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EDITORIAL**Karen Yue**

Group Editor (karen.yue@ttgasia.com)

Xinyi Liang-PholsenaDeputy Editor, TTG Asia & TTG India
(liang.xinyi@ttgasia.com)**Dannon Har**Assistant Editor, TTG Asia Online
(dannon.har@ttgasia.com)**Paige Lee Pei Qi**Assistant Editor, Singapore
(lee.peiqi@ttgasia.com)**S Puvaneswary**Editor, Malaysia/Brunei
(puvanes@ttgasia.com)**Mimi Hudoyo**

Editor, Indonesia (jdmfasia@cbrn.net.id)

Rachel AJ Lee, Yixin NgSub Editors
(rachel.lee@ttgasia.com, ng.yixin@ttgasia.com)**Rebecca Elliott**Australia
(rebeccaelliott@hotmail.com)**Prudence Lui**Hong Kong/Greater China
(prului@yahoo.com)**Caroline Boey**China & Special Projects
(caroline.boey@ttgasia.com)**Julian Ryall**Japan
(jryall2@hotmail.com)**Rosa Ocampo**

The Philippines (rosa.ocampo@gmail.com)

Rohit KaulIndia
(rohitkaul23@gmail.com)**Feizal Samath**Sri Lanka/Maldives
(feizalsam@gmail.com)**Redmond Sia, Goh Meng Yong**

Creative Designers

Lina Tan

Editorial Assistant

SALES & MARKETING**Michael Chow**Group Publisher
(michael.chow@ttgasia.com)**Ar-lene Lee**Senior Business Manager
(arlene.lee@ttgasia.com)**Pierre Quek**Publisher, Online Section
(pierre.quek@ttgasia.com)**Cheryl Tan**Corporate Marketing Manager
(cheryl.tan@ttgasia.com)**Kwek Wan Ling**Marketing Executive
(kwek.wan.ling@ttgasia.com)**Cheryl Lim**Advertisement Administration
manager (cheryl.lim@ttgasia.com)**Carol Cheng**Asst Manager Administration
& Marketing (Hong Kong, carol.cheng@ttgasia.com)**PUBLISHING SERVICES****Tony Yeo**

Division Manager

Kristy Lim

Publishing Services Executive

Lynn Lim

Web Executive

Katherine Leong

Circulation Executive

OFFICES**Singapore**

TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd, 1 Science Park Road,

#04-07 The Capricorn, Singapore Science

Park II, Singapore 117528

Tel: +65 6395 7575, fax: +65 6536 0896,

email: contact@ttgasia.com

Hong Kong

TTG Asia Media Pte Ltd, 8/F, E168,

166-168 Des Voeux Road Central,

Sheung Wan, Hong Kong

Tel: +852 2237 7288, fax: +852 2237 7227

TTG ASIA MEDIA PTE LTD**Darren Ng**

Managing Director

Raini HamdiSenior Editor
(raini.hamdi@ttgasia.com)**Karen Yue**
Group Editor

Don't feed that fear

When the UK's decision to leave the European Union (EU) was announced on June 24, news producers and thought leaders everywhere got busy churning out reports after reports on the consequences of this decision. They range from predictions of an exodus of foreign investments in the country, to the death of medical science research in the UK due to a loss of precious EU funding, to higher cost of travel between the UK and Europe due to new air restrictions.

Such hand-wringing is expected as the move is an unprecedented one – no other major economy like the UK has ever exited the trade bloc. Those fears clung on tighter when global stock markets got hammered and the pound plunged in the days and weeks that followed.

Asia's business travel and MICE stakeholders are worried too, since the UK is among the top 10 markets for business travel and there is substantial trade between Asia and the UK. In GBTA's recent study on global business trends until 2020, conducted before the Brexit poll, the UK was ranked fifth in the world as an important business travel market in 2015. It chalked up US\$47,138 billion in business travel spend that year, an 8.3 per cent increase over 2014.

But cast your eyes on the other top 10 spender markets of 2015, and you will spot several bright sparks that are worth celebrating and investing in. China, at pole position, spent US\$291,276 billion on business travel, up 11.4 per cent. India made the second biggest leap with an 11 per cent annual growth to hit US\$29,629 billion in spend.

Providing more reasons to reach into our own backyard – Japan, South Korea and Australia all reported growth in business travel spend.

Furthermore, business travel and meetings remain essential for companies to achieve their business objectives and these activities have continued even in the face of terror incidents and pandemic scares.

This issue's In focus on Brexit's impact on Asia's business travel and meetings (page 10) shows how our region is still holding up and bookings out of the UK have not seen significant stirrings. Now, breathe out and go have a cup of tea.



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The 2020 Olympic Games hardware boost will make MICE players big winners when the event is over, writes Julian Ryall

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The Indian CVB has drawn up a lengthy to-do list that will see it boost its ability to market the destination, writes Rohit Kaul

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Indonesia's first MICE industry champion is born and it has hit the ground running with plenty to juggle, including securing its own financial stream. Mimi Hudoyo reports

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Insufficient hardware to support large-scale events continues to be a bugbear for Sri Lanka's MICE players, writes Feizal Samath

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A secret worth sharing

Gardens by the Bay's existing event venues such as the Flower Field Hall are already a hit with event planners, but its latest product will likely set more hearts ablaze.

The new Secret Life of Trees is a new outdoor venue that made its debut in July. Carved out of an existing plot of lush land that sits close to the iconic Supertree Grove and promising the best views of the 15-minute Garden Rhapsody light and sound show that transforms the megastructures into magical giants, Secret Life of Trees is perfect for welcome cocktails, networking parties and product launches for up to 120 guests.

It boasts a fairytale-like garden setting, framed by trees of varied species, and offers plenty of attractive photo opportunities.

According to Darren Oh, director of business development at Gardens by the Bay, there has been a surge in demand for outdoor events at the attraction, and Secret Life of Trees is the answer to this growing interest.

Oh said the new venue "helps to break the usual tone of meetings and events by transporting (delegates) outside".

Mobile sound system and projection setup can be arranged, as can chauffeur-driven garden cruisers to ferry guests to the venue.

In the event of wet weather, an indoor meeting room located right below the garden will be used instead.

To enhance the event experience, planners can arrange for their guests to end the event with a stroll through Gardens by the Bay and across the OCBC Skyway, an aerial walkway located 22m above ground in the Supertree Grove.

Secret Life of Trees is open for hire from 18.00 to 21.00 only.

Buffalo Tours presents inspirational interactions

A line of specialised tours that connect event delegates with some of Asia's most inspiring people who will impart knowledge on Asian cuisine, history, arts and culture, have been launched by Buffalo Tours.

Also available to leisure tour groups and individual travellers, the Master Class line boasts 14 unique tours in seven Asian countries. Event groups can expect to enhance their programme with a guide who is a stone conservationist in Angkor Wat; Indonesia's most famous chef, Degan; and a famous painter who explores the history of Hanoi through art.

Matt Masson, Buffalo Tours managing director, said: "Many of our customers are looking for unique and exclusive experiences that they will remember forever. These experiences and workshops from local masters provide an out-of-the-box insight into our destinations."

"Some of our Master Class experiences include preparing traditional Chinese home cooked meals, capturing the unique architecture of Kuala Lumpur through photography, learning the secrets behind making the legendary Singapore Sling, or exploring Saigon's history through paintings."

Masson added that the Master Class delivers Buffalo Tours' commitment to connecting people and cultures through extraordinary journeys.

Master Class follows close on the heels of Buffalo Tour's late-June launch of a dedicated MICE division, Buffalo Events.

Centara venue now an Avani

Centara Hotel & Convention Centre Khon Kaen has been rebranded under Minor Hotels' Avani flag.

According to a statement, Avani Khon Kaen Hotel & Convention Centre is "uniquely positioned to meet the needs of business guests", boasting 4,000m² of meeting space.

In addition to having 196 guestrooms across five room types, the property also features an outdoor pool, a fitness centre and a spa.

The property is a 15-minute drive from Khon Kaen Airport and located close to a number of leisure attractions such as the Dino Park water park and a shopping district.

All-suite Four Seasons opens in Jakarta

The 125-suite Four Seasons Jakarta has opened on Jalan Gatot Subroto within the central business district of the Indonesian capital.

Business travellers will appreciate the elegant and spacious suites crafted by New York-based interior designer Alexandra Champalimaud, a member of the Interior Design Hall, who worked chinoiserie wall panels, original Indonesian artwork and Italian marble bathrooms into each unit. Private space is also separated from the living area to allow a perfect mix of comfort, style and function.

Facilities include four F&B outlets, a spa, a 24-hour fitness centre, an outdoor pool and 1,858m² of function space which features the Grand Ballroom for 350 people, two salons, three meeting rooms and a pool terrace.



Destination Asia Events revamps website for greater usability

Easier access to information essential for event planning as well as richer content are being promised on the revamped Destination Asia Events website.

The redesigned website now provides planners with a thorough understanding and overview of event options available in the 11 Asian destinations the company has operations in.

Users are able to view destination facts and extensive information on hotels and venues. For select destinations there is also an option to directly download event videos, programme overviews and ready-made presentations that can be included in proposals to clients.

China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia take the online offering further by making available virtual, 360-degree-view tours of the destination.

The new responsive site can work across all devices, ensuring every planner has the best possible experience when navigating through its pages.

"We are excited about our new event website and the valued information it provides for clients who seek to remain ahead of their competitors," said Victoria Sertic, COO of Destination Asia Events.

Sertic added: "The new site was required to better support our clients, providing them with the tools they need to succeed when competing against others."

"It also complements the support provided by our professional, local meeting and incentive staff who lead the way in providing faultless event services for groups of any size visiting Asia."



Wanda enters Shanghai

Wanda Reign on the Bund, the latest ultra-luxury property under the Wanda Hotels & Resorts umbrella, has opened in front of the popular Shanghai Shiliupu Marina.

The hotel features 193 rooms including 14 suites, five F&B outlets offering a variety of cuisines, a 720m² pillar-less Grand Ballroom which looks out to the Bund, three multi-purpose function rooms, and the private Club Reign, among other facilities. Meeting planners can also enjoy assistance from the hotel's in-house event specialists and a professional banquet culinary team.

Yu Garden and the City God Temple are within walking distance, allowing time-strapped business travellers to get a quick introduction to Shanghai's cultural side.

Ovolo Woolloomooloo unveils collection of event spaces

Sydney's Ovolo Woolloomooloo has launched its brand new event complex, after a A\$20 million (US\$15.1 million) renovation.

The complex, set in a 100-year-old heritage-listed wharf, has rooms that are named after some of Sydney's most popular neighbourhoods and can cater for events with 12 to 350 guests.

The biggest of the rooms, Piper Room, can be combined with The Burbs – made up of Darlo, Paddo and The Cross rooms – to create a 390m² space for up to 350 guests.

For smaller gatherings, planners can use the Glam-A-Rama boardroom, as well as the



AC/DC and INXS Ultraroo suites.

Joanna Hillier, conference & events sales manager, Ovolo Woolloomooloo, said: "We know that not all events are created equal and

accept the challenge to make every event completely different. Whether it be for work or pleasure, a memorable location creates a memorable occasion. There are few areas in Sydney that rival our location and the versatility of our offering."

The use of state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment and Wi-Fi are included with every booking, while delegates receive preferential bookings at the hotel. Planners are also given a selection of menus, created by award-winning group executive chef, Gavin Berreclough, to choose from.

Meeting packages are priced from A\$109.



HOT DEALS



Regent Singapore's Manhattan

Regent Singapore

Regent Hotel has rolled out offers for dining and networking events held on premises.

Dinner events booked now and held at the hotel by September 30 this year will enjoy a 20 per cent discount, while those booked by September 30 and held by December 31 will get 10 per cent off.

For networking functions booked at Summer Palace, Basilico or Manhattan by August 31 and

held before December 31, the hotel is giving out a S\$100 (US\$74) F&B voucher to planners. Enquire with the hotel to find out how to weave free-flow wines and beer, as well as butler-passed canapés, into your event.

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New World Millennium Hong Kong Hotel

From now until 29 December, planners who book at least 10 rooms with a minimum of two nights' stay will enjoy a special rate of HK\$1,988 (US\$256) per room night plus a host of perks.

The perks include a full-day meeting package, a HK\$200 F&B credit, one set dinner at Tao Li restaurant, daily breakfast buffet at Café East, a welcome drink, and laundry for three pieces of clothing per stay.

Additional perks will be given to groups with bookings of more than 50 guestrooms, and they include early check-in at 10.00 and late check-out until 15.00 for a maximum of 10 rooms, a coffee break upgrade, and an upgrade to the newly renovated Deluxe Harbour View

room on Deluxe Floor with one complimentary bottle of red wine per room for a maximum of four rooms, among others.

For bookings with more than 100 guestrooms, planners can enjoy all the above plus a maximum of two complimentary guestrooms for the organisers, one complimentary round-trip limousine between the airport and hotel for VIP delegation, one complimentary secretariat room throughout the meeting, and more.

Terms and conditions apply.

Email daniel.cheung@newworldmillennium-hotel.com.



Three global TMCs grow accommodation content through Airbnb partnership

By Karen Yue

Airbnb's new partnerships with American Express Global Business Travel (GBT), BCD Travel and Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) will bring its content to a greater audience of corporate travellers while satisfying duty of care requirements.

With GBT, the partnership will first allow individual travellers of GBT clients to book Airbnb content on the latter's site using a corporate email address. In the coming weeks, GBT and Airbnb will integrate Airbnb booking information into GBT's reporting platform, "enabling corporate reporting and traveller tracking which supports duty of care responsibilities", explained a GBT spokesperson.

This arrangement will only be available to US-based clients for now, while other markets will get it later this year.

With BCD Travel, which has an existing partnership with Airbnb, Airbnb data will be integrated into BCD Travel's DecisionSource business intelligence and security solution. This will allow BCD Travel's clients to interact with maps and detailed reports in real-time and bring Airbnb bookings under managed travel.

With CWT, Airbnb for Business content will be made available to its clients, allowing travellers more options and flexibility as well as a highly personalised itinerary.

While post-booking security measures are in place, the TMCs are unable to guide clients in making a safe Airbnb accommodation choice – one of the prime concerns among corporate travel managers who have rejected sharing economy stay options.

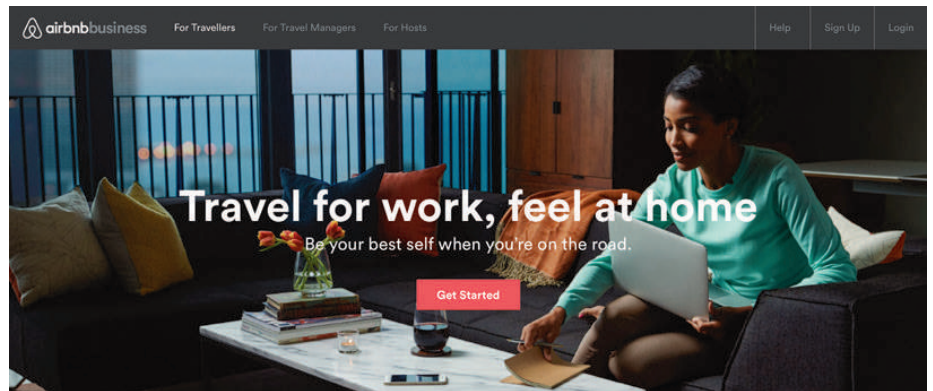
In response to *TTGmice's* question on this aspect of security measures, Suzanne Lee, spokesperson with BCD Travel, Asia-Pacific, said: "DecisionSource does not provide risk assessment for individual Airbnb properties (just as) it does not provide individual risk assessment of hotel properties. But it help companies with travellers staying at Airbnb accommodations by tracking them and alerting them when an incident takes place in their neighbour-

hood so companies can communicate with them as necessary."

The GBT spokesperson too said travellers and their employers will have to make that accommodation decision.

However, he added that travellers can look out for Airbnb's Business Travel Ready options.

Such properties have five stars for at least 60 per cent of reviews; have hosts that respond to 90 per cent of booking requests within 24 hours and do not cancel confirmed reservations within a week of the check-in date; provide 24-hour check-in; offer business amenities such as Wi-Fi, laptop-friendly workspace, etc; and are an entire home or apartment.



Accor and FRHI properties to offer a common loyalty programme

Following the official acquisition of FRHI Hotels & Resorts made known last week, AccorHotels is now working on an integrated hotel loyalty programme.

Speaking to *TTGmice*, Michael Issenberg, chairman and COO Accor Asia-Pacific, said: "We are working on the loyalty programmes now and we will ultimately have a combined programme."

"For instance, we know that the Fairmont loyalty program is more recognition based than point based. So that's what we are studying now and we will (eventually) make sure our customers get what they need," he elaborated.

While the acquisition now makes the upscale and mid-market operator now a key luxury hotel player, Issenberg emphasised that rebranding the hotels "is not part of the plan".

He said: "On one hand it is important to have a common background for the brand

but it is also very important for them to be distinct like we have the Fairmont and Raffles (names) which is all about the individual brand and we want to respect that."

"Perhaps we may do a bit of tweaking for one or two hotels but it is to ensure that they stay relevant and not about rebranding," he added.



Issenberg: customer satisfaction first

When asked about the potential job cuts with the generation of 65 million euros (US\$72 million) in "revenue and cost synergies" with the integration, Issenberg said: "We announced this (figure) as part of the transaction and we are confident of achieving that, and synergies do mean job reductions."

Issenberg said he was unable to comment further on the specifics of the downsizing due to its sensitive nature, but added that Accor will be finalising this over the next few months.

– Paige Lee Pei Qi

Singapore tops UIA charts

Singapore, Brussels and Seoul have emerged the top three cities for international meetings in 2015, according to statistics collected by the Union of International Associations (UIA).

The annual report this year looked at 458,453 meetings held in 1,449 cities across the world and found Singapore most popular, having played host to 736 or 6.3 per cent of all international meetings in 2015.

In close second was Belgium's capital city of Brussels. It was the chosen city for having hosted 665 international meetings.

Seoul, meanwhile, took the third position with 494 international meetings in its bag that same year.

The city-state of Singapore ranked fourth as a country, after the US in first place, South Korea in second and Belgium in third.

Paris, Vienna, Tokyo, Bangkok, Berlin, Barcelona and Geneva also scored top 10 city placings on UIA's list this year.

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Adelaide gets 3,000 reasons to smile

The Australian Dental Congress, one of the largest business events in Australia, has chosen Adelaide for its next gathering in 2021.

Hosted by the Australian Dental Association, the congress is expected to welcome more than 3,000 participants from across Australia and around the world. It will add A\$16 million (US\$12 million) to South Australia's visitor economy, provide over 15,000 bed nights and create 132 jobs.

Oscar van Elten, who represents the Australian Dental Organisation, commented: "Adelaide is the perfect sized

Australian City that thinks outside the box for business events. I visited the city for the first time in quite a while early this year as part of Destination South Australia, and was surprised and highly impressed by the development the city has undergone. From the larger projects including the Adelaide Oval and Adelaide Convention Centre upgrades, to the 70-plus new small bars and restaurants adding a real vibe to the city's laneways, we're looking forward to an exceptional event".

He noted that "a lack of suitable venues" in Adelaide had previously made it impossible for the city to accommodate the

growing event since it last played host a decade ago.

However, the expansion of the Adelaide Convention Centre as well as the introduction of the Convention Bid Fund have changed things for the better.

Damien Kitto, CEO of the Adelaide Convention Bureau, said: "In such a highly competitive market (with many) destinations keen on hosting such meetings, this expansion (by the Adelaide Convention Centre) along with the entire Riverbank Development has certainly made us a much more attractive offering to event owners."



Adelaide Convention Centre

Steady growth for global business travel until 2020: GBTA

A new report by the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) has forecasted that global business travel spending will be US\$1.3 trillion in 2016, and grow 5.8 per cent on average in the next five years to reach US\$1.6 trillion in 2020.

In 2015, global business travel spend was US\$1.2 trillion, a five per cent growth year-on-year.

Michael McCormick, GBTA executive director and COO, commented: "Business travel has demonstrated a tremendous resiliency as it continues (to make) slow and steady progress even in the face of global uncertainty, a weakened global economy, terrorist attacks, world health issues and other obstacles. Companies across the globe clearly understand the return on investment business travel delivers for their bottom line."

Notably, China surpassed the US as the largest business travel market in 2015 with a US\$291 billion market. However, GBTA expects China's business travel market to

become the fifth fastest-growing major market in the next five years as the country's economic growth moderates.

Elsewhere in Asia, GBTA predicts that India and Indonesia will average double-digit growth in business travel spending over the next five years.

With Brexit outcomes in mind, the report further stated that uncertainty in the UK economy may cause business trips to be postponed or cancelled. Should the UK enter a recession, domestic and outbound business travel will suffer, although a much weaker pound would attract more leisure and business travel to the country.

GBTA also projects US business travel spending to grow only 0.9 per cent this year (US\$292.5 billion) before advancing 4.2 per cent in 2017 (US\$304.9 billion), owing to increasing risks in the domestic and global economies, uncertainty leading up to the US presidential election, Brexit and continued signs of a weakening global economy.

{ In brief }

More players support Penang

Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau has expanded its Industry Partner Programme to include 16 more tourism specialists. They include Bayview Beach Resort, Eastern & Oriental Hotel, Parkroyal Penang, The Wembley, Straits Quay Convention Centre, Asian Overland Services, Destination Asia and Ascolite Design. Businesses in the programme are recommended in events proposals as preferred industry players.

JNTO Singapore takes on MICE roles

The Japan Convention Bureau and Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) have made JNTO Singapore Office their fourth international MICE office. Led by deputy director, Susan Maria Ong, it will be responsible for promoting Japan to South-east Asian and Pacific markets.

Bogor plans new integrated theme park resort

Indonesian developer MNC Land has entered into an agreement with China Metallurgical Corporation Group for the development of a new integrated theme park resort in Bogor city. The theme park alone is expected to occupy 55ha and be part of a larger project which includes two hotels and an entertainment precinct.

Deloitte University to feed Amara Sanctuary Resort with regular events

By Karen Yue

Luxury hotel Amara Sanctuary Resort, Sentosa has become the permanent base for Deloitte University's first Asia-Pacific campus where Deloitte employees will receive enriching learning experiences.

In preparation for the Deloitte University appointment, Albert Teo, CEO of Amara Holdings, revealed that the hotel had undergone an enhancement exercise to rejuvenate its facilities.

Teo said: "This is our first time providing a permanent base for a university. Although Amara Sanctuary had always been equipped with MICE facilities, we've spruced up the resort's interiors and adapted our MICE offerings to meet the (university's) requirements (and) to transform the resort into an integrated 'entrenched learning' space where individuals can hone their leadership skills, network and socialise in an inspired, luxurious and relaxing setting."

Improvements were made to the lobby and guestrooms while event equipment and network infrastructure were enhanced. More spaces were also added to encourage social networking, such as the extended Tier Bar, a new lounge and the



newly renovated rooftop infinity poolside which now comes with increased seating capacity.

F&B offerings also received a shake up, with new and innovative menus now on the table at Shutters and Tier Bar.

Both Deloitte University's appointment of the resort as training grounds and the refurbished hardware will serve to boost usage of the resort's event facilities, according to Teo.

When asked if the resort's special arrangement with the university would mean fewer opportunities for other events planners to use the property, Teo explained that "facilities are still being reserved on a first-come-first-served basis".

Moreover, the university "is flexible in their approach as to the number of classes to be held and will make arrangements with Amara Sanctuary ahead of time", he added.

Jordan qualifies as a MICE destination: Amman mayor

Jordan's available tourism infrastructure, the business-oriented mindset of its people and country leaders, safe environment, and location in the heart of the Middle East, are the qualities that make the country ready to capture more international business events, opined capital city mayor, Akel Biltaji.

Expressing a keenness to attract more events, Akel said: "Jordan is business-oriented and sees itself as the launch pad for advancements into the Middle East. Our country's high-level leadership is frequently overseas, engaging peers in talks for possible business opportunities. As we speak, His

Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein is in Sun Valley (the US) on a business mission. Our people are always looking to bring international business investments into the country.

"Because of (all that and) Jordan's tranquillity, security and the swell of intellectual capital, the country is home to many international organisations with humanitarian and commercial interests in the Middle East."

In terms of infrastructure, Akel pointed out that the country has "almost all the big hotel brands you can think of – The St Regis, Kempinski, Le Meridien, etc – and a Ritz-Carlton is now being built",

in addition to the King Hussein Conference Centre at the Dead Sea, and the Zara Conference Centre and King Hussein Business Park in Amman.

Jordan will host the World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa come May 2017, an event that Akel said would "demonstrate how much a peace-loving people we are and how safe the country is" and "serve to raise Jordan's profile as an attractive tourist destination in the minds of global travellers".

Another high-profile business event in Jordan is the Pan Arab Construction Forum, which Akel said would be attended by delegates from the Middle East, South Africa and Europe. – **Karen Yue**



Biltaji: we are ready for more MICE



CORRECTION

July issue's case study, *Harnessing elements of success*, had the name of Hyatt Sales Force Singapore's senior global sales director spelt wrong. It should be Lee Lin Ing. We apologise for that.

In the same issue, under China's Checking in section, we wish to point out that the Gourmet Shop has moved to the Lobby Lounge.

{ 2016 Calendar }

**August
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**September
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7-9**

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Singapore

Asia holds up

Brexit reality has rocked global stock markets and slayed the pound, but Asian BTMICE players are not feeling the pinch yet. By **Karen Yue**

In the days after the UK's historical vote on June 23 to leave the European Union, leading global travel companies have reported neither sharp falls in business travel traffic nor postponements or cancellations of business events originating from the UK.

Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT), BCD Travel and Hotel Reservation Service (HRS), have all reported no significant changes in business travel by their clients in the UK over the final days of June.

The impact on business travel has continued to be slight in the following weeks.

While Bertrand Salliet, general manager of FCM Travel Solutions Singapore, shared that "a level of uncertainty and a slight downward trend in business travel" had emerged over time, he said there isn't yet a "clear trend for business travel to and from the UK".

"Corporate travel is usually linked to market conditions, so with the uncertainty, businesses are watching their spend more cautiously and when this happens, business travel is usually the first to be scaled back. This is more apparent now in the finance and investment sectors, where most trading is conducted in pounds," Salliet explained.

But because most business travel plans are pre-determined (and essential for) ongoing business discussions, corporate traffic from the UK into Asia will carry on as usual, according to Salliet.

BCD Travel is also "preparing for some volatility" as clients may take a "conservative approach to internal travel and small meetings", according to Greg O'Neil, president – Asia-Pacific, but the company is not "adjusting annual projections for volume".

Still, the uncertain economy will cause clients to approach travel negotiations with greater care, resulting in tougher negotiations and higher demand for cost-savings, opined both FCM and HRS.

No impact yet on meetings

It is still early days for regional MICE experts to diagnose Brexit's impact on meetings and events coming from the

UK into Asia, but a tinge of apprehension exists.

Arokia Das, senior manager at Luxury Tours Malaysia, thinks a slowdown in corporate event bookings is on the horizon, as companies will be cautious about spending and may wait until the economy and political situation stabilise.

And should demand for corporate meetings be affected, O'Neil and Salliet agreed that small meetings would take the first hit.



O'Neil explained: "Companies tend to drop small internal meetings first because those are planned closer to the time of the event and often can be (replaced) using virtual collaboration technology. Larger meetings typically include costly cancellation policies, so we expect them to proceed."

On the corporate incentives front, SITE past president, Paul Miller, has urged calm, saying: "It is critical that our industry maintains a 'keep calm and carry on' approach in order to minimise any potential impact on incentive travel programmes and other business events."

And calm is what Diethelm Travel Group is feeling right now.

Lisa Fitzell, group managing director of the inbound specialist with operations in 12 Asian countries and which is strong in the European market, told TTGmice that it

is business as usual with her UK clients.

"We have had no cancellations and bookings have not slowed down," Fitzell said, adding that enquiries for future events in Asia have not been put on hold.

Fitzell, who held client meetings across the UK in the two weeks following the Brexit vote, found that key clients were not changing their forecasts for 2016.

While she expects softer bookings in 2017 due to the weak pound, she opined that "Asia is still placed better than the US, Australia or New Zealand (as a destination) due to the value it offers".

SITE Asia-Pacific president, Rajeev Kohli, also reminded his industry peers that "British travellers tend to be very resilient and, after a period of adjustment, we should see a degree of normalcy (in outbound travel) return."

Rosy prospects the other way

It is a different story with inbound travel to the UK.

David Tarsh, managing director of UK-based Tarsh Consulting, which serves many in the travel industry there, said: "Brexit brought a slump in the value of the pound. Overnight, hotel rooms, taxis, restaurants and all visitor attractions in the UK are better value."

Companies holding events in the UK would benefit from being able to attract a larger attendance with the softer currency, opined Salliet.

"This means we are able to offer our clients more event options that fit within their budget. Our clients are also looking to extend their business trips in London because it is now more affordable to do so," he said.

A HRS spokesperson also agrees that the weakened pound will lead to increased demand for the UK, as cost of business trips and meetings will be lower.

Dynasty Travel, one of Singapore's leading outbound specialists with a business events arm, has already reaped the rewards of Brexit's pound slaying.

Spokesperson Alicia Seah said corporate event bookings for the UK have leapt 15 to 20 per cent within a few weeks. These are slated to take place between September and December.

Seah added that dual city itineraries, such as those combining London and Paris, are giving way to more UK-only programmes as clients hope to take full advantage of their new buying power.

"Travellers are opting to travel beyond London to less explored parts of the UK, such as Ireland and Scotland," she said.

"The UK is popular among Singaporeans. If the pound continues to weaken, we can expect even stronger demand in the coming spring/summer months," Seah concluded.

01

46 Top Incentive Ideas

From partying in a disused Swiss military bunker to dancing along with Japanese festival revellers, there is something fascinating for your next reward programme

05

09

19



Cover story

01 Take in the raw energy of Fuji san

Renown Japanese hotel company, Hoshinoya, has come up with a great way to appreciate the majesty of Mount Fuji by placing guests in a location that leverages the great outdoors around the sacred mountain and yet elevate the experience with touches of luxury.

Known as Japan's first glamping resort, the 40-cabin Hoshinoya Fuji sits amid pine forests that overlook Lake Kawaguchi-ko and Mount Fuji. Groups that buy out the resort can work with the in-house Glamping Masters to create an itinerary which includes activities such as coffee brewing lessons, canoeing on Lake Kawaguchi-ko or early-morning yoga in Aokigahara Forest.

The library café, where hot drinks and petit fours are served, is also a lovely place for top achievers to gather and trade winning tips.

Capacity: 86 pax for resort buy-outs

Website: <http://hoshinoyafuji.com/en/>

02 Party in a Swiss bunker, anyone?

Peace-loving Switzerland's many disused bunkers – military shelters that are partly or fully buried underground – make for novel incentive event venues.

In Ticino, the bunkers entice with live music and a feast of cheese fondue, raclette and other much loved Swiss dishes. Cooking lessons can even be arranged.

Accorded with military welcome and briefing, your top achievers can spend the night in the dorms within the bunker, which can be personalised and branded with their company logo or Swiss images.

Capacity: 50 pax per bunker, up to six bunkers per event

Email: mice@ticino.ch

03 For your eyes only

Already widely acclaimed as the first museum in the world to be dedicated to modern art from South-east Asia, the National Gallery Singapore invites your delegates for an exclusive view behind the scenes. In this private tour, learn from curators and specialists about the rich history of the heritage buildings and gain insight into iconic art pieces for an unrivalled experience in this prestigious museum.

Capacity: 20 pax per tour

Email: info@nationalgallery.sg



04

Clan meetings

Celebrate your top achievers in one of the most distinctive Chinese clan houses in Malaysia – the Khoo Kongsi in Penang – by throwing a dinner featuring delectable popular local street eats such as *char koay teow*, *laksa* and *passembur* and entertaining them with living heritage activities that showcase true Malaysian customs and traditions.

Discovery Overland Holidays, which delivers this experience, is able to put together unique cultural dance performances as well as a mock Peranakan wedding procession.

Capacity: 950 pax

Email: doh_mice@discoveryoverland.com



06

05

Sail away in a catamaran

Get on the water in style at Mövenpick Siam Hotel Pattaya, which has partnered with Ocean Marina Yacht to offer upscale sailing in the Gulf of Thailand.

A range of fully-manned yachts are available to whisk guests around the bay or to the neighbouring islands off Na Jomtien coast in Pattaya.

Yachts include the 25-person, 16m-long *Siamese Twin*, which includes captain and crew, state-of-the-art equipment, living quarters and four bedrooms; the 20-pax, 13m-long *Sonic*; and the intimate six-pax, 8m-long *Siamese Cat*.

Capacity: Yacht dependent

Email: Nattapun.Runyasewa@moevenpick.com

06

Gangsta lovin'

Slide back in time to the notorious past of Shanghai when the city's most powerful Chinese crime lords ruled like kings. Have your incentive winners don colonial era costumes, and explore the mansions and villas where once wealthy banking families and rich opium dealers live, and learn how crime lords stashed their ill-gotten gains.

Participants also get an exclusive chance to "spy" on the insides of an old Jewish club where secret conversations took place and gain insight on how they changed the fate of Shanghai. Your winners can conclude the adventure by sipping on complimentary cocktails inside a mansion that once belonged to one of Shanghai's most influential families.

Capacity: Minimum three pax

Email: info@newmantours.com



07 Wining in Waiheke

Waiheke Island, approximately 18km from Auckland, and is famed for its sprawling vineyards, olive groves and pint-sized beaches. Savoy Charters offers exclusive luxury yacht charters for groups from Auckland to the Island where guests are met by a local sommelier for an afternoon of premium wine tasting. A private tasting back on the 16.4m vessel in a sheltered, secluded bay caps off the experience.

Capacity: 44 pax

Email: info@savoy.co.nz

08 Down by the railroad track

Haerang, also known as the Hallyu Tourism Train, is an event train that provides visitors with a unique and immersive Korean travel experience to Namiseom Island from Seoul. Passengers will get to enjoy Korean fusion music performances and live performances of songs from the soundtracks of hit Korean TV dramas. They will also be treated to a tour of Namiseom Island before indulging in a hearty meal of *dakgulbi* followed by the chance to make *mak-gusgu* noodles. The train will then depart from Gimyujeong Station and return to Seoul.

Capacity: At least 100 pax

Email: ask@korailtravel.com

09 A bottle of rum to warm the tum

Visit a young French couple's award-winning rum distillery at Phuket's Chalong Bay and meet the owners for a private tour at Chalong Bay Rum. Learn how natural white rum is made from Thai sugarcane cultivated on the premises. With ample space available at this boutique plant, events and programmes can be customised and personalised, ranging from distillery discovery tours with a master distiller to cocktail-making workshops to full dinner receptions with live music.

Capacity: 50 pax for full-option dinner and activities; 200 pax for cocktail parties

Email: marine@chalongbayrum.com

10 Glory of Awa Odori

The Awa Odori is one of Japan's three most famous festivals and takes place over four days in Tokushima, on the island of Shikoku, in mid-August every year. Dozens of teams – known as *ren* – wear brightly coloured costumes and chant and dance through the city's streets to traditional pipe and drum music. For anyone unfortunate to be visiting at other times of the year, do not fret; teams put on demonstrations three times a day at the Awaodori Hall and positively insist upon audience participation.

Capacity: 50 pax

Email: www.awaodori-kaikan.jp

11 A gastronomic adventure for an exclusive few

Exclusivity, refined cuisine and culinary expertise come together at Khao, the private table of chef Vichit Mukura – the former executive chef at the Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok's Sala

Rim Naam. Set in a cosy dining room with a show kitchen at high-end Japanese restaurant Yuutaro, the acclaimed chef serves up a modern interpretation of Thai cuisine using freshest ingredients available on the day of dining. Six, eight and 10-course menus are offered. With only 12 seats per session and a waiting list at least a month long, this chef's table will make an intimate gastronomic adventure for discerning gourmands.

Capacity: 12 pax

Email: info@khaogroup.com

12 Get behind a fancy wheel

Perfect for fans of the luxury British car, the Aston Martin Experience at the Silverstone Track, the home of British Motor Racing, allows participants to put their driving skills to the test on eight amazing cars in a single day. Take the Aston Martin V8 Vantage on the full Grand Prix circuit or the Formula Silverstone Single Seater race car on the Stowe Circuit – it is up to your participants' fancy.

Make time to soak up the ambience of racing greatness past and present in the exclusive British Race Drivers' Clubhouse before finding out first-hand the differences in power, handling and dynamics of these luxury vehicles.

Capacity: 15 pax

Email: enquiries@silverstone.co.uk

13 A touch of luxury

The Waterhouse at South Bund, Shanghai is the embodiment of a perfect architectural marriage between the remnants of a serrated 1930s warehouse and a former army compound, and contemporary design adaptations.

Situated in the iconic Shiliupu dockyards, the hotel offers 19 rooms (including 11 suites), a rooftop bar and an adjacent pillarless multipurpose warehouse. Every room comes with a stunning view of the majestic Huangpu River.

Incentive winners can enjoy epicurean dining at Table No. 1, a modern European restaurant helmed by Jason Atherton, followed by a tour around the nearby old Jewish ghetto and synagogue. Architectural geeks will be pleased to find that The Bund is a mere five minutes' walk away.

Capacity: Unavailable at press time

Email: reservations@waterhouseshanghai.com

14 Bask in Brunei's pristine environment

Take your top achievers out of the bustling city and into the preserved Ulu Temburong National Park in Brunei, where flora and fauna are protected for scientific research and the appreciation of low-impact travellers.

A day excursion can be organised for private groups, beginning with a ride in a local water taxi from Bandar through a network of rivers and channels around the back of Brunei Bay. As the group passes by dense mangrove islands, delegates have the chance to spot wildlife enjoying the early morning sun.

From Bandar continue onwards to Batang Duri where the group stops for morning tea, before heading upstream through the rapids of the Temburong River using traditional longboats, to the National Park entrance. Here, enjoy the panoramic view of the rainforest from the tree tops and visit a waterfall for a swim. The return journey downstream is taken on a longboat or inflatable raft to Rainforest Lodge where a great lunch of local delights awaits.

When hungry bellies are satiated, take the zipline and call at an Iban longhouse to discover the local way of life.

Capacity: 60 pax

Email: fremeinb@brunet.bn



John Leung/Shutterstock.com



Cover story

15 It is all written in the stars

In June 2012, the Aoraki Mackenzie region in the South Island of New Zealand was approved as one of only a few international Dark Reserves worldwide, offering unparalleled vistas of the night. Nestled against the backdrop of spectacular alpine landscape, the Hermitage Hotel in Aoraki Mt Cook Village offers Big Stargazing tours of the largest gold-rated reserve of its kind, beginning at the hotel's Digital Dome Planetarium. Guests are then transferred to the Reserve where astronomers highlight the constellations of the spectacular southern.

Capacity: 30 pax

Email: reservations@hermitage.co.nz

16 Eat your way around town

What better way to get a feel of a city than through its local cuisine. UnTour Shanghai offers culinary excursions that deviate from usual tourist hotspots. Three regular food tours with bilingual guides are offered: Shanghai Night Markets; Street Eats Breakfast; and Dumpling Delights, which ends with a one-hour hands-on cooking class for *shengjianbao* with a local chef. Private tours for corporate groups can be arranged.

Capacity: Six to 20 or 30 pax, depending on the tour

Email: info@untourshanghai.com

17 Shake up the afternoon with a sushi class

No trip to Japan is complete without a taste of freshly made sushi, but you can up the game by getting your top achievers to make their own tasty nugget of rice and seafood.

At Umemori Sushi School in Nara, Japan, a sushi-making class can be conducted for groups as large as 100 pax. The 90-minute experience begins with a welcome drink of Japanese tea, and then participants will be given *happi*, a cloth used for festivals, to don as aprons. After a quick briefing, the group gets on with making eight types of sushi using tuna, squid, salmon, shrimp, eel, salmon roe, scallops and sea urchin.

Everyone will have a chance to enjoy their creations together, before receiving a certificate of completion to show off proudly to friends and family back home.

Capacity: 100 pax

Email: info@umemori.co.jp

18 Fancy a cocktail?

Delve into Shanghai's thriving nightlife where speakeasy bars are coming back in vogue. For your incentive winners who crave for a different facet of Shanghai, a former F&B editor of *Time Out Shanghai* will personally lead this tour, taking them to three hidden bars. The night doesn't end without enjoying new cocktail creations specifically tailored to the participants' taste by the city's best bartenders.

Capacity: Minimum two pax; maximum eight

Email: info@bespoke-beijing.com

19 Luxury voyage down the Mekong

The customisability of Aqua's luxury offerings is just what incentive planners need to effectively dangle a carrot. Unlike its competition, Aqua does not rely on third parties, and even has its own skiffs for excursions – the only cruise plying the Mekong to offer this. With the added flexibility, foodies, for example, could choose to attend cooking lessons on board and visit markets and villages when they hit shore.

Aqua Expedition offers a four-night itinerary from Ho Chi Minh City to Phnom Penh, and a three-night itinerary from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap, with two excursions each day.

Capacity: 20 suites for 40 passengers

Website: www.aquaexpeditions.com

20 Regal home of the winners

Hidden among the lush undulating hills of Bali's highlands is The Chedi Club Tanah Gajah, an intimate retreat with twenty individual villas, each one uniquely featuring original Balinese artworks, spread across a five-hectare plot.

And within this private, serene complex, poised at the edge of a steep valley along the Petanu River, is the Bumi Duadari, an enchanting residence of renowned Indonesian art collector and designer Hendra Hadiprana. Constructed in traditional Balinese style, the handsome residence also supports local Ubud-based artists by filling out its interior with their art pieces.

While Bumi Duadari is not open for stays, select spaces are available for private event hire. Three venues are on offer: Bale Barong, which can seat 45 pax or accommodate 60 for a standing cocktail; Dua Dari Statue, which can seat 20 pax or host 60 for a standing cocktail; the scenic poolside which is good for a 45-pax cocktail party; The Hadiprana House which welcomes 45 pax for a standing cocktail.

Capacity: Varied

Email: sales@thechediclububud.com

21 A hot and cold date

One that features hot air ballooning and a cool champagne breakfast, to be exact!

To gain a full appreciation of the expansive Australian outback and why it has been dubbed The Red Centre, a bird's-eye view is recommended.

Outback Ballooning operates hot air balloon flights out of Alice Springs, which begin before dawn so your top achievers can watch the sunrise and crimson shades emerge over the West McDonnell Ranges and arid landscape. Following the flight, your groups is treated to a cool champagne breakfast at a remote bush campsite.

Capacity: 60 pax

Email: sales@outbackballooning.com.au

22 Forbidden no more

The Forbidden City in Beijing is iconic and holding a gala event on the grounds is very prestigious and exclusive because it costs about 10 times more to use the venue to access areas that are not open to the public. Participants can dress up in imperial costumes and enjoy five-star dining in the main hall of the Imperial Ancestral Temple while being entertained by performers playing traditional instruments.

For a modern twist on entertainment for a gala event, a mini Beijing Olympic Games-style opening ceremony with artists and performers can be staged in the courtyard.

Capacity: 300 pax

Email: kris.vangoethem@thomascook.com.cn

23 Playground of the gods

When The Gleneagles Hotel first opened its doors in the heart of Scotland in 1924, it was dubbed the playground of the gods. Not much has changed and it is still recognised as one of the world's grandest resorts.

This luxury hotel is set on a sprawling estate where guests can indulge in a smorgasbord of activities not easily found in the big cities. Have your top achievers train a Labrador at the Gundog School, experience the thrill of flying a Harris Hawk at the world's first dedicated Falconry School, put their motor skills to the test on two of Scotland's most challenging 4x4 off-road driving courses, and more.

Golf enthusiasts can also have a go on the PGA Centenary Course which had hosted The 2014 Ryder Cup.

Dining delights abound too at the hotel, home to two Michelin star chef Andrew Fairlie's restaurant.

Capacity: 232 guests on single-occupancy basis for hotel buy-out

Email: group.sales@gleneagles.com

23

24 Road to happiness

A well preserved 360m long and 50m high Roman aqueduct in Pont du Gard, France provides a memorable trek to an even more impressive venue where a private sound-and-light show awaits your top achievers. The colossal structure makes a

unique backdrop for a private gathering held in a nearby Mediterranean garden or right on the riverbank. At night, the aqueduct will be lit with a thousand lights for a heavenly sight.

Capacity: 300 pax

Email: domnine-reynert@pontdugard.fr

Website: www.pontdugard.com

25 Fly over for lunch

A succulent seafood feast on a private island off the coast of Victoria, complete with a beach concierge to facilitate on-the-ground activities such as stand-up paddle boarding, four-wheel driving over sand dunes or a relaxing massage, may be the highlight for the day. But getting your top achievers to this private island lunch date is also great fun when you put them on a helicopter and fly them from Melbourne to the Great Ocean Road, soaring over the majestic 12 Apostles and coastal surrounds.

Capacity: 60

Email: info@bigstickadventures.com

26 Don't forget your brolly

Umbrellas are a symbol of good luck for the Hakka people. This 1.5 hour workshop is offered in a small Hakka Village situated in the countryside of Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Owner Li Rong-qun and his wife will guide the class in the century-old craft of Chinese umbrella making, before offering participants brushes and colours to beautify their creations. Moreover, as only a handful of umbrella makers still survive, your group's participation supports the continuation of this traditional handicraft.

Capacity: 30 pax

Email: kcsumbrella@yahoo.com.tw

27 A great stay all the way

Reward your incentive winners with a one-of-a-kind stay at Commune by the Great Wall, an award-winning contemporary architecture overlooking the Great Wall of China. Occupying the plains of the picturesque Shuiguan Mountains, the property offers tranquillity away from the city's hustle and bustle. Your winners will appreciate a private path from the property that leads to an untouched section of the Great Wall of China. The property has 40 villas with a total of 175 suites and 11 presidential suites.

Capacity: Unavailable at press time

Email: reservation@commune.com.cn

28 Glide like a bird

At dawn, coast over lush paddy fields, Lanna temples and the rolling mountains of northern Thailand in a two-seater microlight aircraft belonging to Chiang Mai Adventure. Take in views of the idyllic countryside and enjoy the sensation of gliding in the air like a bird. There are plenty of aerial photo and video opportunities, just make sure to come with a GoPro.

Capacity: Eight pax per day

Email: infoadventure@gmail.com

29 Dive into Middle Earth

Your top achievers can channel their inner Gandalf and take a journey to Middle-earth

with a scenic flight from Queenstown in the South Island of New Zealand. Departing from Queenstown Airport, pilot Alfie Speight, the cameraman responsible for most of the aerial scenes in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* movie trilogies, flies passengers over the awe-inspiring Remarkables and onto many film locations including the Shotover River which can be recognised as the Ford of Bruinen.

Capacity: Six pax per helicopter

Email: info@glaciersouthernlakes.co.nz

30 Master The Jungle Cook Book

Love Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*? Now you can step into the very landscape that inspired the setting of the classic tale – Pench National Park – through a stay at Vannraj by Ayana in Madhya Pradesh, India.

The luxury safari lodge is a short drive to the Turia entrance of Pench National Park, and blends in with the surrounding landscape and indigenous vegetation. Spread across nine hectares of deciduous forest are 12 independent lodges that provide ample indoor and outdoor spaces for guests to interact with nature while being afforded the necessary privacy.

Landscaped gardens and various open spaces make perfect locations for exclusive get-togethers, or host a welcome dinner under an old Mahua tree and a post-dinner cocktail party on a romantically-lit pool deck or on a suspended deck on the lake. These venues can accommodate 100 to 150 pax.

But wait, there's more to do. Ready your group for a lesson on tribal cooking techniques used by the local Gond and Baiga tribes. Interactive sessions, led by the executive chef, can be arranged for groups of eight to 10 guests.

Capacity: Varied

Email: vannraj@ayanahospitality.com

31 Roll into India's best locales in style

The Deccan Odyssey, regarded as one of the most luxurious trains in the world, rolls through India and takes its passengers to some of the country's most remarkable landmarks and locations.

Itineraries are rather lengthy for corporate incentives though – running for seven nights/ eight days – but for groups who can afford the time, the journey will be a memorable one. Various itineraries are available, and each explores a different part of India, such as the Taj Mahal in the north and the heritage sites of Ajanta and Ellora caves in the west.

The Deccan Odyssey train has onboard a fitness centre, a spa, restaurants and well-appointed cabins that come furnished with twin-beds, LCD TVs, bath and shower. There are 21 royal coaches and four presidential suites.

Capacity: 88

Email: trains@deccanodyssey.in

32 Stop and smell the flowers

In the Upcountry region of Maui, nestled on the slopes of Haleakala, is the mystical Ali'i Kula Lavender farm. Created by Ali'i Chang, an agricultural artist and horticultural master, the 5.5-hectare farm resides at an elevation of



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roughly 1,219m and is home to some 55,000 lavender plants from 45 different varieties.

Guided walking tours can be arranged for your top achievers to wander down the beautiful paths and enjoy breathtaking views while the guide shares the farm's history, inspiration and plans for the future.

Later, work off lunch with a treasure hunt that explores lesser known nooks and crannies of the farm or partake in a craft class where your group can make their own souvenir using lavender flowers.

Capacity: 40 pax

Email: info@aklmaui.com

33 Sandy adventures

The Gobi Desert adventure in Dunhuang will be able to even awe participants who have seen it all. Count on the stunning backdrop, especially when going on one of the many land and air transport experiences such as camel back rides, a helicopter trip, microlighting (flying in an ultralight aviation craft), a jeep safari and all-terrain biking on sand dunes, to impress your top performers.

The programme also includes an open-air Silk Road dance and cultural performance.

Capacity: 80 to 100 pax

Email: kris.vangoethem@thomascook.com.cn

34 Get a trinity treat of culture, adventure and nature

Want to experience Sarawak's traditional Iban longhouse with the opportunity for some culture, adventure and nature along the way?

Aiman Batang Ai Resort and Retreat is the answer. Previously managed by the Hilton hotel group, the 100-key property at the fringe of the Batang Ai National Park and overlooking the picturesque Batang Ai lake was renamed on January 1, 2016 following its purchase by Malaysian company Aiman Agro Park.

Fashioned after a traditional Iban longhouse, the resort offers a variety of activities such as canopy walks, jungle treks and traditional cooking classes.

Capacity: 200 pax, twin-share basis in a resort buy-out

Email: sales@aimanbatangai.com

35 Purify this soul

Your top achievers are invited to experience this time-honoured tradition of the Hindu-Balinese culture and take part in a one-of-a-kind spiritual experience.

The 45-minute programme takes place on the beaches of The Ritz-Carlton, Bali in the early morning, when Surya, God of the Sun, is believed to rise.

Balinese Hindus believe that the blessings from Surya and Baruna, God of the Ocean, are required for a clean and fresh new beginning, which is why this is performed on the beach.

It started with a Balinese priest offering a devotion to both Gods, followed by a *Tepung Tawar* ritual – cleansing of the guest's hands, feet, face, and mouth three times each with the holy water, to symbolically cleanse the

body, mind, and soul, and concluding with a prayer.

Completing the journey, a piece of three-colored string called *Benang Tridatu* is tied around the guest's wrist and worn until it falls off – symbolising their quest for balance, harmony, and understanding.

Capacity: 20 pax

Website: www.ritzcarlton.com/Bali

36 Blue, blue woohoo

Established in the 1970s from the run-off of the Svartsengi Geothermal Power Plant in Iceland, today the healing waters of the Blue Lagoon occupy 8,700m² in an 800-year-old lava field. The nine million litres of geothermal seawater combine silica, algae and minerals, and at a temperature of approximately 38 degrees Celsius, bathing in the Blue Lagoon is an invigorating experience quite like no other.

The Blue Lagoon is available for exclusive events and can be combined with lunch or dinner overlooking the surrounding volcanic landscape and lagoon in the LAVA Restaurant.

And if you are planning ahead for your top achievers, you can watch out for a luxury hotel and underground spa which are set to open in 2017.

Capacity: 700 pax

Email: sales@bluelagoon.com

37 Music for winners

Hotel Magnol in Montpellier, France, a 17th century mansion formerly home to famed botanist Pierre Magnol, from whom the magnolia tree was named, is now owned by sculptor, writer and violin maker Frederic Chaudiere.

The magnificent property makes a stunning location for an awards gala that can be accompanied by a private concert and a tour of Chaudiere's atelier where he makes violins, violas and violoncellos, including copies for museums and collectors.

Chaudiere or his daughter will regal visitors with anecdotes about famous musicians and their expensive musical instruments, entertain requests for an imitation Gibson Stradivarius, and more.

Capacity: 100 pax

Email: contact@hotelmagnol.com

38 Gourmet encounter of the Maui kind

A truly unique island experience begins in the misting forest of Waipoli in Upcountry Maui, Hawaii where you will find O'o Farm.

Its northwest exposure and 1,067m elevation on the slopes of Haleakala provide a breathtaking venue for a truly unique Maui experience.

Your top achievers will feel like they are at the top of the world amid the cool upcountry climate while enjoying panoramic bi-coastal views of the island. Enrich their soul with a connection to the land as they sit down to a gourmet lunch prepared in their presence with fresh natural products they had a hand in harvesting. What a rare chance to become hunters and

gather-ers of a sort again, living for today's treasures.

Capacity: 100 pax

Email: reservationist@pacificomaui.com

39 Sizzling action

Get up close and personal with Singapore's celebrity chef, Sam Leong and his wife Forest Leong, while learning how to cook modern Chinese dishes under their guidance.

Whip up plates of baked cod with honey, prawns stuffed with smoked oyster and egg yolks, and pumpkin dumpling with quail egg in coconut sauce. Once you nail these dishes, and more, you are one step closer to becoming your household's master chef!

Capacity: 20 pax per class

Email: samatforest@singnet.com.sg

40 Sail away

What better way to fete incentive winners than sailing onboard the 19-metre catamaran *Région de Picardie* which its owner and skipper, Alain Petit Etienne, steered to win top prizes in many a sea races in Europe since 1983. Etienne himself will sail the catamaran around Camargue, the port of the rich and the famous, and regale your top achievers with tales of his sea adventures and history of this scenic area in the south of France.

For larger groups, Etienne has four other catamarans to rent.

Capacity: 15 pax per catamaran

Email: skipper@voilemed.com



guests can interact with the cows and shop for fresh dairy foodstuff.
Capacity: 200 pax
Email: askapxara@apxara.com

44 Peer into Kedah's past

An international ancient trading centre and a Hindu-Buddhist kingdom believed to be the oldest civilisation in Southeast Asia, dating back to 110AD, is the latest historical discovery in modern Malaysia to be made available to tourists.

The archaeological site of Bujang Valley in Kedah will be the starting point of this curated tour, and your top achievers will get a deeper look at the well preserved surroundings. A two-hour drive from Bujang Valley will take the group to Inas Mountain Forest Reserve, where a bird's-eye view of the lush tropical jungle below can be enjoyed from the world's longest canopy walkway measuring 925m.

Capacity: 30 pax
Email: greenjohnchan@gmail.com

45 Get out of the city

Skip the usual city hotels and house your top achievers at The Tamara, Coorg, a resort that is tucked away in the tranquil confines of a 69-hectare coffee, cardamom, pepper and honey plantation in Kodagu District, Karnataka, India.

All 56 cottages here are raised on stilts and enveloped by hills, sparkling streams and lush greenery at about 1,097m above sea level.

Its unique location presents opportunities for nature and wellness activities, such as yoga sessions, nature treks and bird-watching.

Sign your group up for the resort's signature Blossoms to Brew activity, which invites participants to blend and roast their own coffee beans to create a unique cup of coffee at The Verandah restaurant. The coffee blend can then be taken back home as a unique souvenir.

Capacity: 56
Email: coorg@thetamara.com

46 Be a latter-day superhero

Your top achievers may have conquered the toughest targets in the corporate world, but how will they fare as modern-day ninja warriors?

For anyone who has dreamed of becoming a latter-day superhero, here comes the opportunity. Descendants of Japan's legendary feudal era warriors maintain the traditions to this day and are now imparting these secrets to worthy disciples. Under the guidance of ninjas from the Musashi clan, delegates will don the all-black robes of the ninja, practice martial arts, master the art of concealment and silent escape, and learn how to use weapons such as throwing stars and short swords.

Capacity: 40 people.
E-mail: office@musashi.ninja



...es an experience than is on par with other wildlife resorts across the globe, where fine living and dining blend perfectly with closeness to wildlife. Resort guests can expect to see and listen to wildlife from the comfort of their living room and other resort areas such as the restaurant and swimming pool decks.

And come mornings and evenings, avian songs will entertain guests.

Capacity: 48 pax
Email: reservation@aahanaresort.com / info@aahanaresort.com

42 Gastronomic discoveries in a wildlife sanctuary

Cuddling a koala or feeding a kangaroo is a must on any Australian incentive itinerary. Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary on the Gold Coast offers guests the opportunity to do both over a five-course progressive dinner, stopping at multiple exhibits along the way for A\$400 (US\$300) per person. Guests are welcomed by Yella the yellow tailed black cockatoo before they get to meet Boss Hog the crocodile and pay a visit to the Wildlife Hospital. What's more, all proceeds from the event are invested back into caring for the wildlife and conservation programmes.

Capacity: 160 pax
Email: enquiries@cws.org.au

43 Local interaction

Located approximately two hours from Kota Kinabalu, Kundasang is reputable for its sweater weather and picturesque view of the captivating Mount Kinabalu. Travelling through Kundasang, participants will get to experience the freshly grown produce and local delicacy – sago worms! Dive into the local culture as the tour visits local villages. There, participants will be introduced to the Kundasang locals' fascinating culture through food and performances. This adventure will end at a dairy farmhouse, where

41 Wild days ahead

In the Patlidun valley of India's Uttarakhand lies Aahana – The Corbett Wilderness, a luxury eco-friendly resort that touches the forests of Corbett National Park all along its entire length on the north-eastern boundary.

Here, your incentive winners can begin the day by going on a bird-watching trail to spot vultures, storks, eagles, kingfishers, sandpipers, martins – and even spotted deer, tigers and leopards if they are lucky. The programme can then progress with a jeep safari into the national park in the afternoon, and a traditional ayurvedic body therapy at the resort come evening.

Aahana promises



Tokyo sprints for MICE gold

The 2020 Olympic Games hardware boost will make MICE players big winners when the event is over, writes **Julian Ryall**

With less than four years to go until the world's largest sporting jamboree arrives in Tokyo, the city is making plans to ensure the 2020 Olympic Games is an efficient, attractive and unforgettable event. And business event players are delighted at the enhancements that are being planned as they know that once the show is over, they will be in prime position to take advantage.

"There will be a great deal of work done to the infrastructure of the city and the surrounding region, which will undoubtedly make life easier for MICE providers," said Katsuaki Suzuki, executive director of the Japan Convention Bureau, the division of the Japan National Tourism Organisation tasked with developing the business events sector.

Among the new sporting facilities that are to be constructed, Suzuki pointed out a number are being designed to have dual uses after the Games, such as the 15,000-seat Ariake Arena where the volleyball competition will be held, and the new

gymnastics stadium in the Ariake district of Tokyo, which will have seating for 12,000 people.

The Japanese government has also announced plans to enlarge both Haneda and Narita airports, adding runways and lifting annual arrival and departure slots by 79,000 flights a year by 2020. Meanwhile, the transport ministry is looking into ways to speed up immigration procedures.

Within Tokyo, a state-of-the-art terminal for long-distance buses opened in Shinjuku this April, while plans are also afoot for a new cruise terminal on Tokyo Bay.

The operator of the monorail that presently links Haneda airport with Hamamatsucho Station has announced that it will extend the line all the way to Tokyo Station.

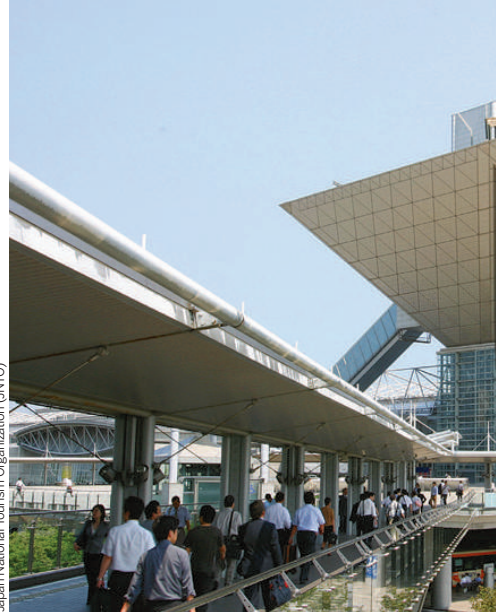
"We believe the Games – and the run-up to the Games in Tokyo – will also help raise our profile as a destination for MICE," remarked Suzuki. "We already have many conferences, exhibitions and so on, but we're expecting more related to sporting themes as we get closer to 2020."

An early promotion drive is planned for the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games this summer, with

"There will be a great deal of work done to the infrastructure of the city and the surrounding region, which will undoubtedly make life easier for MICE providers."

Katsuaki Suzuki
Executive director, Japan Convention Bureau

Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)



Yasufumi Nishi@JNTO



Tokyo offers a mix of modern architecture and scenic natural spaces; clockwise from above: Mount Takao, Tokyo Big Sight, Tokyo Station, Shinjuku and Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden





Raf02/Shutterstock

Japan opening an online media centre providing easy access to detailed information on options in Tokyo over the next four years.

These broader developments mesh with a number of MICE-specific measures, Suzuki pointed out, such as the opening in early 2020 of a new 20,000m² facility alongside the existing Pacific Convention Plaza Yokohama (commonly known as Pacifico Yokohama).

Similarly, the Japan Tourism Agency has started accepting applications for companies seeking financial support to use some of the city's unique venues for events.

One of the locations being put forward under the programme is the Geihinkan State Guest House, which was until recently only open to the public on a limited number of days each year. Now, the venue can be used for private events, giving more people access to a building that is officially listed as a national treasure.

That's exactly the sort of thing that would appeal to clients, according to Lucky Morimoto, president of Tokyo-based Event Services, Inc.

"Many of the firms that come to us do not want a generic location for their gala dinners or major events; they want something that is unique, traditionally Japanese and able to cater for up to 1,000 people," explained Morimoto.

"Tokyo lacks something like that at the moment and I believe that if such a facility was built then it would be in great demand," he added.

Morimoto believes that the new-found focus placed on Tokyo means that DMCs will "need to elevate their standards of service and their offerings".

He said: "That is the main reason why I organised a group called The DMC Club, which meets once every two months to exchange information on unique venues or services that would be welcomed by our corporate event buyers.

"We do need to elevate our standards to be ready to welcome all the corporate buyers that we expect in the year of the Olympics."

James Kent, sales and marketing manager for Tokyo-based The J Team DMC Co., also called for venues that have previously been declared off-limits to now be made accessible.

"I'm talking about temples, parks, special properties that today

Sathirapong phoothit/Shutterstock



Sean Paeon/Shutterstock



Destination: Japan

say they are not interested in hosting events, but need to realise that they have a very important role to play for the city," he told *TTGmice*.

Unable to find a sufficiently large venue for one huge group recently, Kent's company had to resort to using one of the exhibition halls at the Tokyo Big Sight convention centre for the gala dinner.

Management of the centre had never previously considered the space for such an event and it "was like watching a light bulb go on when they realised what was possible," Kent added.

Another legacy that Kent hopes

that the industry gains from the global spotlight in the lead up to and during the Games, will be that more DMCs attract a new influx of young people into their ranks. Too often, he said, event companies take on older workers seeking a "second life" job after they retire from another firm.

"One legacy that I hope we have beyond the Olympics is people looking at joining DMCs and looking at what they can achieve over the next 20 years rather than the five years until they finally stop working," he said. "That would give the business a more sustainable boost."



"Many of the firms that come to us do not want a generic location for their gala dinners or major events; they want something that is unique, traditionally Japanese and able to cater for up to 1,000 people."

Lucky Morimoto
President, Event Services, Inc

{ Talking numbers }

25

The number of years since Japan hosted the annual meeting and general assembly of the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers. The event will be staged in Tokyo in 2018

355

The number of international association meetings held in Japan in 2015, a record annual high which places the nation seventh in the global rankings of host countries by ICCA

3,000

The size, in square metres, of the new TOC Gotanda Messe event space, which opened in January this year



{ Developments to watch }

1

In June 2014, the 52-storey Toranomon Hills skyscraper changed the profile of the previously rather unremarkable district sandwiched between the more desirable Azabu and Roppongi districts. The eye-catching tower has office space, 25 restaurants, conference facilities and the Andaz Tokyo, the first boutique hotel by Hyatt Corporation in Japan. By 2020, Mori Building Co. plans to open a further three new tower complexes with facilities designed to turn the district into Tokyo's newest global business hub.



Toranomon Hills

2

With an eye on the growing outbound travel demand from the Muslim nations in South-east Asia, the Tokyo Muslim Travellers' Guide was published in April 2016. The English-language pamphlet provides details of hotels and dining establishments that are especially accommodating to Muslim visitors, and will benefit both leisure travellers and corporate groups with Muslim delegates. The project is part of the broader omotenashi long-term vision for Tokyo, to roll out a warm welcome to all international visitors.

3

The Tama district of western Tokyo has emerged as a hot-spot for incentive groups. Even though it is within the metropolitan area and a mere hour from central Tokyo, the region has some of the best green spaces in Kanto. Top of that list is Mount Takao, which was designated as a three-star destination on France's famous Michelin Green Guide to Japan. Hiking up Mount Takao makes an excellent teambuilding activity. Chair lifts and cable cars are available to make the journey much easier. Other attractions in the area include a tour of a sake brewery and soba noodle-making.

{ **Review central** }

Tokyu Stay Ginza

By Karen Yue

Opened in March 2016, Tokyu Stay Ginza is a well-furnished yet affordable hotel in the posh Ginza retail, entertainment and business district. It scores high marks in my books for providing basic comforts and its excellent location – mere minutes on foot from both Ginza Station and Higashi-Ginza Station, and within easy walking distance of landmark attractions such as Kabuki-za Theatre and Tsukiji Fish Market.

Rooms Various room types are on offer, from the smallest Moderate room at 15m² to the largest Executive Double at 32m². All are equipped with complimentary LAN and Wi-Fi access and a microwave, and most come with a washer/dryer. I imagine these amenities will be appreciated by frequent business travellers on lengthy assignments in the city.

The Residential Double where I spent three nights, came with a well-equipped kitchenette that allowed me to make quick meals when I finally got tired of dining out. At 25m², the room, dressed in crisp white and comforting beige, felt more spacious



than it really was, thanks to its smart layout.

The deep western-style bath was a welcome amenity in chilly springtime.

MICE facilities There are no function rooms at this hotel, but its facilities and stellar location make it a great option for business travellers or teambuilding/incentive groups keen on exploring Tokyo.

Other facilities I discovered an impressive daily breakfast spread with seasonal Japanese and popular Western dishes

at The Stay Gold Ginza restaurant on the second floor. The 24-hour front desk can help guests dispatch and accept parcel delivery, and acquire dry-cleaning services. Hotel guests can also pick up a variety of complimentary products, such as bath salts and teabags, from a counter in the lobby to enhance their stay.

Room count 191

Star rating 3.5

Contact ginza@tokyustay.co.jp / (81-03) 3541-0109

Mitsubishi Ichigokan Museum

By Julian Ryall



In a city that is better known for ultra-modern venues in sleek steel-and-glass skyscrapers, The Mitsubishi Ichigokan Museum transports guests back to a more genteel time.

Concept Originally constructed in 1894 as the first Western-style office in Tokyo, the Mitsubishi Ichigokan building was rebuilt to the original plans in 2010 to exhibit art from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Situated in the swanky Marunouchi business district, just a five-minute walk from both Tokyo Station

and the Imperial Palace, the museum displays art from its own collection and hosts visiting exhibitions of works by Renoir, Gauguin, Pierre Bonnard and others.

MICE application The museum has recently introduced programmes for private events on site.

The Museum in the Morning option, for groups of 60 to 200 pax, costs 3,000 yen (US\$27) per person. The Museum in at Night option enables groups of up to 300 pax to stroll among the exhibits and then have refreshments

at Cafe 1894. This is priced at 3,500 yen per head. Private viewings with either a buffet lunch or dinner cost from 13,500 yen per pax.

Service Swift, precise and hassle-free. English-speaking staff are a major plus, and the location is ideal.

Operation hours 10:00–18:00, except on Fridays when it closes at 20.00

Contact mimt.jp/english/

Changes for the better

The Indian CVB has drawn up a lengthy to-do list that will see it boost its ability to market the destination, writes **Rohit Kaul**

The India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) is undertaking a much welcomed major restructuring to allow it to better promote India as a preferred destination for international business events.

And the highlight of this exercise is ICPB's new ability to bid for international association events.

ICPB had been battered in the past by Indian MICE players who were disappointed that the bureau was not involved in conference bids, unlike its more aggressive peers in other countries, causing India to lose out on business.

India's Ministry of Tourism has

now decided to offer financial support to ICPB for the bidding of international association events, but on one condition: the state tourism board has to contribute half of that monetary commitment.

Suman Billa, joint secretary with the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and chairman of ICPB, said: "We understand the importance of attracting international MICE events to the country. We will support states looking to host such events on a sharing basis (because) revenues generated through event hosting will largely benefit the states."

Billa added that a "focused marketing strategy" will be employed to

tap major source markets.

Chander Mansharamani, ICPB vice chairman, expects the entire process of restructuring to be completed in a year's time.

"To begin, we are gathering information on conferences coming into Asia-Pacific that we can bid for. We are approaching the local chapter of international associations in India and telling them that we can support their bid for business events."

ICPB is looking to set up chapters in different Indian states to raise awareness about the economic benefits of hosting an international business event. Each state chapter will have at least 10 members.

"We are initially targeting 11 or 12 Indian states with existing infrastructure for business events," shared Mansharamani, who added that Maharashtra has become a member of ICPB while other states like Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have shown interest.

Detailing ICPB's plans further, Mansharamani shared that the bureau aims to first break into ICCA's top 20 global destination rankings and then improve on its position.

Commenting on ICPB's new responsibility, Amaresh Tiwari, managing director of AT Seasons & Vacations Travel, said ICPB's involve-



igphoto/shutterstock

The state of Madhya Pradesh are among those that have shown interest in joining ICPB; the Orchha Palace in Madhya Pradesh pictured here

{ Talking numbers }

31

India's position in ICCA's 2015 ranking of countries for global association meetings. It rose from its 35th position in 2014

30,000

The total exhibition area, in square metres, available for use at the new Jaipur Exhibition & Convention Centre

40,000

The attendance at IMTEX 2016, a flagship event for the Indian metal cutting industry that draws a global audience. It is one of the largest events to be held at Bangalore International Exhibition Centre



Nuke2013/shutterstock



CRSHELARE/shutterstock

ment in an event bid would “carry more weight than an individual entity” and pointed out that “most of the bids are won by (CVBs)”.

Going forward ICPB will organise roadshows in cities such as Geneva, Paris and Amsterdam where many global associations have headquarters, starting from this September. It will also participate in international MICE tradeshows such as IMEX America and AIME.

“Associations (in Europe and Australia) representing sectors like IT, science and medicine looking to organise their events in Asia-Pacific will be our target when we are ready to bid because India is a knowledge powerhouse in these fields,” shared Mansharamani.

Trade partnerships also feature strongly in ICPB's restructure. It is working closely with major Indian industry bodies like the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) to organise events that highlight the importance of MICE in the pursuit of tourism industry growth. The Ministry of Tourism and FICCI co-organised the inaugural Global MICE Travel Mart in New Delhi recently.

Soon to come in the third quarter is a new planner, published by ICPB, to highlight the various MICE venues across the country.

Local tourism players are eager to share suggestions on what ICPB needs to do in order to achieve its goal sooner.

Saurabh Bhargava, associate vice president-sales, North India with Taj Hotels & Resorts, opined that

besides shouting about India's MICE hardware, destination marketing must also “spread the message that India is about experiences”.

“We also need to move beyond the famed Golden Triangle (of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur) and promote India as a 365-day destination,” he urged.

Ananya Sinha, director, sales & marketing with JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity, added that the

general perception of India held by international markets must also be corrected.

Sinha explained: “There is still a perception internationally that India is a land of snake charmers. We need to dispel such notions. If we are able to bring a major global sporting event into India, it will help spread a positive message about our country.”

India's historical architecture and rich culture can add a unique touch to business events; India Gate war memorial and revellers during the Holi festival of colours pictured here

{ Developments to watch }

1 India's current tough stance on visas for conference delegates will soon be a thing of the past, as the Ministry of Tourism has put forth a proposal to the home ministry to include conferences in the list of travel segments that can utilise the e-visa facility. An announcement in this regard is expected in the near future.

2 India-US relations are rosy today, thanks to the Indian prime minister's frequent visits to the US in recent times – prime minister Narendra Modi has called at the US four times since assuming office in May 2014. Apart from strengthening defence ties, such visits are expected to boost US investments in India, which will herald good business for inbound tourism and events from the US.

3 Work on the new convention and exhibition centre near the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi is finally making

progress. The project was delayed by the reluctance of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to transfer land directly to the body responsible for putting the project out to tender. This has changed, with DDA agreeing last year to transfer 100 hectares for the project. The entire complex will comprise of more than the convention and exhibition centre; it will have 3,500 hotel rooms and an entertainment arena that can host a large-scale concerts.



{ Review central }

Pullman New Delhi Aerocity Novotel New Delhi Aerocity

By Rohit Kaul

Both the Pullman and Novotel hotels sit together in the hospitality district of New Delhi Aerocity, close to the international airport and the business hubs of Gurgaon and New Delhi. A station on the Delhi metro line is located a stone's throw away.

Rooms The hotel complex contains 670 rooms and suites. At the Pullman New Delhi Aerocity where I stayed, guestroom sizes begin from 36m². My room came with modern amenities to make my stay a comfortable one. I was also offered a good view of the swimming pool. I like that the housekeeping staff was efficient and friendly.

MICE facilities Both hotels are well positioned to cater to business events, and boast one of Delhi National Capital Region's largest convention spaces, spread over more than 3,716m².

Pullman New Delhi Aerocity alone offers 17 meeting rooms, each with state-of-the-art technology and flexible seating.



Here, the largest meeting room can take 1,500 pax. I love the peacock design theme that is employed in the ballrooms.

The property also provides an event manager to assist clients.

Sister hotel Novotel New Delhi Aerocity offers 11 meeting rooms and five boardrooms with flexible layouts. These are supported by a business centre. I find the chill-out space next to the meeting rooms a great idea, as it offered meeting

delegates some privacy should they require it during coffee breaks.

Other facilities There is a total of five restaurants across both hotels, a spa, and heated and unheated swimming pools.

Room count 670
Star rating 4
Contact (91-11) 4608-0808

Imagica By Rohit Kaul



Located at Mumbai-Pune Expressway, Imagica is one of India's leading theme park destinations, offering entertainment, dining and shopping under one roof. It comprises a theme park, a water park and a newly added snow park.

Concept Built at the cost of 11 billion rupees (US\$) and using world-class technology, Imagica boasts some 21 attractions and rides, five themed restaurants and the country's first theme park hotel, the Novotel Imagica Khapoli.

The latest draw is the Imagica Snow

Park, said to be the largest of its kind in India, at 2,787m². It brings visitors to winter wonderland with 100 per cent natural snow that is created at sub-zero temperatures.

MICE application Imagica is perfect for pre/post-meeting extensions for pleasure or teambuilding and incentive trips. Event packages can be tailored according to group size and budget, and planners can utilise one or all of three banquet halls. The halls can accommodate 100 pax to 450 pax. Outdoor functions are possible too, complete with a stage and

audio video setup.

A two- to three-hour teambuilding programme for 20 pax is also available. The programme promises to build team morale through unique and experiential learning activities that incorporate Imagica's rides and attractions.

More event venues can be found within Novotel Imagica Khapoli, specifically four meeting rooms with capacity for 300 pax and a terrace that can be rented.

Service Imagica – in my opinion – is one of the best holiday destinations in India. My favourite is the waterpark, which is the best place to beat the heat. Plus, there are three restaurants to satisfy fussy diners. I recommend Sunbeatz where one can dig into oven-fresh pizzas.

Overall, I appreciate the convenience of adequate restrooms throughout Imagica, as well as well-placed information booths and guest relations counters at the entrance to assist visitors who are unfamiliar with the sprawling attraction.

Operation hours 09.30 to 20.00
Contact (91-22) 4213-0405



salic3p/shutterstock

Follow this leader

The National Monument in Jakarta's Merdeka Square

Indonesia's first MICE industry champion is born and it has hit the ground running with plenty to juggle, including securing its own financial stream. **Mimi Hudoyo** reports

For Indonesian MICE stakeholders who have been hungry for a national body to coordinate and lead the promotion and development of the country's business events industry, the formation of the Indonesia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (INACEB) is regarded as an exquisite feast.

Budi Tirtawisata, chairman of INACEB, described the industry's welcome as being "enthusiastic" and "overwhelming".

He said: "We received requests from convention centres in Manado and Jakarta to become members even before we've established the (joining) criteria. A number of

professional associations have also approached us for assistance in bringing congresses here. Even Aceh has asked us how it can also develop a MICE industry."

Warm welcome aside, INACEB has its work cut out for it.

Budi said: "Developing and promoting all 16 MICE destinations in the country is one of our programmes (but) we need to set our priorities."

And for now, INACEB's priority is to focus on destinations that can handle conferences with more than 1,000 delegates. These destinations are Jakarta, Bali, Bandung, Surabaya, Jogjakarta, Medan and Makassar.

For the promotion of Indonesia's

incentive capability, Budi said far more destinations would qualify for support.

Ida Bagus Lolec, head of incentive division of INACEB, added: "Currently, Bali is (about) the only destination in Indonesia for incentive programmes but there are other destinations with potential because of their culture, people, nature and culinary offerings."

MICE stakeholders agree that what these destinations need is greater creativity in packaging attractive products to entice international incentive groups.

INACEB will also need to tackle the financial challenge and obtain sufficient resources to keep it going

Destination: Indonesia



“Developing and promoting all 16 MICE destinations in the country is one of our programmes (but) we need to set our priorities.”

Budi Tirtawisata

Chairman, Indonesia Convention and Exhibition Bureau

and deliver on its promises.

The association had announced its lofty goals of positioning Indonesia in eighth spot on ICCA's Asia Pacific ranking by 2019, up from the current 12th, as well as move Indonesian cities into the top 30 global rankings by ICCA and UIA.

It also vowed to contribute two million MICE arrivals – 10 per cent of the total 20 million target footfalls – by 2019.

Unlike other countries where the government fully funds such an association, Budi revealed that this wasn't the case in Indonesia. As such, INACEB is a private organisation that also acts as a strategic partner of the Ministry of Tourism.

While the ministry has pledged some funding – US\$10 million which will come into use in 2017 – INACEB must also find its own financial stream in the long run.



Mimi Hudoyo



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Calaya Images/Shutterstock

Clockwise from top: Jakarta's city centre; Indonesian gourmet delights; Balinese Legong dancers; Tamansari water castle in Yogyakarta

Budi explained that INACEB has no control over the funds provided by the government, as they are channelled into supporting programmes.

For 2016, some of INACEB's programmes are incorporated into the ministry's own programmes which were rolled out last year.

Other forms of support from the government include database compilation and website construction. According to Budi, the website should be up and running this year.

Budi pointed out that financial control is needed because the current government programmes do not include support for site visits, delegate-boosting activities and bidding, and these – if required – will need to be created in the next budget term.

The government has a rigid financial regulation which requires budgets to be used entirely and for approved programme requirements.

When asked about the lack of support for site visits, delegate-boosting activities and bidding, I Gde Pitana, deputy minister for international tourism marketing development, Ministry of Tourism, clarified that they do exist although such activities go by different "business terminologies" in the ministry's books.

He explained that support for INACEB's bidding activities would be referred to as sales missions, while site visits would be referred to as familiarisation trips.

"Therefore, there is nothing (for INACEB) to worry about," he concluded.

Meanwhile, since its launch on March 28, INACEB has kept busy with participation in MICE industry tradeshows such as IMEX along with the tourism ministry. Rocky Kalalo, INACEB executive director, also shared that the board has held meetings with industry players and assisted professional associations in inviting international events to Indonesia.

Rocky said: "There is interest from medical and earthquake engineering associations, for example, to organise conferences in Indonesia."

INACEB is working on "quite a number of events aiming to take place in 2017", and an international exhibition on philately in Bandung is one of them.

At press time, INACEB was putting together a programme for 2017, which will be submitted to the Ministry of Tourism for approval.

{ Talking numbers }

2.5

The target revenue – in billions of US dollars – that Indonesia hopes to make from MICE by 2019, representing around 10 per cent of total tourism revenue

15

The position Bali takes in ICCA's latest global ranking of cities for meetings. The destination hosted 38 meetings in 2015

31.4

The percentage of total arrivals to Indonesia that had come for business and convention in 2014, according to latest available data from the Ministry of Tourism

Tourists enjoy a drink while watching the sunset in a beach bar along Seminyak beach, just north of Kuta, in Bali



{ Developments to watch }

1

Terminal 3 Ultimate, Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in Jakarta is in its final stage of development at press time. It is expected to be fully operational by 2017. Designed to be an air hub like the airports of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, the new terminal can handle up to 25 million passengers a year.

Even better access into Indonesia can be expected with a third runway which will begin construction next year.

2

Garuda Indonesia's reinstatement of a daily Singapore-Medan service in June bodes well for North Sumatra and its capital, Medan. The province has been promoting itself as a business event destination, particularly touting Medan's readiness for MICE. Medan has hotels of various categories, a convention centre and an airport with capacity for eight million passengers a year.

3

The European Commission's recent decision to remove its safety ban on three Indonesian carriers – Lion Air, Batik Air and Citilink – has presented more opportunities for secondary Indonesian destinations to host business events with European participants. Lion Air, especially, has extensive routes and frequencies around Indonesia.



{ Review central }

Inaya Putri Bali

By Mimi Hudoyo

Once home to Hotel Inna Putri Bali, one of the earliest hotels to be built in Nusa Dua in the mid-80s, the building's latest incarnation is Inaya Putri Bali. Although it underwent a thorough reconstruction that started in 2012, the building has retained the Balinese and Indonesian architectural elements.

Rooms The resort has 460 rooms, of which 306 are deluxe rooms and 117 are deluxe rooms with pool access. The other room categories include suites and villas.

My ocean-view suite is huge – 90m² in size – and conveniently located near the restaurants and lounge. There are two balconies – one connected to the living room and another to the sleeping quarters. I loved the latter which became my favourite spot to sip my morning coffee.

Views of the gardens and the ocean are stunning.

MICE facilities I like that the meeting facilities have their own entrance which sits away from the main one to the hotel. From this entrance, event attendees can go



down an unsheltered walkway – my only complaint – to arrive at the ballroom's pre-function area.

Another walkway connects the main hotel building to the meetings complex.

Facilities include the Mengiat Ballroom and two meeting rooms on the upper floor and breakout rooms on the lower floor. A staircase connects the two levels.

Mengiat Ballroom can take 800 pax, theatre-style and is equipped with a sound system and Wi-Fi. Pandawa and Balangan meeting rooms next to it can each accommodate 50 pax, or be combined for larger gatherings.

Three meeting rooms downstairs can

each can take up to 50 pax, theatre-style.

A separate kitchen supports events held here.

Inaya Putri Bali's sprawling gardens and beach are suitable for outdoor events.

Other facilities There are five F&B outlets, with capacity ranging from 50 to 250 seats. For recreation, there are three-tier infinity pools, spa facilities and water activities such as kayaking and windsurfing.

Room count 460
Star rating 5
Contact www.inayahotels.com

il Lido Bali

By Mimi Hudoyo



Bali's fashionable district, Seminyak, has gotten a tad more chic with the arrival of il Lido Bali Italian restaurant which is perfect for romantic dinners, relaxing corporate gatherings and everything else in between.

Concept Inspired by the leisure islands of Venice's Lido and Singapore's Sentosa, il Lido Bali is the brainchild of Beppe De Vito, who has combined Balinese hospitality with Italian elegance to create his latest baby. The result is an uber-chic

and relaxed restaurant which promises authentic Italian food that is value for money. It also offers prime options for world-class wines, fine spirits and craft cocktails.

The dinner set menu is priced from 580,000 rupiah (US\$45) per person while the buffet menu starts from 780,000 rupiah per person.

MICE application The restaurant has both indoor and outdoor spaces. The Courtyard in the middle, which draws shade



from surrounding trees, along with the Portico, can accommodate 150 guests while the Pergola houses 24 seats.

There is also a private room which is suitable for an intimate gathering of 30 people, and a 30-seat bar.

In all, the restaurant can comfortably host a sit-down event for 200 guests and standing cocktails for 300 people.

Planners will appreciate the many open spaces here, which adds flexibility to theming efforts. I imagine a sit-down dinner with acoustic music, a buffet dinner with entertainment, or a cocktail party with a fashion show can all be easily arranged here.

Service The restaurant delivered on its promise as far as the food is concerned. Service is friendly but there is room for improvement. The restaurant was not busy when we were there, so the service staff could have afforded to be more attentive to our needs by clearing the crumbs off our table or replenishing our empty glasses.

Contact info@illidobali.com

Too little to show

Insufficient hardware to support large-scale events continues to be a bugbear for Sri Lanka's MICE players, writes **Feizal Samath**

A new convention centre in Sri Lanka is on the cards while the industry has pulled off a major coup in cajoling a top French travel association to hold its congress in the country. The congress of the Syndicat National Des agents de Voyages in October will bring over 500 agents and their guests to the country.

These should be enough reasons for Sri Lanka's MICE stakeholders to celebrate but the mood is still sombre as current and upcoming event infrastructure is seen as being inadequate to support their desire for mega events.

Sri Lanka presently offers the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) and the Sri Lanka Exhibition & Convention Centre. The former houses multi-purpose facilities for meetings and a separate exhibition centre, with the main hall capable of accommodating only 1,500 seats. The latter, managed by Singapore-based Pico Group, can also accommodate 1,500 pax but lacks proper parking facilities. Furthermore, this facility will likely be demolished once its contract ends in three to four years, to make way for the construction of a financial centre.

Vipula Wanigasekera, a MICE veteran and former general manager of the state-run Sri Lankan Conventions Bureau (SLCB), lamented: "No one really understands conferences and exhibitions. There is no proper strategy and MICE is seen as a small component of travel, just another add-on."

Expressing frustration with the upcoming convention centre, which will be only 1.6 hectares in size, Wanigasekera said: "The space allocated for it is, in my view, only enough for parking!"

The new venue, to be located outside of capital city Colombo, is the government's response to urgent calls from local MICE stakeholders to resolve the capacity crunch.

For years now, local MICE stakeholders have been demanding a bigger convention centre with capacity for over 5,000 people, break-out rooms, areas for special dinners as well as entertainment and residential facilities. They bemoaned that while successful MICE cities like Singapore and Dubai can accommodate more than 10,000 to 15,000 pax in one of many venues, Sri Lanka's largest conference centre can seat a meagre 1,500 guests.

So, in November, the government set aside three billion rupees (US\$20.6 million) for the construction of the country's third venue. Today, a blue-print is being prepared.

But experts argue that this is simply not enough, especially with the impending loss of the Sri Lanka Exhibition & Convention Centre.

A worried Ziyen Ameen, president of the Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition & Event Organisers (SLAPCEO), told *TTGmice* that the remaining venues would be "miniscule compared to our competitors" who have several larger multipurpose venues.

What is rosy, however, is the state of Sri Lanka's incentive event business which has been flourishing. Trade players expect this segment to continue to see good growth, thanks to the country's diversity of locations and attractions.

Adding another obstacle to Sri Lanka's MICE quest is the high taxes. According to the MICE head of a local firm, taxes on bringing a foreign musician or band into Sri Lanka can amount to 46 per cent of the entire event cost.

Accommodation in Colombo, where most of the events are held,

Local MICE stakeholders want more unique venues in Sri Lanka and have suggested making existing attractions, such as the Colombo National Museum, available for event hire



Destination: Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka's Golden Temple of Dambulla is a UNESCO World Heritage Site

is also woefully inadequate to support large-scale meetings. There are now about 4,000 rooms in the capital.

New hotel brands like Shangri-La, Sheraton and Hyatt that are coming into the capital will add 1,000 rooms to the room inventory, but the numbers are still insufficient to make Sri Lanka a worthy global competitor for big events.

The largest meeting in Colombo was in January 2015 when Phillips India held its convention for 1,500 guests. Attendees had to be housed in three to four hotels while meetings were hosted in two hotels at different times.

What the country needs is a stronger convention bureau with more funding and a good strategy in place, according to Ameen.

"We (also) need special venues for theme dinners, for example the Colombo National Museum grounds or a sports complex that can be transformed into something

exciting. We don't have (such venues) at the moment," Ameen added.

Although Prema Cooray, SLCB chairman has acknowledged these shortfalls, he remains excited about Sri Lanka's MICE future, confident that India will continue to be the industry's key to success.

Cooray said: "Our focus will be to concentrate on India (as always). The potential for MICE is huge and (the market) is advantageous to us as we are (located) very close."

He added that many international companies have moved their corporate headquarters to India from Singapore or Europe, which will encourage more business travels from India.

The southern cities of India – Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore – which are just a short flight from Colombo will be the centre of SLCB's marketing efforts. Cooray said access is affordable and frequent, as SriLankan Airlines flies 110 times a week to these cities.

{ Developments to watch }

1 Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts has become the first hotel chain in Sri Lanka to establish a Chinese-friendly environment, encouraged by the vast increase in Chinese inbound numbers. Two hotels in the chain – Cinnamon Grand and Cinnamon Lakeside – have employed Chinese nationals as guest relations officers who are fluent in both Mandarin and English, trained its front-line staff in basic Mandarin, and dedicated an entire floor in both hotels to Chinese guests. Rooms on this floor feature Chinese décor, Chinese tea and reading materials in Mandarin.

2 Cinnamon Air's commencement of daily flights from Colombo to Hambantota in early June has vastly improved access to Sri Lanka's developing southern coast. While it used to take 2.5 hours to journey between the two points, the flight cuts it down to just an hour, a convenience much appreciated by time-strapped business travellers and event attendees.

3 Opened earlier this year in the former war-devastated northern town of Jaffna, the 55-keys Jetwing Jaffna is the destination's first upmarket hotel. Its ability to accommodate small meetings with 30 to 50 guests means it will help attract corporate interest to Jaffna's unspoiled beaches and rich cultural offerings. Jaffna, meanwhile, is looking to build up its tourism sector.



{ Talking numbers }

34

The number of international conventions and meetings in Sri Lanka this year that SriLankan Airlines is supporting as official carrier

61

The number of overseas tradeshow and fairs that Sri Lanka Tourism is taking part in to promote the country

145,773

The number of Indian arrivals in the first five months of 2016. India is Sri Lanka's largest source market and biggest provider of MICE footfalls

{ **Review central** }

Shangri-La's Hambantota Resort & Spa

By Feizal Samath



The latest hotel in Sri Lanka made waves in the tourism and events trade as soon as it was first announced; it was going to be the largest luxury resort in the country and the first internationally-branded high-end property to be built in Hambantota.

Now opened, Shangri-La's Hambantota Resort & Spa is regarded as the best multipurpose facility for business events.

Location wise, Colombo is just an hour's flight away. Daily flights available makes the hotel an easy pre/post-event product for event groups.

Rooms All 300 rooms and suites are luxurious and offer magnificent views of either the golf course, the sparkling

lagoon or the Indian Ocean.

My deluxe room was spacious, with all the modern amenities one would expect of a five-star hotel. I especially appreciated the hassle-free Wi-Fi connection, which came complimentary and with instant connectivity, without troublesome password entry.

MICE facilities The hotel's multipurpose ballroom can seat 1,200 guests and this is supported by five break-out rooms. Planners looking for an outdoor option have sprawling greens to choose from. These lush spaces are dotted with sway-ing king coconut trees.

Should planner desire, the hotel can help to arrange visits to the nearby Yala Wildlife Park and a bird sanctuary.

Other facilities It is home to an 18-hole golf course, three swimming pools, the signature CHI spa, four restaurants and bars, and The Village, which celebrates local arts and crafts and provides guest activities and entertainment.

This is truly my kind of a business hotel, where I get to mix business with pleasure by playing water sports and a round of golf, before ending the day with a cold beer on the beach bar after the convention is over.

Room count 300

Star rating Five

Contact (94-47) 788-8888

slht@shangri-la.com

www.shangri-la.com/hambantota

Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall

By Feizal Samath

Built in 1973 to host the Non-Aligned Conference, the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) is Sri Lanka's largest convention centre. It underwent refurbishments about 18 months ago, and has since reopened. BMICH is a popular venue choice for major national and international conferences as well as weddings and musical concerts.

MICE application Its unique selling point is its collection of 16 different venues spread across 17 hectares. The Sirimavo Bandaranaike Memorial Exhibition Centre is perfect for exhibitions, conventions and seminars. Spread across 4,500m² are two exhibi-

tion halls, a lobby, a dining room, a lounge, a kitchen and other amenities.

New to BMICH is a garden which can be spruced up for a candle-lit barbecue dinner for 20 to 30 guests.

In BMICH's main building are two conference rooms that can accommodate 309 and 200 guests, and two smaller rooms for 50 and 30 people.

A 1,500-seat auditorium is the largest in the city.

BMICH is supported by advanced equipment including a simultaneous translation facility that can handle seven languages at one time as well as a dedicated kitchen, staffed by around 100 employees and managed by the Mount Lavinia Hotel, one of Sri Lanka's oldest properties.

Providing much ease to event planners is BMICH's own hotel, the 60-key Sovereign. It is, however, located a 20-minute drive away. Smaller meetings can be held at the hotel.

Service Although the management promises to offer the best, service is slow and food served at events held at BMICH isn't extraordinary. Perhaps some training to update the service crew would help.

Contact

(94 11) 269-1131

bmich@slt.lk

www.bmich.lk



Fulfilling a dream conference

An exclusive location, good pre-event planning and prior site inspections helped these delegates to go home with a memorable experience, writes **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Event brief

The supplier of bathroom and plumbing products, Plumbing Plus, wanted to hold its annual conference and had invited Daydream Island Resort & Spa – located in the Whitsundays island cluster in Queensland, Australia – to host it. The four-day event had 170 delegates and featured conference sessions, networking parties and dining functions which utilised multiple locations on the island.

Challenges

The resort was tasked to make the event memorable for delegates, hence organisers had to brainstorm for entertainment and activities that were one-of-a-kind.

There was also a lot of logistical planning and coordination required in order to ensure the programme ran smoothly, as meetings and activities were organised in various locations across the 1km-long Daydream Island.

The organisers also had to ensure that there were sufficient support vessels to transport all 170 delegates, and plan for them to arrive in a timely fashion so as not to disrupt the flow of activities.

Solutions

Delegates were invited to explore the resort's

Event
Plumbing Plus Conference
Organiser
Conference In Style
Venue
Daydream Island Resort & Spa
Date
October 23-26, 2014
Number of participants
170

stunning reef in its man-made lagoon – home to some of The Great Barrier Reef's marine life – and the view left them with a memorable impression of the area's natural wonders.

The resort also worked with local tourism operator Cruise Whitsundays to take all delegates, in separate batches, to the iconic Whitehaven Beach. The scenic cruise to the magnificent beach included a friendly guide

who provided an informative commentary on the history of the area.

Meanwhile, the island's variety of indoor and outdoor venues provided the flexibility required for both business meetings and leisure activities.

Jane Hermann, director of sales and marketing with Daydream Island Resort and Spa, said the compact size of Daydream Island had worked to the event's advantage, as all locations used in the programme were within easy reach of the resort's accommodation and conference venues.

"Hence, there was minimal disruption to the schedule," said Hermann.

For the event to end in a spectacular style, the island called upon its specialist suppliers and on-island team. High profile performers such as Samantha Jade, Daryl Braithwaite and comedian Mikey Robins were brought in to entertain the crowd, while a pyrotechnics expert was on hand to light up the night sky with a dazzling fireworks finale.

Key takeaways

Hermann noted that "good pre-event planning and site inspections with the organiser" allowed logistical issues to be resolved before the event.

"It was a memorable event and I am sure the delegates will be talking about it for a long time to come. The staff on Daydream Island should be highly commended for the many hours (of work they put in) to ensure we had a great time."

Vickie Scobie, owner, Conference In Style

{ Hot moves }



Caroline Kerr

Anthony Quin

Quin is now general manager of Mövenpick Hotel Enshi in Hubei, China. He was last general manager of Mövenpick Hotel Hanoi.

Caroline Kerr

Kerr is now general manager of FCM Travel Solutions Hong Kong. She had worked for Flight Centre Travel Group across the Flight Centre, Corporate Traveller, Stage & Screen and FCM Travel brands in Australia and Hong Kong.



Diane Chen

Diane Chen

Chen has been promoted to the position of general manager of the Shenyang New World Expo. She was previously deputy general manager, and has been with the centre since 2012.

Fabrice Collot

Collot is now general manager of Banyan Tree Macau. He joins from Wanda Vista Tianjin, China.

James Ellis

FCM Travel Solutions



Fabrice Collot

has appointed Ellis as director of sales – North East Asia, based in Hong Kong. Ellis comes with a decade of travel industry experience.

Jean-Pierre Leclerc

Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor welcomes Leclerc as general manager. Leclerc was last general manager of Mövenpick Resorts and Spa, El Gouna.

Liza Indira

Tauzia Hotel Management has placed Indira in



Liza Indira

the position of general manager of Harris-Pop! Hotels & Conventions Denpasar Bali. She has been with Tauzia since 2011.

Luke Benbow

Benbow has joined the Wyndham Sea Pearl Resort Phuket, Thailand as general manager. He was most recently general manager of the Mercure Resort Bali Sanur, Indonesia.

Melvin Lim

Lim now helms Marina



Melvin Lim

Mandarin Singapore as general manager. His last appointment was with Far East Hospitality where he was area general manager.

Pedro Mendes

Premier Inn has appointed Mendes as general manager of Premier Inn Singapore Beach Road. Mendes was last cluster general manager for Premier Inn in the UK, and has covered all aspects of hotel operations in his 10 years of experience with the chain.



{ Career inspiration }

Norman Arno Kiehl

Assistant outlet manager, G Hotel Gurney, Penang, Malaysia

How long have you been in the F&B line?

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in hotel management back in Switzerland seven years ago, I joined St Andrews Country Club in Boca Raton, Florida where I did my management training. After that, I moved to Sheraton Iowa City Hotel as a banquet supervisor and oversaw the bar. Here, we handled about 70 weddings a year. In 2015 I joined G Hotel Gurney as an assistant outlet manager, overseeing the G Lounge and Tree Bar, Penang's largest all fresco bar.

What do you love most about your job?

Every day is a new chapter at work because I get to meet different people from all walks of life and make new friends. First-timers to the bar like to ask for a drink recommendation, and we always make something based on their personality and taste preferences. Most times the guests are happy with what we make, and it is rewarding to see their smiles.

It is also fun to create drinks that go with the festivities – for example, green beer for St Patrick's Day and Halloween-themed cocktails made with peppermint and Jägermeister.

What is your most memorable career achievement in this role?

A renowned company requested for a mixology and bar service to replace the usual coffee break at their annual general meeting for 60 people. We were asked to come up with healthy and refreshing cocktails and whipped up an energising concoction using various fruits like dragon fruit and star fruit with an appropriate alcohol level that wasn't intoxicating. The organiser and delegates were happy with the creation, and they have supported us ever since by putting their events with us.

What is the most difficult request you have ever handled?

Curating one drink that pleases every taste bud during a large event is challenging. The pressure was on us to deliver when we had to do a concoction for our hotel's annual appreciation dinner for corporate guests.

What advice would you give to someone looking to be a mixologist?

Always have the passion and never lose it, and do not be afraid to experiment with new things.

Karen Tan

Pan Pacific Hotels Group wants to make a name for itself in the MICE arena with a promise of flexibility and ease in getting things done as well as strengthening a property portfolio. The group's senior vice-president, sales and revenue performance shares details with **Karen Yue**



PPHG has properties that are events-ready but why are we not hearing enough from the group about its MICE prowess? Is this set to change?

Exceptional Meetings was introduced this March as part of our strategy to drive MICE business in recognition of its potential contribution to total RevPAR.

While we have properties in key MICE destinations such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Sydney, location alone is not sufficient to land the MICE pie on our plate. In this competitive environment, it is critical for us to understand and effectively meet the needs of planners.

Our MICE strategy revolves around an offer which is backed by our PPHG promise for meetings and events. Through this promise, we demonstrate to our customers the ease of working with PPHG because we can provide flexibility and customisation to the last detail, from the point of enquiry to the site inspection and final billing. We offer an extensive menu with items which planners can pick to create their own personalised package, and that allows us to provide value across a spectrum of needs.

How will these efforts stand out

from what other international hotel chains are already doing to attract MICE clients?

Our hotels have creative ideas to enhance the meeting experience, such as providing a wide selection of benefits including themed coffee breaks. We have seen a positive response since the launch of *Exceptional Meetings* and riding on this success, we will roll out the second phase for bookings from July 1 to September 30 this year for events held till mid-2017.

Of all your properties, which would you say are the strongest for MICE and why?

Pan Pacific Singapore has close to 2,500m² of function space and can accommodate up to 800 guests, theatre-style, at its Pacific Ballroom. With 27 meeting rooms, it is also ideal for smaller meetings.

Parkroyal on Pickering is a multiple award-winning green hotel known for its iconic architecture, and has done very well with business meetings. Being named the Business Event Venue of the Year – at the Singapore Experience Awards 2015 – is testament to the team's ability to deliver distinctive experiences using versatile venues such as the pool-side terrace on level five, which I say is perfect for elegant cocktail receptions!

Then there is Parkroyal on Beach Road. Not many people know that we invested S\$20 million (US\$14.8 million) to build The Ballrooms adjacent to the hotel. Besides being connected to the hotel via a skywalk, The Ballrooms has direct street access and its own dedicated driveway, which lends an exclusive and elevated sense of arrival for VIP events. Built for flexibility, the Grand Ballroom and Sky Ballroom can be divided into six smaller venues for events.

Are there any hidden treasures in your collection that would work splendidly for business events but aren't getting enough attention from planners?

Pan Pacific Perth and Pan Pacific Suzhou are two understated gems in our fold. A little known fact about Pan Pacific Perth, which sits on the spectacular Swan River, is how spacious its meeting facilities are – the hotel offers almost 2,600m² which makes it ideal for large conferences.

Pan Pacific Suzhou's meeting facilities were refurbished recently and now features a dedicated driveway and foyer to the meeting rooms. Set against a backdrop of traditional gardens, the tranquil sanctuary of our hotel makes it perfect for corporate retreats. With 16 meeting rooms spread across almost 2,000m², it is a great alternative to hotels in Shanghai, which is a mere hour's drive away.

Does PPHG study how venue usage has evolved before designing the meeting spaces in properties that it owns and manages?

Hotel infrastructure is critical in the bid for event business, and properties are developed with the specific needs of the area in mind.

We research the market thoroughly and take into consideration present and future needs when designing new properties.

Pan Pacific London, for instance, is in Bishopsgate, London's central financial district, and is ideally located to meet the need for both short- and long-term accommodation with its hotel and serviced apartments. Hotels in London also tend to have smaller function spaces, so Pan Pacific London will (plug the gap by) offering spacious meeting facilities. We have received plenty of interest and enquiries from clients although Pan Pacific London will debut only in 2019.

PPHG has several new hotels coming up over the next few years. Tell me more about them.

Sofitel Plaza Hanoi will be rebranded to Pan Pacific Hanoi this October after refurbishments to its lobby, lobby bar, all-day dining restaurant and meeting spaces – all 1,300m² of it – are done.

We will also debut the Pan Pacific brand in Myanmar next year with the opening of Pan Pacific Yangon, which features six flexible meeting rooms and a seven metre-high pillarless ballroom which spans almost 600m².

Also in the pipeline are Parkroyal Resort Langkawi in 2018 and Parkroyal Melbourne in 2019.

Located on Pantai Tengah, the longest and most popular stretch of beach in Langkawi, Parkroyal Resort Langkawi will appeal to meeting planners with its luxury resort setting complemented by a 680m² ballroom and seven meeting rooms. Parkroyal Melbourne will sit within a 37-storey hotel and apartment complex in the Digital Harbour Precinct of Melbourne Docklands, which is part of an ongoing project to rejuvenate the central business district.

These brand-defining properties will showcase the quality of our products and enhance PPHG's visibility as a hotel group, which in turn strengthens our MICE proposition.



Parkroyal on Pickering has won awards for its architecture and business event capabilities

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Small city, big surprise

The **Adelaide BioMed City Showcase** hosted by the Adelaide Convention Bureau in June not only gave medical association representatives an indepth look into the city's ongoing medical investments, it also presented the myriad fun and exciting sides of the coastal capital of South Australia



Time to bond

TTG Asia Media staff swept into Penang for an intensive two-night **teambuilding programme** in July, which was made possible by Sunway Hotel Georgetown



What's next?

TTGmice heads to the big cities this September to bring you updates on why these destinations continue to shine in the minds of business event planners. Also, come with us to Malaysia, the Philippines and Macau to see what's brewing for MICE there.

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