai, Washington DC, and Brussels as a

Destination: Singapore

“significant milestone” last year, STB’s Lim explained: “This (partnership) was formed in response to the increasing decentralisation of international associations and it aims to raise standards and grow the presence of them in each of the four partner cities.”

Through this partnership, Lim said: “Singapore aims to be a platform for international associations to grow and build their capacity in the region, create opportunities for local and regional associations to develop their global membership base, and cultivate best practices.”

However, even as the business

events sector continues to shine, there was an overall six per cent fall in BTMICE visitor arrivals last year, with a corresponding eight per cent drop in per capita expenditure, according to the STB’s latest statistics unveiled on March 1.

According to STB chief executive Lionel Yeo, factors like companies cutting back on both travel and trip budgets were reasons behind the decline in business travel arrivals and spend.

STB’s deputy chief executive, Melissa Ow, added that China and India took a great hit in terms of business travel traffic.

“We recognise business traffic will

be subjected to some of the conditions that will impact overall economies,” Ow said. “That means there are many opportunities for us to think about how we might grow our business events.”

However business might be in the coming years, the Lion City can rejoice now over several big wins in its bag. They include the International Council of Nurses World Congress 2019 which will see 3,000 visitors, the Intelligent Transport Systems World Congress 2019 which is expecting 6,000 guests, and the Lions Clubs International Convention 2020 for an impressive 20,000 guests.

{ Spotlight }

All that glitters is silver



The South Beach Grand ballroom in all its shimmering splendour

Feast your eyes upon the first Philippe Starck-designed hotel in Singapore, The South Beach, which has already been hailed as a visual stunner in the heart of Singapore’s city landscape.

This 654-room designer luxury hotel features an extravagant ballroom that promises to charm your delegates. The grand ballroom, À La Carte, which hosted its first event in October last year, is located in one of the hotel’s four heritage buildings. It seats 370 guests banquet-style, with 320 guests seated on the ballroom floor and 50 guests seated on the mezzanine level which overlooks the entire ballroom.

The venue’s high ceiling is adorned

with a “Forest of Lights” – a 11,520-light installation designed by Philippe Starck. The venue is also home to a expansive 9.5m high by 15.8m wide LED wall for projections. Situated within the ballroom are pre-function spaces as well as a VIP holding room.

Also available are 15 additional meeting rooms that are customisable and conducive for private meetings, breakout sessions, product launches as well as exclusive lunches and dinners. Suitable for a variety of group sizes, the meeting rooms can be combined to cater to groups of up to 72.

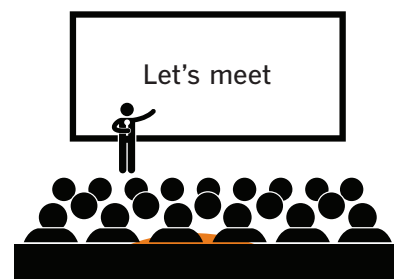
A spokesman from The South Beach said: “MICE planners have the luxury of curating event programmes to suit the needs of their guests through the spaces and facilities in and around the grand ballroom.”

“From gala dinners to trade conferences and events, they will find added charisma and gravitas from the historical value of the grand ballroom as it is housed in a standalone heritage building featuring expansive high ceilings,” the spokesman added.

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 Court Martial Bar, set in one of the army blocks, draws on its courthouse history to serve concept drinks.

The second 1,200m² army block, South Beach Quarter, is 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.

{ Talking numbers }



2,700

The number of international attendees at the inaugural European Society for Medical Oncology Asia Congress in December 2015



16

The number of spine societies from around the world that gather in Singapore come May for SpineWeek 2016, the world’s largest spinal care-related meeting

{ Insider }

Andrew Koh, managing director of Events Architects, proposes three local must-dos

Start your day at a hawker centre

Singapore is famed for its great tasting and affordable food at hawker centres. Experience the hustle and bustle of a typical Singapore morning. Try a popular breakfast option of bread with *kaya* (coconut jam) and learn to order your hot beverage the local way.

Tour Singapore's few remaining farms

Visit fisheries and the few remaining agriculture and horticulture farms at Kranji Countryside. Alternatively, go on a self-



From left: Singapore Botanic Gardens; kaya-smeared bread, soft-boiled eggs and local coffee

guided tour and learn about the magnificent history of Kranji, Lim Chu Kang, Neo Tiew and Choa Chu Kang enclaves through the Kranji Heritage Trail.

Visit the country's first UNESCO World Heritage site

Inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015, the Singapore

Botanic Gardens is the first and only tropical botanic garden on the list. With a rich history of more than a 150 years, the gardens offer visitors a wide range of self-walking trails to choose from. Free guided tours by volunteers on selected days are also available.



Go 'wild' in Singapore

Advertorial

Wildlife Reserves

Singapore (WRS), the parent company of Jurong Bird Park, Night Safari, River Safari and Singapore Zoo, offers a truly eye-opening experience. The lush surroundings, vibrant atmosphere and diverse wildlife are reasons why MICE delegates to Singapore should visit

these world renowned attractions.

MICE planners can count on the full support of the professional WRS team to assist with all the details: selection of venues, activities, catering, access and other customisable options. The venues accommodate groups of 15 to 10,000.

Evening in the Wild at Night Safari

Unique experiences for MICE groups include animal appearance, gourmet dinner and fire performance.



Moving scenery
The Amazon Flooded Forest at River Safari.

MICE planners can organize anything from lavish dinners to family day fiestas, team-building activities, and intimate private functions. Events can also be planned across multiple parks, between

Night Safari, River Safari or Singapore Zoo.

Organize a dinner event with us and enjoy complimentary admission as well as priority entry to the respective parks.

Wildlife Reserves SINGAPORE

EMAIL
sales.enq@wrs.com.sg

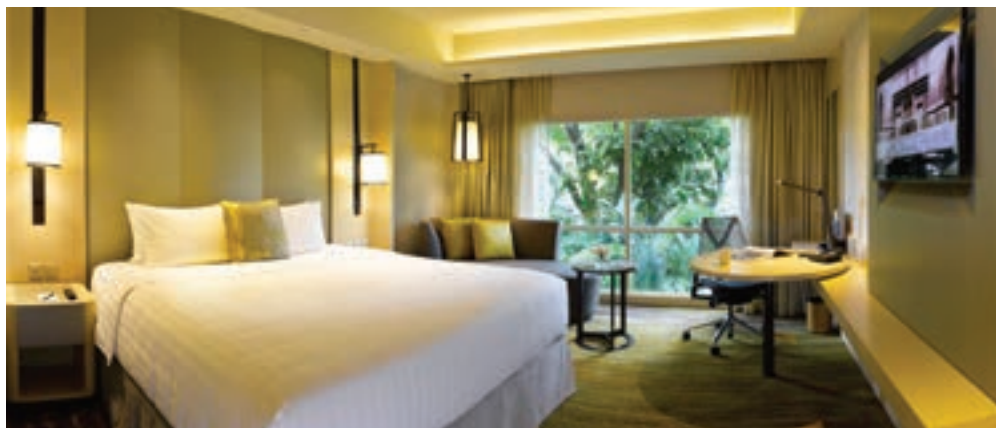
WEBSITE
<http://eventsales.wrs.com.sg/>

TEL
+65 - 6360 8672

Checking in

Four-star, 346 rooms and suites
7500 Beach Road, Singapore 199591
Tel: (65) 6505 5666
www.parkroyalhotels.com

Parkroyal on Beach Road



Stalwart Parkroyal on Beach Road needs no introduction. It is conveniently located near the city centre and beside Singapore's culturally-rich Arab district. Its service standards remain excellent, comparable to five-star properties, such as those operated under its sister brand Pan Pacific.

What does need introduction are its new meeting spaces and refurbished guestrooms that now better cater to the needs of business travellers.

Meeting facilities The hotel's two pillar-less ballrooms were completed in August 2013 and occupies a standalone venue, connected to the rest of the hotel via a linkway. The S\$20 million (US\$14.2 million) project resulted in 982m² of indoor event space spread over the Grand Ballroom (576m²), Sky Ballroom (344m²) and a Board Room (62m²).

The two ballrooms offer great flexibility, with each is divisible into three equally-portioned smaller venues. For theatre-style seating, the Grand Ballroom, Sky Ballroom and Board Room allow for 500, 320 and 24 pax respectively, while a classroom layout caters to 320, 160 and 18 pax respectively. All rooms feature HD audiovisual equipment and conferencing facilities while the Board Room boasts an 84-inch touchscreen monitor that functions as a multimedia platform and presentation device.

A promotion is currently ongoing, where meetings comprising a minimum of 15 delegates and 10 guestrooms can enjoy perks such as room upgrades or a complimentary cocktail hour. Available at all Parkroyal and Pan Pacific properties, bookings must be made by April 30, 2016, and meetings must be held by December 31, 2016.

Rooms My stay in the newly remodelled premier room was comfortable with the bed and pillows plush enough, but perhaps too soft for some. Cleanliness of the room, a pet peeve of mine, was met to exacting standards, and the availability of a hair dryer, ironing board and abundant clothes hangers catered well to my grooming requirements.

In terms of work needs, a desk, free Wi-Fi and ethernet connection were all available in-room. The Wi-Fi speeds are also surprisingly fast even when multiple devices are connected.

F&B Parkroyal on Beach Road has several options. Plaza Brasserie serves as the breakfast buffet joint, offering a range of Asian and International cuisine.

For lunch and dinner, the hotel's renowned Si Chuan Dou Hua restaurant is known for its Sichuan cuisine and a great place for entertaining guests. An assortment of teas, served with flourish by a certified tea master, are also available from the adjoining Tian Fu Tea Room.

In the late hours, the hotel's poolside bar and Club 5 are comfortable spots for a tippie.

Foodies should rejoice, as the hotel is in an exciting area. Popular restaurants like Artistry, I Am, Maison Ikkoku and The Hanger are a short walk away, while Blu Jaz Cafe, Joo Bar and Piedra Negra are great for lively night outings.

Other facilities A renovated outdoor poolside space, located a floor above the meeting facilities, is available as a breakout area. It is also ideal for pre/post cocktail sessions. It is part of the refurbished Wellness Floor, where the hotel's flagship St. Gregory Spa and a Technogym-equipped fitness centre are.

FACT FILE

Maximum pax for meetings
500 at the Grand Ballroom, theatre-style

Recent events handled
Cargill Asia Pacific Conference, Communique Live Asia, Golden Agri-Resources

VERDICT



Bleisure travellers will find lots to love with the hotel's unbeatable location and value for its price point.

Dannon Har



topchina/123rf.com

Road to success

China's Silk Road Economic Belt initiative has been lauded for the transformation of Xi'an into a business hub. By **Karen Yue**

Xi'an is an intriguing blend of the old and the new, and a land of countless business opportunities

The city of Xi'an these days is welcoming more than the usual crowd of history buffs keen on exploring ancient Chinese treasures.

Chinese president Xi Jinping's decision in 2013 to establish the Silk Road Economic Belt, an initiative to link China by trade with the rest of Asia and Europe, has led various industries in Xi'an to flourish and that, in turn, has drawn a higher volume of international business travellers to the city.

While official MICE statistics are

unavailable, local MICE players have reported better business in recent years.

Li Shuyan, MICE and general manager of China Travel Service Head Office Northwest, based in Xi'an, told *TTGmice* in an interview that "this is all good news for the local MICE players".

As a result of China's pro-business stance, China Travel Service has seen an uptick in international government events such as trade missions and ministerial meetings on the Silk Road Economic Belt

initiative involving trade ministers, as well as events by companies dealing in primary resources, fast-moving consumer goods and software – industries that are booming as a result of both the initiative and numerous trade missions to Xi'an.

Li believes that the software industry – backed by the new Xi'an High Tech Integrated Free Trade Zone and Samsung Electronic's facility within (opened in 2014) – would, in particular, "bring many more meetings and trade events to Xi'an".

Destination: China

The pharmaceutical and medical industries are also prospering, observed Diana Duan, director of sales with Angsana Xi'an Lintong in the outskirts of Xi'an city centre, aided in part by the presence of two hospitals and one university that is renowned in the western district of China.

"Xi'an hosts at least one major international pharmaceutical or medical meeting a month, most of which are held in the city for convenience, while Angsana Xi'an Lintong gets some of the smaller internal meetings as planners don't mind a venue away from the business district for such gatherings," Duan said, adding that the hotel has also hosted several luxury product launches as well VIP client parties and residential meetings by financial firms.

Xi'an Xunmei International Travel Service Co, which does mostly medical events, has benefitted from the surge in healthcare business in the city. It was the PCO for a 1,800-pax bone conference and the DMC

Discovered in 1974, the famed Terracotta Army in Lintong continues to be a must-see attraction for all new visitors to Xi'an



marco31/123RF.com



"The Xi'an city centre is fully developed with no more space for new venues. There are talks that a free trade centre may be built 10 minutes from (nearby) Lintong District in the next four to five years."

Li Shuyan

MICE and general manager,
China Travel Service Head Office
Northwest

for a 1,000-pax male reproduction conference, both held last September.

Nancy Lee, general manager of the company, added that "as north-western China's IT and manufacturing hub, Xi'an also sees a lot of corporate traffic and related events".

She said: "The global economy may be challenging this year but I expect China's pro-business policy to enable continued growth of Xi'an's MICE arrivals of 10 to 12 per cent."

She also noted that major event owners were starting to rely more on PCOs in Xi'an.

"In the past, major business events in Xi'an were brought in by renowned PCOs in Beijing or Shanghai, who would then hire a local ground-handler to put things together. Today, more Xi'an DMCs are given the opportunity to perform PCO roles," she said.

Although MICE in Xi'an is now thriving, Li thinks that there is still much room for improvement.

Li said: "Global conferences are the main driver of MICE business in Xi'an, most of which are driven by MNCs based in Beijing and Shanghai. However, Xi'an gets only 30 conferences on average a year, while China on the whole gets around 3,000."

Limited air access direct from key global markets is an obstacle for international MICE planners considering Xi'an, lamented trade players.

Steven Wang, director of sales and marketing with The Westin Xian, said: "We didn't see many overseas corporate meetings and incentives in 2015 due to the lack of direct flights, which makes it inconvenient for large groups and more costly to travel."

However, subvention for interna-

tional MICE groups – something that is being considered by the local government now – may help improve matters.

"We are talking to the tourism bureau about this, to offer such support to international business event planners. This will take time to happen though," Li revealed.

Meanwhile, Jean Philippe Jacopin, general manager of Shangri-La Hotel, Xi'an, believes that president Xi's trade policy has a part to play in improving the destination's luxury appeal among travellers.

"Xi'an has become a much more desirable destination primarily as a result of (the policy). It has resulted in a greater demand for luxury accommodation (and) high-end shops and malls," Jacopin said.

Today, numerous prominent hotels dot the city's map, some in the commercial centre and others close to key tourist landmarks. Many of the international branded hotels come with meeting rooms and function spaces too.

Stiff competition in the hotel space has forced local hotels to upgrade their hardware and software, ultimately benefitting travellers.

Tourism players noted that the city's luxury travel market is dominated by corporate travellers and special interest leisure groups.

Wang revealed that 85 per cent of the hotel's guest are corporate. "Business travellers and meeting delegates have bigger budgets," he explained.

And these wealthy business travellers are contributing valuable dollars to the local tourism sector.

Li said these travellers would extend their trips for pleasure,

requesting for special activities, such as a session with a local archaeology professor who could tell the stories behind historical finds.

“Luxury meetings are on the rise,” said Li. “Each group has 30 to 50 pax and much emphasis is placed on the itinerary. It must allow for business achievements as well as cultural exposure. Mercedes-Benz got us to put their business partners in a convoy of cars, driving through Shaanxi province (of which Xi’an is the capital) in search of artists specialising in traditional art form like pottery, paper-cutting and painting.”

Ideas for unique experiences are limited only by the DMC’s expertise and local networks.

Julia Shi, general manager of Diethelm Travel (China), said her company specialises in “extraordinary programmes” that are different from those in the market.

The company can take visitors into areas that are usually off-limits, such as the reconstruction site within the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor, where archaeologists fix broken terracotta statues, as well as special vaults in the Shaanxi History Museum and Xi’an Museum, and offer unique activities such as a digging experience at The Yangling Mausoleum of the Han Dynasty.

{ Spotlight }

A memorable Song of Everlasting Sorrow

One can always trust the Chinese to put on a spectacular ‘live’ performance. The widely-acclaimed opening ceremony of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, and the celebrated *Impressions* series performed in scenic outdoor locations around China that are produced by famed director Zhang Yimou should all come to mind.

Visitors to Xi’an have an opportunity to catch a mesmerising performance in the great outdoors too.

Set in the beautiful surroundings of Huaqing Pool, a complex of hot springs at the foot of Mount Li in the quiet Lintong County, *The Song of Eternal Sorrow* show tells the tragic love story of Tang Dynasty Emperor Xuanzong and his concubine Yang Yuhuan through a spectacular performance of song, dance and pyrotechnics.

The show is presented by a massive troupe of talented dancers and stuntmen, all decked out in elaborate ancient garb. A haunting tune adapting the famous ancient poem, *Song of Eternal Sorrow*, tugs at the heartstrings, completing a show that one will not easily forget.

The show holds special meaning for Xi’an and Lintong County, as Xi’an used to be the ancient Chinese imperial capital of Chang’an while Huaqing Pool was



part of the emperor’s Huaqing Palace where the star-crossed lovers used to luxuriate together in the hot springs.

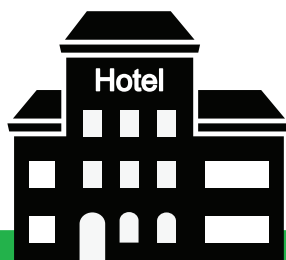
Corporate groups can choose to book VIP seats, which come with light refreshments, otherwise seats in the middle section are good enough for a clear view of the performance. – Karen Yue

{ Talking numbers }



10.3 million

The total number of international and domestic visitors to Xi’an in 2014, up 27 per cent from 2013



121

The number of star-rated hotels in Xi’an as of end-March 2013 – including nine five-star, 27 four-star, 76 three-star and nine two-star – providing a total of 23,199 guestrooms



2,700

The number of international branded hotel rooms under construction in Xi’an from 2013 to 2016

Checking in

Five-star, 400 rooms
17 East Yue Chun Road,
Lintong District, Xi'an,
Shaanxi Province, China
www.angsana.com/en/cn-china-xian-lintong

Angsana Xi'an Lintong



Rooms The 400 guestrooms promise views of the hotel's sprawling gardens, hot springs, or Mount Li. Room sizes are generous, starting from 60m².

My Royal Room – the lead-in category – looked out to Mount Li and the courtyard. It is as comfortably and luxuriously furnished as one can expect of a five-star international hotel, especially one that carries the Angsana brand.

But it was the circular bath – separated from the sleeping quarters by a plush curtain – that stole my heart. It would be filled with warm water and plump red rose petals every evening when I returned from a long day of meetings, beckoning me to slide in and unwind. That I did on both nights of my stay, and the bath was a welcome prelude to a restful sleep.

F&B Hotel guests are spoilt for choice, as there are three restaurants and two bars, as well as another restaurant – Waterlight – in the hot springs annex. I had the opportunity to dine at three restaurants.

Angsana Cafe is the hotel's all-day dining outlet, a spacious venue with a lively marketplace vibe and an extensive breakfast spread.

The Silk Road-themed restaurant, Silk Route, showcases dishes from countries along the ancient trade route. For dinner, I had a simple salad with vinaigrette, an array of Mongolian-inspired barbecued meats and seafood on metal skewers stuck dramatically into a pineapple, and a curry rice dish.

But the restaurant that will truly impress guests is the Mandarin Palace, which is set among lush greenery and comes with 18 private dining rooms, some of which are spacious villas furnished with oversized sofas and local art pieces. The largest private dining villa can seat 20 pax. My dinner here featured some of the most luxurious ingredients favoured by Chinese diners, such as abalone and sea cucumber, and they were all done and presented wonderfully.

Other facilities There are six karaoke rooms, seven mahjong rooms, a Kids Club, a massive swimming pool, a gym, a yoga studio and the signature Angsana Spa where treatments unique to the property are offered. The Angsana Hot Spring next door earns the hotel boasting rights to being the only international hotel in Lintong to have its own hot springs.

The sprawling Angsana Xi'an Lintong may be a 40-minute ride by car from Xi'an city centre and the airport, unlike most of the international class hotels that occupy the prime district, but the journey is worth it.

Built to resemble a Tang Dynasty court, the sprawling property offers guests an equally regal treatment.

Its location in Lintong County, home of the famed Terracotta Army and the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor, puts guests in close proximity to the historical sites.

While its location places it at a disadvantage among business travellers seeking quick access to the city's business district, Angsana Xi'an Lintong's serene surroundings will surely score points with corporate event planners who like their delegates to be removed from the downtown buzz and distractions.

Meeting facilities The Angsana Ballroom can host grand banquets and corporate gatherings with up to 800 guests. Meeting planners with smaller-sized events on hand can also choose from one of seven other multifunctional rooms.

These venues are supported by an outdoor foyer that overlooks the hotel's lush gardens and Chinese-style courtyard. In cooler seasons, this venue is a splendid alternative to indoor spaces for a rejuvenating coffee break or post-meeting cocktail networking session.

The courtyard is also no stranger to corporate teambuilding activities, and the hotel's in-house MICE specialists can help clients organise games as well as half- and full-day pre/post tours to key attractions in Xi'an.

FACT FILE

Largest venue

Angsana Ballroom, 800 pax, banquet

Smallest venue

Meeting Room, 22 pax, U-shape layout

Events handled

Maserati and Mercedes-Benz product launches, attendance unspecified; Mercedes-Benz retailers meeting, attendance unspecified; internal meetings by pharmaceutical companies, attendance unspecified

VERDICT



A fine hotel with a regal ambience and stellar service to match. I love its wide spaces and serene surroundings.

Karen Yue

Second time's the charm

A prior hosting of the ASEAN Summit provided KLCC with invaluable knowledge and experience, and that made the location a natural choice, writes **S Puvaneswary**

Event brief

The ASEAN Summit is a biannual meeting hosted by a different member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) each year. The summit, the most significant intergovernmental meeting in ASEAN, is where heads of government discuss regional issues in relation to economic and cultural development.

The 27th ASEAN Summit also included world leaders from the US, Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, India, South Korea and Russia. Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) was confirmed as the host venue in May 2015.

Challenges

A challenge was handling protocol appropriately and attending to the large number of VVIPs. With the heads of state of over 18 countries attending the summit, there were not enough individual small rooms that could be converted into private holding rooms for the various countries.

Safety was also a very big concern, stressed Alan Pryor, general manager of KLCC. He said: "It was important to ensure the safety of all delegates, visitors and the venue at all times. As this was a high profile event involving heads of states, extra precautions had to be taken."

Solutions

To cater to the needs of its VVIPs, the centre had to convert back-of-house and internal meeting rooms, and transform a small exhibition hall into one large central VVIP holding area.

The centre's security team also had to work closely with local government authorities, the Royal Malaysia Police, and country specific security agencies to ensure the safety of the delegates, visitors and the venue.

There were detailed briefings and site visits prior to the event by various Malaysian government officials – including the Malaysian prime minister. On top of this, numerous brainstorming sessions were held to anticipate and plan for last minute requests and changes.

Pryor explained: "To cope with the organisational and coordination challenges, preparation began seven months prior to the event. Our team relied heavily on the experience gained from its decade in business. There were



Event
27th ASEAN Summit

Organiser
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia

Venue
Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

Date
November 18-22, 2015

Number of participants
1,600

numerous teleconferences and meetings with the organiser. Internally, countless interdepartmental meetings were held to go over details of all aspects of the summit. The pre-planning was crucial to minimise challenges and avoid setbacks during the summit itself."

Key takeaways

Pryor revealed that teamwork was key to the



successful hosting of the 27th ASEAN Summit.

He said: "Without the collective efforts of all involved, the centre would not have been able to host an event of such magnitude. With so many VVIPs in attendance – each with their own individual requests and needs – impeccable service delivery was essential. Fortunately, the many months of preparation and training paid off. This resulted in not a single complaint during the Summit.

"Our security team also gained invaluable knowledge and experience from working closely with some of the world's foremost security experts, which will benefit the safety of delegates, visitors and the venue moving forward."

"Congratulations to Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre on a job well done. It was a fantastic effort from everyone involved to ensure a successful 27th ASEAN Summit."

Mohd Najib Abdul Razak, prime minister of Malaysia

Safeguard business travellers

Employees are invariably exposed to risks when they travel, but with the appropriate measures in place, these risks can be managed. **Benson Tang** tells you how



The human resource is a core asset of every successful firm, making travel security one of the paramount concerns of travel managers. What's more, in countries such as the UK, firms are legally obliged to provide travel support and protection to travelling employees.

Below are five tips to help you structure your firm's business travel protection:

- The new normal**
 It is ill-advised for you to assume that everything will go according to plan – some change must be anticipated. In fact, reminders that change can happen without warning are abound: Terrorist attacks, like the recent events in Jakarta and Paris; natural disasters; extreme weather conditions such as the snow storms that recently hit cities around the world; the pollution situation; and the list goes on. Such events demand extra attention from travel managers.
- Travel contingency plan**
 Travel management leaders should create and continually test travel contingency plans suited to the diverse

corporate-cultural needs of individual firms. According to Darwin's Theory of Evolution – the species that best adapt, survive! In this case, quick and well-informed responses that prevent travelling employees from coming to further harm are your trump cards.

- Effective communication**
 Without great communication with employees, the effectiveness and efficiency of travel contingency plans will be diminished significantly. Processes and procedures must be clearly articulated and made easily accessible to all travelling employees. Change management might be required in some cases. Let's be frank, it is completely understandable for employees to resist change initially!
- Technology utilisation**
 In the corporate travel market, there are many user-friendly technology tools that can facilitate your efforts to monitor the safety of travelling employees. Many car companies are now able to provide real-time passenger location information, for instance. Also, by setting up mobile device linkage (with the

approval of employees, of course), you would be able to pinpoint the exact whereabouts of employees abroad.

- Engaging more professionals**
 You are not alone in this travel management battle! There are many experts in the corporate travel industry such as service providers in global travel safety and security. Some of these service providers render instant medical support, evacuation support, pre-travel injection support, among other services. It is definitely worthwhile to engage more professionals to help mitigate possible risks.



Benson Tang is the regional director for Asia at the Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE), where he is responsible for the association's development and education programme in Asia. The ACTE is a professional association that represents corporate travel managers and travel service providers in 29 countries. Visit www.acte.org for details.

{ Hot moves }



Anne Scott

Amelia Roziman

The Sarawak Convention Bureau (SCB) has promoted Roziman to the position of general manager, marketing and sales.

The former global marketing and communications director will now manage SCB's departments of marketing, sales, bids and communications.

Anne Scott

Scott is now general manager of The St Regis Kuala Lumpur Hotel and Residences, set to open in 2Q2016. A familiar face in the Star-



Jansen Low

wood family, she was last general manager of The St Regis Sanya Yalong Bay Resort in Hainan, China.

Carl Jones

American Express Global Business Travel (GBT) has named Jones its vice president for global client management in Asia-Pacific. Based in Singapore, Jones will lead global client management in the Asia-Pacific as well as GBT's global mining, marine and energy portfolio. He joins from Carlson Wagonlit Travel.



Kelly Kuhn

Jansen Low

Furama RiverFront has picked Low for the position of director of sales & marketing. Low brings with him more than 20 years of experience in both hospitality supply, demand and vendor environments, and was last with Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel, Cotai Central.

Kai Chan

Previously general manager, South-east Asia for Carlson Wagonlit Travel, Chan is now president, Asia-Pacific, and part of the global executive



Raymond Tan

team. She is based in Singapore.

Kelly Kuhn

Carlson Wagonlit Travel's Kuhn is now president, Europe, Middle East and Africa and Global Partners Network, based in London, having moved from her former role as president, Asia-Pacific.

Phuong Nam Nguyen

Hanoi's five-star Apricot Hotel has appointed Nguyen as its new hotel manager. She was last Prestige



Ronald Dooremalen

Hotel Hanoi's general manager and had held various positions at Sunway Hotel in Hanoi from 1999 to 2010.

Raymond Tan

Grand Hyatt Singapore has appointed Tan its director of events. He was last director of MICE event services at Resorts World Sentosa Singapore.

Ronald Dooremalen

Dooremalen has joined Raffles Hotel Singapore as hotel manager. He was director of operations at Raffles Praslin, Seychelles.

{ Career inspiration }

Helene Fong

Director of sales & marketing, JW Marriott Hotel Bangkok

How long have you been in the business and what do you love most about your job?

I've spent 18 years in the hospitality industry and my time has been enriched by the people I've met from all walks of life. I have many guests or clients who have since become friends. I love the opportunity to work in various countries, and that has broadened my perspective of life and allowed me to experience new culture.

What is your one greatest career achievement to-date?

My relocation to China in 2001 was an eye-opener for me and one I thoroughly enjoyed. I made many new friends, both foreign and local, and got to train many new talents who are now very successful in their career.

What about your job keeps you awake at night?

I must say that I have trained myself well since I took on the role of director of sales & marketing, but I do occasionally get worried when there is a shortfall in revenue or market share for a consecutive period of time.

What are your top three tips to achieving success in a sales and marketing career in this industry?

- Maximise marketing through digital means
- Understand the market trends and stay abreast with current affairs in the local and global environment
- Hire the right people for the right job (in your team)



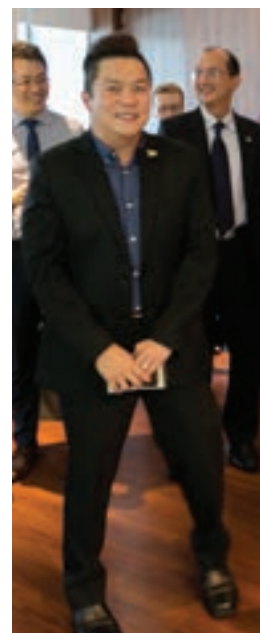
An elaborate welcome

Keeping to its tradition of stunning delegates with an elaborate welcome party, the **AIME Welcome Event** this year in a unique warehouse location in Melbourne was a multimedia, multisensory celebration of the Australian city's unique culture, vibe and spirit



The scent of pure New Zealand

Singapore corporate event planners enjoyed a preview of what New Zealand has to offer at a lunch party hosted by **Tourism New Zealand** and Singapore's **Dynasty Travel International**



TTGmice
Asia Pacific's leading meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions magazine

What's next?

In the May issue of *TTGmice*, we shine the spotlight on river cruises in some of Asia's most scenic locations and show you why they make a great product for your next corporate gathering. Also, join us in Malaysia, South Korea and Switzerland to see how these destinations are faring in the MICE space.

PATA TRAVEL MART 2016

September 7-9
Indonesia Convention Exhibition (ICE)
Banten Province
Jakarta, Indonesia

PATA Travel Mart (PTM) is Asia Pacific's premier travel trade show, featuring unparalleled networking and contracting opportunities. Now in its 39th year, PTM is hosted by a different destination every year. Each event brings together a fresh set of buyers and sellers whilst also showcasing the cultural diversity of destinations across the region.



Maximise opportunities with pre-matched appointments facilitated through PATA's business matching software



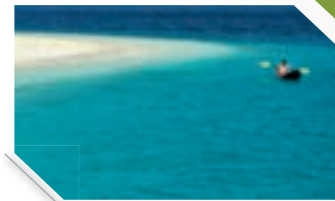
Get exclusive access to the 300+ pre-qualified hosted international buyers from over 50 countries



Stay abreast of trends at the PATA Travel Innovation Forum and Blogger Forum



Immerse yourself in the cultural festivities and colourful performances of the host destination

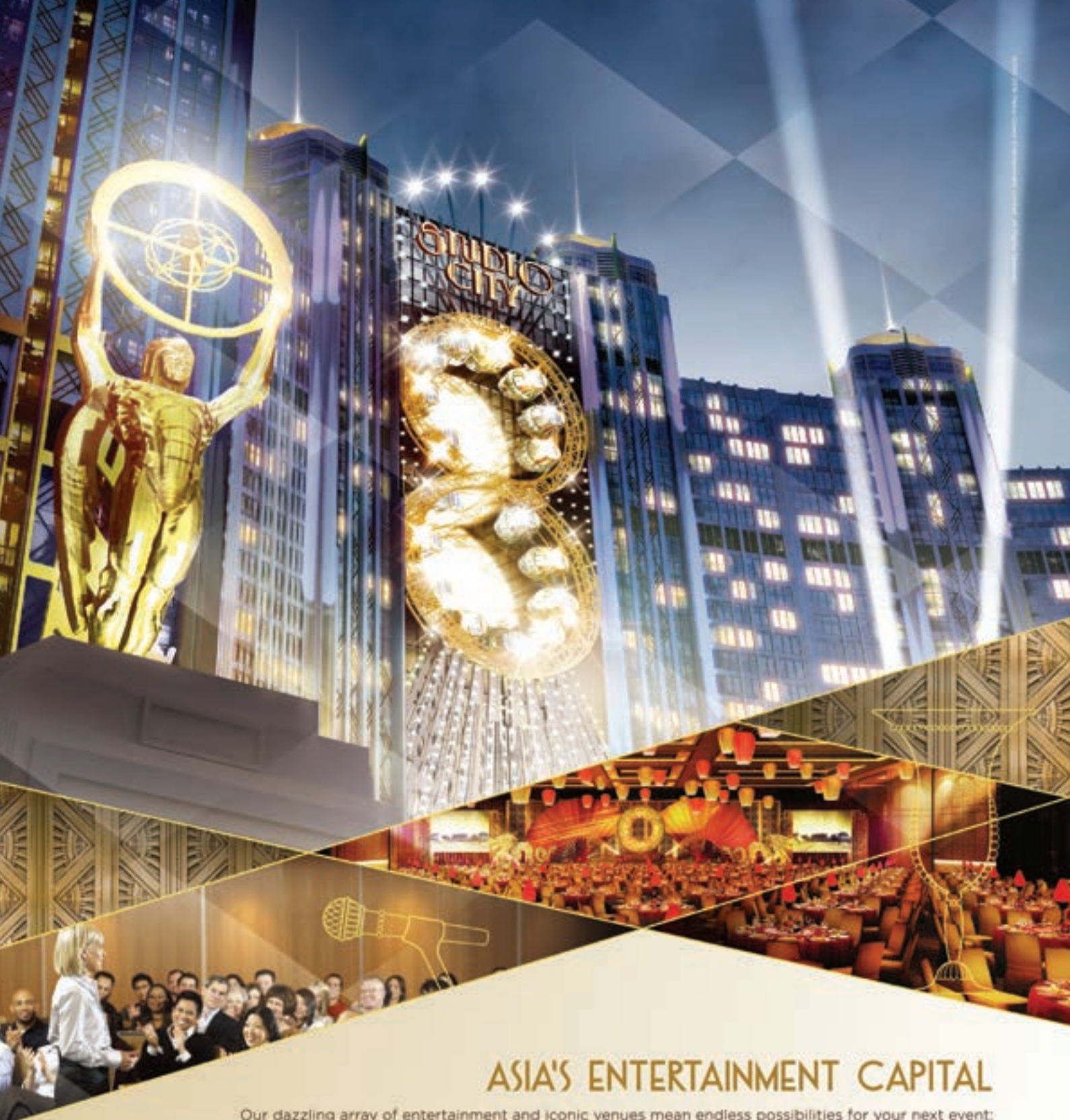


Generously hosted by the Ministry of Tourism Indonesia, PTM 2016 is being held at the **Indonesia Convention Exhibition (ICE)** in Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia's biggest convention and exhibition centre with eco-friendly and energy-efficient features. The venue is only 20 minutes away from Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport.

The surrounding province of Banten features rich cultural heritage and pristine natural resources - from the archaeological remains of the Islamic Banten Kingdom to secluded islands and landscaped resorts. Join us in growing your travel business alongside fellow tourism industry professionals in Asia Pacific.

Register now at **PATA.org/PTM-2016**

Seller, buyer and media registrations available.



ASIA'S ENTERTAINMENT CAPITAL

Our dazzling array of entertainment and iconic venues mean endless possibilities for your next event: Cocktails 130 meters up in a private Ferris wheel capsule; a team building adventure on our lush pool deck complete with a scenic lazy river; a thrilling flight through Gotham City with Batman; or a stylish reception under the stars in our Event Garden – Studio City lets you dictate your own experience. The only limit is your imagination.

Bookings and Enquiries

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