

November 2016

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16 Tuas Avenue 5, Singapore 639340**Karen Yue**
Group Editor

More than just entertainment

As business events specialists who have not only planned and executed your own events but have also attended many others as guests, I'm sure you have experienced event entertainment of all kinds.

And I bet some made you sit up in amazement and wanting more when it ended, while others got you wondering if the planner had booked the wrong act.

Looking back at the variety of event entertainment I have encountered so far this year, the worst was a band that rocked a little too hard and loud for a black tie dinner. Actually, the band was rather good and would have been a better fit for a corporate dinner party where guests are given space and opportunity to dance to that energy.

The best for me was the sole act that hosts Stopover Finland and Finnair flew into Singapore for a late-night party and destination feature for invited delegates. The Helsinki-based a cappella group FORK was perhaps relatively unknown to the predominantly Asian audience, but by the end of the night, the energetic quartet had acquired a ballroom full of fans who, I'm sure, had gone online right away to find out who they were.

And because FORK was so fun and lively, it emphasised that Finland is just as too for visitors.

Event entertainment does more than just entertain. It sets the mood for the gathering and projects the brand image the organiser hopes to impress upon his guests, so more critical thought ought to go into the entertainment hire and production process.

Event entertainment can even satisfy a CSR objective by supporting the local community where the event is held or where the organiser operates in. If it showcases the local culture, it educates the audience and preserves the performance. If it is performed by locals, it provides continued employment for artists who are sustaining a tradition.

So for this issue's cover feature on event entertainment (page 16-20), we sniff out unique and engaging event entertainment ideas in Asia-Pacific that also do justice to the destination and its people.

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Make your event a memorable one by showcasing the culture of the destination while celebrating local talent. Here are some unique performance groups that you can call upon here in Asia-Pacific to leave a lasting impression

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Hosting the 2014 G20 meeting has swung Brisbane into the spotlight, allowing it to score yet another major coup, writes Rebecca Elliott

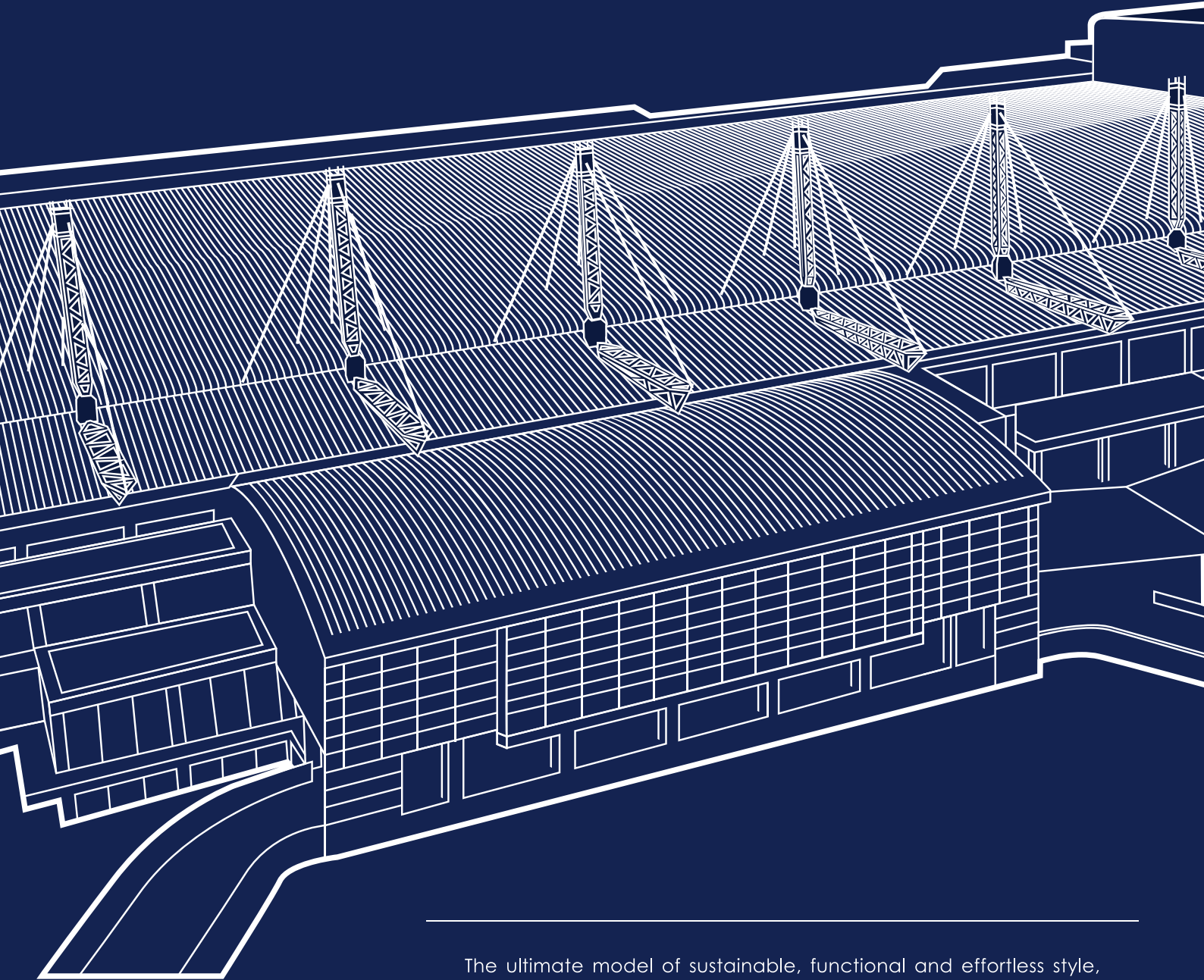
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THE MIGHTY DRAGON RETURNS TO MACAO

After 10 years, a mammoth annual event of the insurance industry has not only rekindled its chemistry with Macao, but also scaled new heights leveraging the city's well-established MICE offerings.

Almost as if Macao's decade-long rapid development of its meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) sector had been timed for its return, the mega Worldwide Chinese Life Insurance Congress and International Dragon Awards (IDA) – last held here 10 years ago – took place again in 2016.

The two events, recognized as international events by ICCA were held successfully in August this year at the Convention and Exhibition Centre of the Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel. It welcomed more than 7,200 professionals from the international insurance industry. It was founded to foster the professionalism and business acumen of Chinese insurance specialists worldwide,

with the IDA likened to the Oscars awards in recognition of the industry's top performers.

MACAO ELBOWS OUT THE COMPETITION

The 11th Worldwide Chinese Life Insurance Congress and 2016 International Dragon Awards were well sought after, attracting the bids of seven cities. Macao emerged as the winner, against some tough competitors, namely Nanjing, Kaohsiung, Hawaii, Melbourne, Fukuoka, Jeju Island, and Singapore.

So what constituted Macao's winning formula? Besides the full co-operation provided by the Macao community and

the city's relevant public departments and organisations, Macao's renowned infrastructure – both hardware and software – played a major role. Richard Wu, Vice President of the two events, added another reason for selecting Macao as the host city "As Macao had in the past decade transformed itself so well as a destination city, its self-improvement also resonated with the theme of this year's events," he said.

Indeed, Macao's diversification efforts into non-gaming industries in recent years have allowed for a fast expanding range of product offerings and capacity for hosting large-scale events. In terms of accommodation, hotel projects underway

and pending government approval could add about 13,000 new hotel rooms to the existing 37,000 rooms available in the near future. Accessibility-wise, the construction of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge is expected to create new business opportunities for the MICE industry.

Macao's growing MICE capability, strong public-private partnership and relentless focus on economic diversity are creating a very conducive environment for the attraction of MICE events of all sizes. At the helm, driving MICE development and promotion is the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM). Supported by Macao's MICE industry, IPIM is devoted to enhancing the sector's professionalism and expertise, developing Macao's MICE brand, and promoting Macao as the Business events destination. Apart from organising Macao's presence at international tradeshows, IPIM also assists local entities in bidding for international events to Macao, as well as offering subvention programmes for event organisers.

WIN-WIN PARTNERSHIP FOR ALL

As much as large-scale events bring direct economic benefits when in Macao, the city too reaps many other indirect benefits such as the generation of much-needed and talented manpower for the MICE industry. Gene Capuano, Vice President of Convention & Exhibition Operations at the Venetian Macao that hosted the Congress and IDA apart from other large events, said: "Mega conventions drive the development of the local sector and propel the economy. These activities also encourage young people to cultivate an interest in the MICE industry, and to serve as talented professionals in order to replenish the industry."

"Taking IDA as an example, around 100 students were hired as part-time associates to provide catering and crowd management services to more than 7,200 participants. By working for these kinds of large-scale conventions on a part-time basis, young professionals are able to learn through practice, as well as gain valuable knowledge from senior colleagues. It is a crucial part of the training of professionals in this industry."

Mr Capuano expects Macao's young people would show an increase interest in joining the MICE industry as the number of large-scale events organised in Macao keeps growing. That, he explained, would guarantee the industry an ample supply of qualified professionals, complementing the well-developed infrastructure and further enhancing the global competitiveness of the industry.

Additionally, large-scale conventions significantly benefit the local economy. Mr Capuano explained: "Lots of meeting participants don't want to remain inside the hotel for a whole day, and commonly ask us to recommend the best places to visit." He has therefore compiled a ready list of tourism attractions and restaurants in various parts of Macao to win favour with MICE customers. Highlighting the necessary interdependence of the local economy and the MICE industry for their respective sustainability, he suggests that the local business community plays its part by providing MICE venues and MICE promoters with information on off-site activities and destinations.

LARGE-SCALE EVENTS LINE-UP

Having successfully played host to several mammoth events in the first half of 2016, other large-scale events lined up in Macao in the second half including the 9th ACM SIGGRAPH Conference and Exhibition on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques in Asia (with more than 5,000 participants expected), NU Skin Star Academy Meeting (with about 7,000 expected), and Jeunesse Global Greater China Conference (with about 10,000 expected). Macao is poised to receive even more major events in 2017 including the Asia Pacific Dental Congress (with more than 3,000 participants expected), among others.



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A performance through the seasons

A new night musical featuring traditional and modern Japanese culture has opened in the central Tokyo district of Nihonbashi. *Sakura: Japan in the Box* blends performances of classical dance and Japanese instruments with pop music, martial arts, acrobatics and animation to tell the story of a high school girl's journey through Japan's four seasons.

Host theatre company Meijiza Co. created the 70-minute performance specifically to attract overseas tourists, with support from the Arts Council Tokyo.

Hiroya Kimikawa, spokesperson of Meijiza, said the company is working with travel agents abroad to promote the show and develop packages, including those for corporate groups.

Since the musical debuted on September 7, the largest corporate group the theatre has welcomed is a 180-pax group from China.

Kimikawa explained that Meiji-za Theatre has 140 years of hosting traditional performances such as kabuki, the classical Japanese dance and drama, and

Sakura: Japan in the Box is a selection of "the best parts of that heritage (with the addition of) pop culture, creating something that overseas tourists would find easy to understand and enjoy."

Using mostly movement and music, rather than dialogue, to drive the narrative, the show has an app that displays the song lyrics in English, Chinese or Korean.

Sakura: Japan in the Box is scheduled to perform at Meiji-za Theatre most nights until 2020 and costs 6,000 yen (US\$58.60) per person.

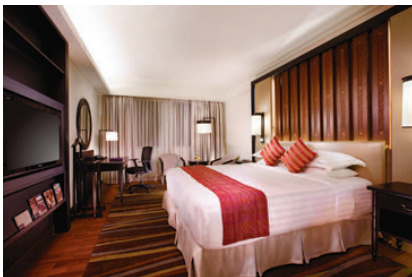
Parkroyal Yangon unveils a new look

The completion of a two-year staggered refurbishment of the 334-room Parkroyal Yangon in Myanmar has given the hotel a modern sense of elegance and elevated standards.

The comprehensive revamp has seen the lobby transformed into a sophisticated open space, with feature lights and soft furnishings, while dining offerings have upped a gear with new and improved options. The hotel's all-day restaurant has been rebranded to Spice Brasserie, serving international and local cuisine in a slick and modern setting, while Parkroyal's signature Si Chuan Dou Hua Restaurant has debuted. The former Music Club has also been relaunched as the stylish Club 5.

A total of 14 one- and two-bedroom serviced suites boast chic interiors and modern comforts. All Deluxe and Premier rooms also sport new fixtures and fittings and revarnished floors.

Meeting planners can also enjoy a refreshed Grand Ballroom, which now charms with new carpeting, lighting, wall paneling and audiovisual systems.



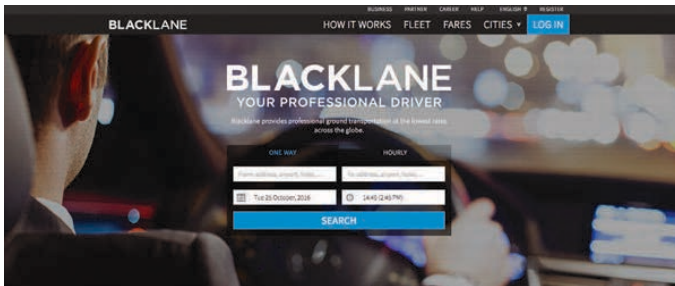
Fun stays for business trips

Step back in time in Attitude on Granville, a new boutique hotel in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui that offers 81 retro-themed guestrooms reminiscent of scenes from Hong Kong in the 1970s and 1980s.

Rooms come in four categories – Urban, Cozy, Elite and Studio Suite – and feature murals of landmarks such as the Clock Tower, while the lobby boasts vintage letterboxes and retro payphones.

There are two F&B options for guests: Yum Cha, a contemporary Chinese restaurant that serves up unique-looking dim sum; and Urban Park, a modern European restaurant and bar with an open-air terrace that overlooks Granville Road.





Blacklane drives easier chauffeured car hires

Berlin-based Blacklane is a relatively young global car hire service provider but since its establishment in 2011, it has achieved a presence in 130 cities worldwide including several in Asia-Pacific such as Bangkok, Hong Kong, Hyderabad and Melbourne.

It streamlines the car hire process by facilitating bookings on its website (www.blacklane.com) and via a mobile app, allowing a choice of car type from business class sedans and vans to luxury vehicles, and presenting upon confirmation the total fare which includes all taxes, tolls, fees and tips. Hourly bookings and one-way hires are available.

Blacklane tracks travellers' flights and train rides, so pickups are ensured even with delayed arrivals. Furthermore, a 15-minute waiting time is included in all standard pickups, and one hour is included for airport and train station pickups.

A corporate solution is offered too, and it comes with a key account manager, 24-hour customer care, a consolidated corporate account, a corporate portal to track all rides, and flexible payment options, among other features.

Rest and recharge at the new Plaza Premium Lounge at Brisbane Airport

Plaza Premium Group has brought its independent airport lounge product to Brisbane Airport, offering all travellers access to a well-appointed space where they can rest and recharge for their next journey.

Located on level four between departure gates 81 and 82 of the International Terminal, the new Plaza Premium Lounge has a seating capacity of over 100 and features the brand's signature honeycomb seats that promise extra privacy, complimentary Wi-Fi, a multitude of electrical outlets for travellers' many gadgets and an extensive F&B menu.

Access to the lounge is priced from A\$66 (US\$50) for a basic package for five hours. Eligible credit card holders and selected lounge access programme members will be granted complimentary access to the lounge.

Also new is Plaza Premium Group's Wellness Spa, located right next to the lounge. The spa provides a selection of treatments using Australian spa products. A 15-minute treatment starts from A\$49.



Explore Year End Party @ DoubleTree by Hilton Jiaxing

DoubleTree by Hilton Jiaxing has flexible space of meeting rooms, including a 9 meters high luxurious ballroom without pillar and 9 multi-functional conference hall, suitable for all kinds of meetings, events and activities.

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We provide the year end party package for guest as:

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*minimum pax is 50pax, including 1 bottle of Coke & 1 bottle of Sprite (1.25L)

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Changsha's MICE appeal gets an upgrade with Meixi Lake Hotel

Opened at the end of October, the 310-room Meixi Lake Hotel, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Changsha is the first high-end international hotel to open in the Chinese city in Hunan province.

The hotel, equipped with seven meeting venues totalling 2,679m² – the largest measuring 1,100m² – is targeting small MICE groups from the electronics, IT, automobile and medical sectors, general manager Eddie Tang, said.

The ideal group size for corporate meetings, product launches and seminars the hotel is eyeing is between 150 and 200 people, with the domestic market taking up a 90 per cent share, he added.

Heavy machinery, advanced materials, automobile and parts manufacturing, electronics and IT, food, tobacco and biological medicines are industry pillars in Changsha, the capital of Hunan in south-central China.

Taking up the upper floors of a modern tower with businesses, shops and a cultural centre, Meixi Lake Hotel is located 10 minutes from the Changsha National High-Tech Industrial Development Zone, 20 minutes from the Changsha North Train Station and 45 minutes from the Changsha Huanghua International Airport.

The property will complement the 260,000m² Changsha International Convention and Exhibition, expected to be ready by end of this year.

New ShowGizmo+Crowd Mics event app gets delegates talking

New Zealand-based event app company, ShowGizmo, has partnered exclusively with Crowd Mics in Phoenix, Arizona to offer what is said to be the first and only technology that turns smartphones into wireless microphones at conferences and events.

The new app, called ShowGizmo+Crowd Mics, uses Crowd Mics technology which is powered by the event venue's Wi-Fi and audiovisual system, connecting the producer device to smartphones in the audience. The producer device receives and accepts requests to talk, which enables the individual microphones.

The app is expected to encourage audience participation and removes the hassle of running multiple microphones around the room.

While ShowGizmo does not have an office in Asia nor does it have current plans to expand into the region, the company's CEO, Marie-Claire Andrews, said: "We are the number one event app in Australasia and support all markets throughout the Asia-Pacific."

"We can provide our event apps in several languages, including Mandarin, across iOS, Android and the mobile web."



The Els Club Desaru Coast is now ready for play

Themed Attractions Resorts & Hotels has unveiled its latest baby, The Els Club Desaru Coast's Ocean 27-hole golf course in Johor, Malaysia.

The Ocean is the first of two major golf developments to open in Desaru Coast where The Els Club is located. The Troon-managed Ocean course features three distinct nine-hole courses: the Coast, Ridge and Lakes. It is also home to The Els Performance Golf Academy – the first of its kind in the region – and two casual dining restaurants including an all-day café and bar created as an ode to designer Ernie Els' PGA Tour record-breaking 72-hole aggregate in the 2003 Mercedes Championship.

The Els Club Desaru Coast's second course, The Valley, is scheduled to open soon after. The Valley will be an 18-hole course.

Refreshed grand ballroom greets all at Swissôtel Nankai Osaka

Swissôtel Nankai Osaka in Japan has relaunched its brand new 1,120m² Grand Ballroom Naniwa, said to be the largest ballroom in southern Osaka, capable of hosting up to 1,400 guests in theater style.

The US\$1.5 million makeover gave the venue new wall coverings, an elegant wall-to-wall carpet inspired by Swissôtel's iconic Swiss Circles silhouettes, and ceiling paint. A rich colour palette of purple, blue and grey is applied to create an opulent ambience.

The expansive foyer space now features eclectic wall art incorporating natural and unique circular designs.

The renovation of Grand Ballroom Naniwa follows the recent refurbishment of the hotel's Swiss Executive Club floors, which saw double rooms being converted to twin and triple rooms to cater to the growing number of MICE travellers.



HOT DEALS

Radisson Golf & Convention Center Batam, Indonesia

The new Radisson Golf & Convention Center Batam is offering a Meet with Success meeting package from US\$139 per person per night. The package includes return ferry transfers between Singapore and Batam, return land transfer from Batam Center Ferry Terminal, one night's stay in a Superior Room with complimentary buffet breakfast, full-day use of a meeting room with free Wi-Fi, two coffee breaks and a buffet lunch, and a two-hour teambuilding activity such as golf, paintball, archery or cooking classes, etc.

Visit www.radisson.com/batamid

NUO Hotel Beijing

Corporate annual party packages are now on offer at NUO Hotel Beijing, which offers the 1,600m² Yongle Grand Ballroom and a pre-

function foyer.

Three packages are available, priced at RMB468 (US\$70), RMB588 and RMB688 per person. Prices are subject to service charge and tax.

Inclusions are complimentary usage of one VIP function room, a four-hour set-up, tailor-made Chinese or Western menu, free-

flow of soft drinks, local beer and house wine over two hours, free parking for up to 80 guests, and a voucher for a weekend stay in a Deluxe room for the event's lucky draw.

The offer is valid until February 28, 2017. For reservations, email sales.beijing@nuohotel.com



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MEETINGS & INCENTIVE

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Destinations 2016)

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(TTG Travel Awards 2016)

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Ride a trishaw to the iconic Raffles Hotel.

Imagine that you are a meetings and incentives travel planner, and you're coming up with a suggested itinerary for three days of business mixed with great food, culture, and nightlife for your corporate group. You will want to combine stimulating work sessions with time for colleagues to relax, have fun together, and come away with new and exciting experiences.

Look no further than Singapore, Asia's top destination for Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE).

Here's a sample itinerary to get you started:

DAY 1

Head over to the five-star Raffles Hotel and travel back to Singapore's elegant Colonial yesteryear. Make sure to have a refreshing Singapore Sling, the world-famous cocktail which recently celebrated its centenary. Planners can arrange a welcome room drop of a

Singapore Sling Bottle for every delegate as a gift.

Attend a Singapore Sling Masterclass or simply soak up the history and refinement of the Long Bar, with its teak interior and spiral staircase connecting its two levels, and where peanut shells are famously strewn on the floor – the only legal "littering" in Singapore.



Attend a Singapore Sling masterclass at the Raffles Hotel.

Reward the group with an exclusive dinner at two-Michelin-starred restaurant Shinji by

Kanesaka, a venerable temple to sushi which is also located within the hotel grounds.



Buy a flower garland in Little India.

DAY 2

Visit a Peranakan home and museum, The Intan, for an in-depth award-winning experience of Singapore's hybrid Southeast Asian culture,

with its mix of Chinese, Malay and Indian heritage while enjoying some traditional Peranakan snacks.

Take a trishaw ride to Little India to get a Henna tattoo, buy flower garlands, or learn how to make *teh tarik* (pulled tea) and *roti prata*

(Indian flatbread) as a group activity.

■ Hop back onto the trishaw to Chinatown for a lunch or local hawker favourites – the street fare that made Singapore a global food paradise, at Chinatown Food Street. Groups can also sample *bak kwa* (barbequed jerky) at heritage brand Bee Cheng Hiang and try their hand at calligraphy

experience along the five-foot-way of the shophouses.

■ Back to hotel for R&R before heading to the world's first night zoo, the Night Safari, for the Evening in the Wild dining programme where groups get to dine under a tipi tent, get up close with creatures of the night and enjoy a fire dance.



Evening in the Wild dining programme at the Night Safari.



■ Enjoy a relaxing start to the day with Tai Chi at the Meadows at Gardens by the Bay, Singapore's largest outdoor garden event space with stunning panoramic views of the city, followed by a back-of-house tour of the Flower Dome and Cloud Forest conservatories and Supertrees to understand its sustainability efforts. Or head out to Sentosa, Singapore's popular island resort, for an adrenaline-pumped time at the theme and water parks to the magical marine realm at the



An evening at vibrant Clarke Quay.

S.E.A. Aquarium™ at Resorts World™ Sentosa.

■ Visit National Gallery Singapore, re-purposed from the heritage City Hall and Supreme Court buildings, with a private tour of the galleries boasting the world's largest collection of

contemporary Southeast Asian art.

■ Lunch at two-Michelin-star restaurant Odette at National Gallery Singapore.

■ Take a sunset cruise down the Singapore River to Marina Bay to catch the nightly light

and laser show at the Marina Bay Sands® and alight at The Clifford Pier, a heritage landmark, for dinner by the bay.

■ Hop back onto the river cruise to Clarke Quay for delegates to check out Singapore's vibrant nightlife at their leisure.

CASE STUDIES WHY SINGAPORE

■ Nu Skin Southeast Asia Celebrate Stars Regional Convention

July 20–22, 2016

Nu Skin Enterprises Inc. chose Singapore to host its 2016 regional convention because it is the hub of Southeast Asia, with easy access from some 320 cities in 80 countries, and with the most efficient transport system among Nu Skin's SEA markets.

The decision paid off in a big way, breaking company attendance records with over 6,000 sales leaders and guests from Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and Vietnam, and for three days filling the award-winning Singapore EXPO Convention and Exhibition Centre, the most advanced and fully equipped venue option for convention in Southeast Asia.

The event proceeded without a hitch, given Singapore's ability



to pull together the talent and logistics that go into any successful large-scale corporate gathering.

Convention goes bid adieu to Singapore feeling invigorated and ready to take their business to the next level.



■ Unicity Global Convention

December 8–10, 2016

Drawn to Singapore's reputation as an exciting place to visit and the perfect host for large-scale corporate gatherings, healthcare products firm Unicity International chose Singapore for the first time to host its Global Convention in 2016.

The event is themed *10,000 Diamonds, I Am One* as a choice experience filled with luxury, enjoyment, and achievement. 25,000 people from 46 countries from every corner of the world are expected to attend, making it one of the largest incentive groups to come shine in Singapore.

Said Christopher Kim, President of Unicity International, Global Market: "Today, Singapore is considered a highly developed country in terms of transportation, business and commerce, tourism, technology, education, and human resources. With English as one of its official languages, visitors can conveniently communicate with locals. In addition, there are many world famous attractions to offer new experiences to visitors such as the Merlion, Universal Studios Singapore, Garden by The Bay, ArtScience Museum, Sands SkyPark at Marina Bay Sands, and Orchard Gateway."



For more information, visit www.yoursingapore.com/mice/m&i-experiences or email the Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau™ at secb@stb.gov.sg

Calls for ASEAN to be a single MICE destination



By Mimi Hudoyo

While ASEAN has been extensively marketed as a single destination for leisure travel, the same cannot be said for MICE.

MICE buyers are calling on the government to do more especially since they believe ASEAN already has what it takes

to reach the ideal, with good intraregional air connectivity and newly developed destinations that can be packaged together.

Twin-country itineraries are especially relevant to the longhaul MICE market as travellers want to maximise their time in South-east Asia, said Susan Soong, assistant general manager of Borneo Destination Management.

As well, increasing intraregional links have opened up opportunities for DMCs to spotlight emerging countries like Cambodia and Vietnam in multi-country incentive programmes.

"Since Turkish Airlines opened services from Istanbul to Hanoi and Phnom Penh last year, there has been growing interest in these destinations," said Murat Ayar, general manager of Travel Dreams, Turkey.

"Combining both countries is more attractive and makes clients' trips worthwhile," added Ayar, who compared these

destinations against the more mature Thailand, whose competitive prices and diverse attractions make it a strong mono-destination.

To promote ASEAN as a single MICE destination, buyers urged governments to lend greater support to DMCs.

Association events can also be leveraged to promote ASEAN MICE, according to Andang Prasmiko, business development manager of PACTO Convex.

"The main event can take place in one destination, while the post tours, technical visits, etc, can be conducted in other countries in the region."

What is needed is better coordination between the involved associations and the local governments, although profit sharing poses a challenge.

"Splitting an (association) event means having to balance the value of the whole event (across the host countries)," acknowledged Andang.

AEC can help Singapore events build delegate numbers: Liu

The formation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) last year will boost the appeal of Singapore as a hub for business events looking to attract South-east Asians, but more support can be provided to fully leverage this "immense opportunity", according to Edward Liu who is both group managing director of CEMS and immediate past president of the Asian Federation of Exhibition and Convention Associations.

Liu elaborated: "When we run our tradeshows in Singapore, many exhibitors lament that Singapore is such a small market. But with AEC, we have moved from being just a country of about five million people to a hub of over 600 million."

As such, Liu urged organisers to utilise this advantageous position while promoting their tradeshows to international counterparts.

He said: "Our challenge now is how to position our tradeshows that will attract firstly exhibitors, then buyers. While we want to continue pushing Singapore as a centre of the MICE

industry, my take is that organisers are much more pragmatic and frankly most of them have gone into other places like Indonesia in a big way.

"Hence, we have got to be aware and continue to raise the profile of our shows and make use of technology to reach our target audience to bring them to Singapore," he added.



Liu: greater access to SE Asian audience

When asked what type of support is needed by the trade, Liu said: "If the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) could give us more funding then we could certainly host more regional visitors to Singapore, which would enhance our positioning. Also, STB could mobilise their regional offices to promote our events to raise further awareness.

He concluded: "On our part, we will ensure that we create content that will appeal and engage both Singaporeans and South-east Asian trade visitors, and structure our programme accordingly so they will have a reason to come to Singapore." – **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

AFECA celebrates young industry professionals

When the 99 corporations and 32 association members of the Asian Federation of Exhibition and Convention Associations (AFECA) gather for its annual meeting in Xiamen, China on November 7, young professionals will take centre stage.

At the meeting, the second edition of the AFECA Asian Awards will include an outstanding young professional category, which according to AFECA secretary general Marisa Nallana, is meant to groom the next generation of industry professionals and "encourage them to excel and take a more proactive role in the industry".

Other award categories are for outstanding trade exhibition; consumer exhibition; convention/congress; service; and venue.

Happening alongside the awards will be the second edition of the Asia MICE Youth Challenge. Competing teams of students majoring in MICE, hospitality and tourism related fields will have their knowledge and understanding of the industry tested.

AFECA president Walter Yeh, said that this platform was for students "to develop their creativity and present fresh ideas" while allowing them to apply in real life what they learn in school... by conceptualising business-testing and organising a MICE event." – **Rosa Ocampo**

Corporate travel buyers welcome Marriott-Starwood merger

By Dannon Har

The completion of Marriott International's US\$13 billion acquisition of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide on September 23 is greeted by corporate travel managers with more enthusiasm than apprehension.

Corporate end-users told *TTGmice* they now gain access to Marriott/Starwood's massive inventory by dealing with just one supplier, even if the company's greater scope and size may give the chain the up-berhand in rate negotiations.

The consolidation results in the world's largest hotel company with 5,700 properties and 1.1 million rooms across 110 countries.

Said Nandan Bhatia, head-administration & facilities at Indian food conglomerate Britannia: "Direct tie-ups with hotels are always preferred as they give us special corporate packages. (The merger) gives us much more options."

Britannia spends an estimated Rs300-500 million (US\$4.5-7.5 million) a year sending between 400 and 500 employees on business and MICE trips.

Bhatia said he saves "at least 10 per cent" by dealing directly with hotels, made even more significant as travel budgets tighten.

Admin manager Philomena Seet, who manages travel for Singapore-based Kseven Industries' top executives, said Starwood properties are frequently used and the merger will boost her portfolio selection as her company is now automatically a client of Marriott.

Seet is unfazed by the merged company's expected additional negotiating power as the value provided by a hotel is her topmost consideration.

"Four-star hotels are just about right (for business travellers). The best are those that provide the value of a five-star property at four-star prices – that will make me a repeat customer," she said.

Seet also liaises with hotels directly to negotiate the best corporate rates, resulting in about five to 10 per cent savings for the company.

Claire Kang, purchasing & travel manager at International Vaccine Institute, said dealing directly with hotels has been the modus operandi for the UN-backed nonprofit. The corporate negotiated rates she gets give her savings of up to 25-30 per cent.

Marriott's greater bargaining power over

rates is no issue to Kang, who said negotiations are commonplace. "We establish annual agreements with them so I am not so worried now. When the time is up, we will request for bids as usual and see how it goes."

Her priority is traveller safety and dependability of the hotel, especially since she sends staff all over the world, includ-

ing third-world cities. Also, she is accountable to donor governments and charities – hotels that are too expensive will price themselves out of the budget, she added.

Some corporate segments however, have different considerations. While corporate negotiated rates offer savings for Lisa Kneivtt, travel and events manager-Asia/Pacific at Cook Medical, location

and standard of hotel properties are bigger priorities, especially as budgets remain strong in the medical profession.

As well, given her company's longstanding relationship with Starwood, Kneivtt is excited about the extra value in the form of redeemable points and roomnights that are now usable across Marwood's 30 brands.



Bhatia: more options from merger

Canberra chases MICE on the back of new international flights

Canberra Convention Bureau hosted its first MICE fam programme in partnership with Tourism Australia and Singapore Airlines in late September, leveraging the September 21 commencement of a new flight connecting the Australian capital with Singapore and Wellington, New Zealand.

The two-day programme showcased the city's business events experiences and brought participants to National Arboretum Canberra, Pialligo Estate and Poachers Pantry for dining functions; Royal Australian Mint, Parliament House and Floriade for tours, and The Truffle Farm

Canberra for a truffle hunt, among others.

Commenting on the trip, Ye Wei, general manager of Carissa MICE Service, China, found Canberra to be "more nature-based than I expected".

Michael Matthews, chief executive of Canberra Convention Bureau, told *TTGmice* that Canberra offers "many unexpected and un-programmed pleasures", as it is a "city set among nature".

"Coming across kangaroos lazing in the sun, wild birdlife in the trees at every turn, strolls by Lake Burley Griffin, and sunset on the mountain range that surrounds our city were memorable for the agents. What I think surprises many is our proximity to the South Coast beaches and also the Snowy Mountains. With Canberra as a base, you can climb to the top of Australia and watch whales on tur-

quoise coastal waters, all in the same day," he said.

But the programme called at only "a fraction of all the possible venues available".

"We would have liked to (showcase) the region more fully, including our wineries, and the coast and mountains. If we had more time we would have also shown more of the quality hotel stock and the many unique venues (for) large groups at our national institutions," he added.

More opportunities to tell the Canberra MICE story will come for the bureau, as Matthews pointed out that last week's fam trip "will be the first of... future visits in partnership with Tourism Australia and Singapore Airlines".

Meanwhile, Canberra Convention Bureau is now represented by Cecilia Chen, sales manager China, based in Shanghai. – **Karen Yue**



Lunch at Pialligo Estate

Gulf carriers spur longhaul MICE travel with new links, cheaper fare

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

Longhaul MICE buyers are witnessing a surge in demand for Asia as air travel into the region becomes cheaper and more accessible thanks to the ambitious expansion of Middle Eastern airlines across the world.

Magdy Ibrahim, managing director of Smart Solutions, Dubai, said: "We are increasing our focus on Asia as it is getting so much more accessible and cheaper."

While 40 per cent of his corporate groups are already heading to Asia this year, with the remaining opting for Europe, Ibrahim predicts Asia's share to grow to 50 per cent next year.



Ibrahim: affordable and accessible

"The new Middle Eastern flights into Asia help to encourage healthy competition between the carriers, which is great news for us as Asia becomes cheaper with all the airline promotions," Ibrahim added.

Sharing similar sentiments, Bulgaria-based Hermes Holidays' principal Violeta Rousseva said the airfares into Asia have especially become more affordable since the entry of the Gulf carriers.

Pointing to Thailand and Indonesia as his top-selling destinations in Asia, he said: "It becomes easier to sell these countries. (To begin with), it

is not expensive to host luxury dinners and incentives in these destinations – and now the whole package including flights becomes (even more) attractive."

Katarzyna Mazur, junior project manager of Nu Horizons Poland, views Asia as a fresh destination. "We see growing demand from clients to host incentives and meetings in places like the Philippines and Malaysia."

According to her, the cost of flying from Poland to Bangkok today is some 30 per cent lesser than four years ago with the presence of carriers like Emirates.

Monika Valleton, managing director of ATJ Lingwista in Poland, added that the lure of

history and culture in countries like Thailand and Cambodia makes Asia a "dream destination" for her clients.

Apart from the Middle Eastern carriers' connections, she had also chartered a plane for a company to Phuket earlier this year.

Valleton said: "There is a general growth in interest and excitement from our clients into this part of the world (Asia). It is very positive."

Smart Solutions' Ibrahim commented that the ease of visa regulations in countries like Indonesia has also boosted the interest. He said: "One of Asia's added advantage is the (people's) warm hospitality which makes it very welcoming for our delegates' overall experience."

TTG Travel Awards 2016 honours trade's top players

THE 27th annual TTG Travel Awards 2016 saw 84 of the best and brightest in the Asia-Pacific travel trade awarded accolades in recognition of their contribution to the industry.

This year, 14 new winners emerged across various categories. Notable inaugural honoraries include Sebastien Bazin, CEO of AccorHotels, Brett Tollman, CEO of The Travel Corporation and Yaana Ventures. They are among TTG's editorial's handpicked recipients of the Travel Personality of the Year, Travel Entrepreneur of the Year and Most Sustainable Travel Company title respectively in the Outstanding Achievement Awards category.

In the voting categories, Bangkok Airways (Best Regional Airline); One Farrer Hotel & Spa (Best New City Hotel); Philippine Department of Tourism (Best NTO); and Khiri Travel (Best Travel Agency –

Indochina) are some of the new winners.

Triumphant organisations in the BT-MICE Awards category are Etihad Airways (Best Airline – Business Class); Grand Hyatt Erwan Bangkok (Best Business Hotel); Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld (Best Meetings & Conventions Hotel); Singapore (Best BT-MICE City); Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre (Best Convention & Exhibition Centre); and Korea MICE Bureau (Best Convention & Exhibition Bureau).

The Awards also ushered in three new TTG Travel Hall of Fame inductees – Qatar Airways, Thai Airways International and Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau into the elite ranks of the travel trade industry. The TTG Travel of Fame represents the highest honour bestowed only on exceptional organisations that have achieved the feat of staying the best in their class for 10 consecutive years.



{ In brief }

ICCA adds Association Relations Partners

Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau, Monaco Convention Bureau and Tourism New Zealand have signed up as new ICCA Association Relations Partners.

The new Association Relations Partnership is a collaborative programme designed to help ICCA deliver a programme of new activities and online services that will strengthen its relationship with international associations. It also allows ICCA tradeshow and destination marketing members worldwide to strengthen their own ties and raise their profile within the international association community.

Macau to host PATA Travel Mart 2017

PATA Travel Mart 2017 will be held in Macau from September 13-15, 2017. Hosted by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), next year's event will mark the annual travel trade show's 40th edition and the second time it is to be held in Macau.

PATA CEO Mario Hardy described the last mart in Macau, in 2010, as a "successful" event and MGTO as "a valuable member of PATA since 1958".

Hardy added the mart "provides us with the perfect opportunity to showcase that amazing relationship and highlight one of the most unique destinations in the Asia-Pacific region". Macau has transformed in recent years, with the opening of more family-friendly attractions and hotels there while emphasising less on gaming, as had been the focus in the past.

{ 2016 Calendar }

November 9-12

83rd UFI Congress
Shanghai, China

November 11-13

CITM
Shanghai, China

November 12-16

55th ICCA Congress
Kuching, Malaysia

November 29-December 1

ibtm World
Barcelona, Spain

Correction

We made a boo-boo in last issue's People, where we identified Mercure Singapore Bugis' general manager, Rhys Challenger, erroneously as Preet Inder Singh. Challenger's photograph was positioned second from right in the Hot Moves section.



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Make your event a memorable one by showcasing the culture of the destination while celebrating local talent. Here are some unique performance groups that you can call upon here in Asia-Pacific to leave a lasting impression

EXTRAORDINARY ENTERTAINMENT

Cambodia Living Arts, Cambodia

Cambodia Living Arts (CLA) is an NGO launched in 1998 to revive the country's traditional arts, which were wiped out during the Khmer Rouge reign. CLA trains young Cambodians to professional standards in a range of art forms, and talented troupes are on hand to wow private and public audiences with their artistic feats. Dance troupes showcase different dances from Apsara to the ethnic buffalo sacrifice dance. The ancient shadow puppet shows have also been revived, with large and small puppets performed in both traditional and modern ways, while musical groups are on hand to perform with instruments such as the *pinpeat* (wind and percussion instruments), and *chapey dong veng* (two-stringed, long-necked guitar).

Best suited for...
Any private events

Contact
info@cambodianlivingarts.org
www.cambodianlivingarts.org





Urban Drum Crew, Singapore

Urban Drum Crew drum is touted as the “definite showstopper whenever and wherever they perform”. This performance group based in Singapore is able to rouse the crowd by playing a number of rhythmic instruments, producing music with a creative blend of innovative ideas.

Among the many unique acts it offers is the water LED drums where lights and water come alive with the drumming beats.

Urban Drum Crew is also able to bring Singapore’s multicultural elements into its performances.

Best suited for...

Any private events. For indoor performances requiring the use of water LED drums, Urban Drum Crew will bring its own water retention carpet and ground sheet.

Contact

boon@urbanlegend.com.sg;
www.urbandrumcrew.com

Bhangra, India

Bhangra is known to be one of the most energetic dance forms from the northern Indian state of Punjab. It has been showcased in many Bollywood musicals.

The dance form is both serious and vibrant at the same time, making it suitable for opening ceremonies in the morning, as a mid-conference energiser, for award dinners and all other events in between.

Event planners can have a Bhangra troupe, wearing colourful traditional dresses and playing a *dhol* (drum), welcome delegates as they enter the venue. The performers can also escort delegates to their respective seats.

Delegates can also be invited to be part of the performance, by having some members of the troupe urging them on, while other performers entertain the rest with their acrobatic feats.

Best suited for...

Any private events

Contact

info@tic-india.com;
www.tic-india.com

Circular Rhythm, Australia

Circular Rhythm is essentially run by Lucas Proudfoot, a one-man-band, who provides interactive and informative performances designed to educate audiences on Australian Indigenous culture.

Located on the Gold Coast, Proudfoot is a member of the Tweed Coast/ Aboriginal Islander community and has over 20 years of experience as a cultural performer. His shows feature a plethora of instruments ranging from the guitar, stomp box and didgeridoo to indigenous instruments such as clap sticks and boomerangs.

Each performance ranges from 10 to 20 minutes in length and is tailored to the client and audience, linking in with corporate branding and key messaging.

Best suited for...

Opening ceremonies

Contact

lucas@circularrhythm.com;
www.circularrhythm.com

Cover story

Tuna Macaense, Macau

Macanese group Tuna Macaense was formed in 1935. Today, the band still performs, and its members are of Portuguese and Chinese descent. They are able to provide live music in the form of Cantonese and Chinese ballads, carnival songs, and Anglo-Saxon pop music.

Best suited for...
Themed events.

Contact
info@smallworldexperience.com
www.smallworldexperience.com

Fanta-Stick, South Korea

One of the many non-verbal South Korean performances that have earned an international following, Fanta-Stick tells a love story that had begun at the dawn of time using a mix of traditional Korean melodies, heart-pounding percussion beats and electrifying dance moves.

The audience are encouraged to clap and chant to the beat, providing a wholly immersive and memorable performance.

Although Fanta-Stick offers regular, scheduled performances at NH Art Hall in Jung-gu, Seoul, the crew is open to private event hire at other locations.

Best suited for...
Opening and closing dinner events, and award functions

Contact
fantastickeng@gmail.com;
www.fanta-stick.co.kr



Children's Cantonese Opera, Hong Kong

Synopsis

Hailing from Hong Kong, Children's Cantonese Opera's roots can be traced back to 1998, when it was formed by a charitable company, the Cha Duk Chang Children's Cantonese Opera Association (CDC).

CDC's performances are based on scripts that have been specially written for children, where the theme revolves around their daily lives.

Performance durations can be anything from 10 to 30 minutes and is flexible depending on the organisers' need. Famous Cantonese opera stories, based on original scripts, can also be relayed in English.

Best suited for...
Any private events

Contact
info@chadukchang.com
www.chadukchang.com

El Gamma Penumbra, the Philippines

The grand winner of the first season of *Asia's Got Talent* in 2015, the all-male El Gamma Penumbra performance group weaves beautiful stories, leaves inspiring messages, and raises awareness on contemporary issues such as trophy hunting, the ill effects of blast fishing and climate change through their shadow acts.

Their mesmerising acts is a study in grace and artistry, requiring high concentration, good balance and extreme body movements.

Best suited for...
Any private events, especially gala dinners, incentive parties

Contact
elgamma.shadows@gmail.com;
www.elgammapenumbra.com

Xam, Vietnam

Xam singing is a traditional art form which originated from Vietnam's northern regions.

With deep lyrics that narrate daily life stories, the art form was considered to be a treasured cultural item, and was an important part of the Vietnamese people's spiritual life.

The artform was at risk of being lost, but it was revitalised recently and once again, holds a special place in Vietnam's heart.

Since 1956, the Vietnam National Academy of Music has been training students in a range of traditional art forms, with troupes ready to showcase their talents to the backdrop of authentic Vietnamese music.

Best suited for...
Any private events

Contact
hvan@vnam.edu.vn;
www.vnam.edu.vn

Angklung Orchestra by Saung Angklung Mang Udjo, Bandung, Indonesia

An orchestra of *angklung*, a bamboo musical instrument from Indonesia, can perform a great variety of music, from the traditional and pop music to complicated classical numbers of composers like Mozart.

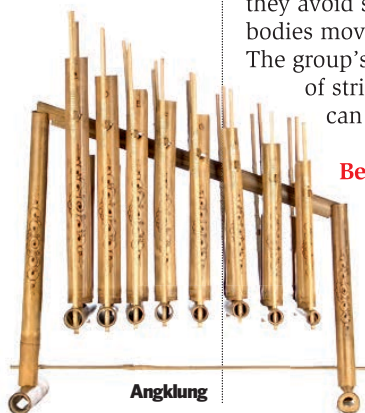
One of the most interesting parts is that at the end of the show, participants will be provided with an *angklung* and be taught how to play. The audience will then have a chance to play the instrument. Special arrangements are required if event organisers would like to gift their delegates the *angklung* to keep as a souvenir.

Best suited for...

Cocktail receptions, pre-dinner or dinner functions, product launches, award nights and ice-breaker sessions

Contact

info@angklung-udjo.co.id; www.angklung-udjo.co.id



Angklung

Folklorico Filipino Dance Company, Philippines

The Folklorico Filipino Dance Company is a group of professional dancers – dressed up in intricate Filipiniana costume and finery – who can add colour, glamour and grace to any event.

The skilled dancers will be able to entertain audiences with tricky performances such as *tinikling*, which requires balance and perfect timing as several dancers hop and dance in between bamboo poles; and the folk dance *pandanggo sa ilaw*, in which dancers balance glasses containing water on their hands and heads as they avoid spilling water despite their bodies moving faster and faster.

The group's *rondalla*, the ensemble of stringed musical instruments, can add spice to the show.

Best suited for...

Any private events

Contact

www.facebook.com/folkloricofilipino

Devdan Show, Indonesia

Devdan is a musical and dance performance regularly performed at Bali Nusa Dua Theatre. The 90-minute performance tells the story of Indonesia's cultural diversity through a mix of traditionally-dressed dancers and high-tech projections.

The story is told through the eyes of two children, who were separated from a tour group and found a treasure chest. The chest transports them to different parts of Indonesia, and at the same time, the audience is introduced to the people and culture of destinations such as Bali, Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan and Papua.

MICE groups can either book the entire show at the theatre, or have a portion of the show performed elsewhere. As such, event organisers will be able to incorporate their event's theme into the performance. In a product launch event, for example, the show can become the means of the product launch itself.

Best suited for...

Opening and closing receptions, gala dinners, award ceremonies/dinners and product launches

Contact

info@balinusaduatheatre.com
www.devdanshow.com

The Wrecking Crew Orchestra, Japan

An eight-piece dance group that is based in Osaka, the Wrecking Crew Orchestra has performed its unique blend of hip-hop and acrobatic moves around the world.

What sets them apart, however, is the group's use of light; they perform their tightly choreographed moves in suits and face masks that are illuminated with brightly coloured LED lights against a black backdrop. The combination of

sound, light and movement is mesmerising.

It will probably be a hit with a younger crowd, although anyone can appreciate the spectacle.

Best suited for...

An evening reception in an indoor venue

Contact

hisashi@wizarts.jp;
www.wreckingcreworchestra.com



At Adau, Malaysia

This six-person Sarawakian band At Adau experiments with the fusion of modern and traditional instruments to create enchanting tunes.

For example, a rendition of the classic *Stairway to Heaven* by Led Zeppelin, is accompanied by the *sape*, a traditional string instrument from Sarawak. Or a round of the ever-popular Pat-a-cake hand-clapping game can be done to a chant of an old Malay rhyme titled *buah cempedak di luar pagar* or jackfruit outside the fence.

These gigs coalesce tribal and contemporary instruments to produce fusions of various rendition acts that is both engaging and interactive.

Best suited for...

Opening ceremonies, ice-breaker sessions and gala dinners

Contact

terence@truevents.my
www.truevents.my



Hands Percussion Malaysia

Hands Percussion Malaysia has been part of the Malaysian performing arts scene since 1997.

Its highly creative and artistic drumming performances incorporate varied influences from communities around Malaysia. In addition, it also uses *shigu* drums and South-east Asian musical instruments.

The group has been invited to participate in international arts festivals such as the World Culture Showcase World Music Festival on Drum and Dance in Taiwan

in 2007; World Congress & Performing Arts Festival for young people in Adelaide in 2008; and the New Taipei City International Music & Dance Festival in Taipei in 2012.

It can also be hired for private events.

Best suited for...

Gala dinners and opening receptions for tradeshows or conferences

Contact

lawrence@redantzevent.com
www.redantzevent.com

Iconic Creatures, Australia

The brainchild of Melbourne-based Icon Entertainment, Iconic Creatures sees talented performers – adorned in costume and body paint – bring four Australian icons to life.

The four icons – Frill Neck Lizard, Sulfur Crested Kangaroo, Eucalyptus Tree and a Kookaburra – first appeared at the AIME 2016 Welcome Reception. Each character takes close to three hours to transform, and the finished product is perfect for meeting and greeting guests, resulting in a host of Instagram-worthy snaps!

A Wattle Tree and Echidna will soon be added to the Iconic Creatures' mix.

Best suited for...

As a welcome feature during opening and closing receptions, and product launches

Contact

info@iconent.com.au
www.iconent.com.au

Jon Santos, Philippines

One of the Philippines' top comedians and impersonators, Jon Santos has the extraordinary ability of imitating the voice of presidents, politicians and other famous people regardless of whether they are male or female, right down to their accents and mannerisms.

During performances, his physical appearance will also be effectively transformed, thanks to skilled make-up artists and costume designers.

Santos' forte in political satire will keep the audience in stitches. Neither corny nor offensive, his spoofs are hilarious, and the punch lines delivered with good timing. He writes most of his scripts, and he can also sing.

Best suited for...

Any private events

Contact

www.twitter.com/jonsantosako

Kathak, India

Kathak is one of the 10 major forms of Indian classical dances and it gained popularity in the courts of the Indian rulers as an entertainment option and classical form.

Considered one of the most dynamic theatre arts in the world, kathak performers tell stories from Indian scriptures like Ramayana through dance, music and mime. The performers will mesmerise the audience with their gestures, expressions and rhythmic foot movements.

Performed in a palace-like setting, the ambience will allow guests to experience how past Indian kings used to spend their evenings.

Best suited for...

Gala dinners, award dinners and incentive parties

Contact

info@tic-india.com;
www.tic-india.com

Shadowgraphy, Singapore

Founded in late-2013, Shadowgraphy specialises in shadow dance where dancers manipulate light with their bodies, casting shadows on a screen to create silhouetted images that tell an engaging story.

Shadowgraphy is able to customise the performance to convey messages or to match a theme the event organiser desires.

This is the first performance company in Singapore to offer this dance form, and it has been engaged for performance overseas.

Best suited for...

Any private events

Contact

email@wildfire.sg;
www.wildfire.sg





Sanya steps up MICE chase

A slew of MICE-ready hotels and a possible subvention programme will move the Chinese destination up the ranks. By **Caroline Boey**

Panoramic view of Sanya city and Dadonghai Bay

With Sanya's 32 new hotels in Haitang Bay – of which 12 have opened and all offering MICE choices galore – and the Sanya Tourism Development Commission's (STDC) submission of a subvention proposal which is expected to be approved by this year, the destination is making all the right moves to become China's next hot MICE destination at home and abroad.

Apart from kicking off the first International Island Sanya Forum, focusing on MICE and co-organised by HIMICE Convention and Exhibition Co and MICE China in September, STDC has also become ICCA's 47th member in China. Further, STDC has stepped up private sector partnership by establishing an eight-member MICE Advisory Board – comprising China's leading DMCs, consulting companies and the media – as well as hosting the first Sanya International MICE Sourcing Fair.

According to Wang Feifei, deputy director, STDC, a task force has also been initiated within Sanya Tourism

Association to promote MICE and professionalise the industry.

With new regional and international flights operating to Sanya from Frankfurt, Ho Chi Minh City and Kaohsiung in the first half of this year, and the 14 flights that commenced since the beginning of last year from Japan, South Korea, Russia, Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, Wang said STDC's priority would be to target those markets.

It harnessed the power of six major social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest to spread its destination marketing messages, and expanded its digital footprint with new websites in Japanese, Korean and Russian.

On a broader scale, Sanya has leveraged its position on the Maritime Silk Road to actively implementing the One Belt, One Road strategy to develop economic and international cooperation in South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Russia.

At home, Sanya wants to target

the whole of China for MICE.

Other MICE initiatives include the beautification of the destination, establishment of policies that encourage sustainable development and the introduction of the Tourism Police last year.

The inaugural 2016 International Island Sanya Forum attracted more than 300 delegates, including international MICE media and 120 buyers from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, while more than 200 suppliers attended the tabletop MICE Sourcing Fair.

Chen Guojiang, executive director, HIMICE, an ICCA member, said three more editions of the forum and sourcing fair have been confirmed.

HIMICE, Hainan's leading DMC, chalked up US\$35 million in sales last year, an increase of about 30 per cent. A spokesman said safety in Sanya, its good natural environment, weather and MICE infrastructure were strong factors in its favour.

"HIMICE will be handling a 3,500-delegate event next year for a US pharmaceutical company, GE already organises many events in

Destination: China

Sanya annually, and Sanya is the regional choice among island destinations,” he added.

HIMICE, which also organises sports events, was also picked to deliver a 2,000-pax Mercedes Benz event with teambuilding in October.

As an international MICE destination, Kevin Chen, operation events manager of regional DMC EXO Events, said Sanya could do with more airlift and staff who are better trained, able to speak English and understand the needs of international travellers. Chen’s main markets are the US and Europe.

For Christophe Hazebrouck, general manager, Sofitel Sanya Leeman Resort and area general manager, Hainan, Sofitel Luxury Hotels, “direct flights from Asia, a few weekly flights from key cities in Europe and visa-free access for all countries or visa-on-arrival” are on his wish list.

“While Sanya is under pressure to push its aviation development, there is also the security issue with it being a military base and where the flight corridor is under military control,” Hazebrouck remarked.

Hoss Vetry, general manager, Ritz-Carlton Sanya, Yalong Bay, commented that the challenges and opportunities in Sanya’s MICE development in the last decade are similar to MICE frontrunner Shanghai.

The local government has responded very quickly to feedback on airport infrastructure and capacity, Vetry said, adding: “That the focus in Sanya is on more international business and is now competing with destinations like Taiwan and Thailand, are signs of the industry maturing.”

For the first time, Sanya made it to ICCA’s 2014/2015 Asia-Pacific city rankings, marking a major milestone.

With the massive development in Haitang Bay – where AccorHotels has planted its first Sofitel beach resort, the Sofitel Sanya Leeman Resort, and where CDF Mall, said to be the world’s largest duty-free store, have opened – Sanya has new products to offer domestic and international MICE groups.

At the MICE forum, Noor Ahmad Hamid, regional director, Asia-Pacific, ICCA, advocated the formation of a CVB to help Sanya conduct research and bid for association events. “Competition is fierce among the first- and second-tier cities in China and associations will be critical because their meetings rotate.

“Sanya can work together with destinations with the same appeal like Jeju, Bali, the Gold Coast and Pattaya, start an alliance of coastal destinations and tap on the others,” he suggested.

Industry players agree Sanya needs to step up its marketing and promotions, stand on its own right and not be branded the “Oriental Hawaii” or the “St Tropez of China”.

Xu Feng, vice president, North Star Events Institute, which handles a number of medical groups and corporate meetings, said the safety and low-risk aspects of Sanya has been gaining attention and should be further highlighted.

Sanya received 18.4 million MICE delegates in 1Q2016 and 16.6 million in 2Q2016. Hotel occupancy rate in 1H2016 was 64.4 per cent, up 0.67 per cent year-on-year.

With STDC in the driver’s seat, increased involvement of the private sector, better connectivity, more attractive room rates and an overall improved product, Sanya is well positioned to reach its MICE ambitions.

{ Developments to watch }

1 Sanya has adopted an aggressive strategy to launch new international air routes targeting destinations within a four-hour, eight-hour and 12-hour flight radius. The priority is to further improve connectivity to Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand in South-east Asia, and Russia. In 1H2016, Sanya Phoenix International Airport welcomed 8.8 million arrivals, a year-on-year increase of 3.9 per cent.

2 The Sanya Tourism Development Commission has submitted a proposal to introduce a subvention policy and until this is formally approved, Fan Mu, the commission’s director, said applications for support can be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3 Sanya Tourism Development Commission wants the private sector task force to look at strengthening information exchange among members, collect MICE product information, conduct analysis and evaluation, launch joint MICE marketing, organise member participation in various promotional activities, develop MICE tourism standards and practices, promote service quality, develop MICE professionals and conduct MICE business training.

{ Talking numbers }

51.7 In millions, the number of MICE delegates who attended national and international conferences and meetings, with between 50 and 2,000 people each, in Sanya last year

3,002 The number of events held in Sanya last year that were shorter than three days in duration, while 2,763 events had lasted longer than three days

200,000 In square metres, the total meeting space available in Sanya, where there are a number of hotels offering column-free ballrooms measuring 1,500m².

A stately traditional Chinese house can be found in modern Sanya city



{ **Review central** }

Sofitel Sanya Leeman Resort

By Caroline Boey

Launched in January 2016, this is AccorHotels' first Sofitel resort hotel to open in Greater China. Located at Haitang Bay, the Sofitel Sanya Leeman Resort is about 10 minutes by road from the massive duty-free CDF Mall.

Rooms The 550m² two-bedroom Imperial Sky Villa, with a private swimming pool, showcased during a site inspection, was modern and tastefully appointed. Blue is the dominant colour, with white and grey furniture and furnishings, splashes of beige and pops of yellow coming together to create a sense of warmth and elegance. Overlooking the spacious lawn, helicopter parking apron and villas close to the beachfront, the room offers an uninterrupted panoramic view of sea. About 85 per cent of rooms in the hotel are sea-facing.

MICE facilities The hotel features 11 meeting rooms ranging from its 1,100m² Ballroom to smaller spaces of between 17m² and 150m² in size. Several of these offer natural light and can be configured to cater to all kinds of events. The sense



of space indoors, where corridors are wider than normal and ceilings lofty, create an air of lightness and not being cooped up.

In addition, the hotel offers a 5,000m² lawn that be used partially or in its entirety for all sorts of gatherings.

Other facilities The hotel, equipped with a helipad, offers helicopter rides around the bay and horse riding on the beach. A Thai restaurant will open soon to complement the Hainan Pearl

Chinese restaurant and International Cuisine restaurant, the Lobby Lounge and Eau Bar pool bar.

Room count 477

Star rating 5

Contact

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Email: Tracy Yuan,
H8167-SM4@SOFITEL.COM

Seven-star Beauty Crown Grand-Tree Hotel Complex

By Caroline Boey



Officially opened in January 2016, the property is a massive complex comprising a crown-shaped theatre and several tree-shaped hotel towers.

Concept Run on a club basis, a meeting planner can join as a member for RMB5,000 (US\$750) and can book meeting spaces at a 30 per cent discount and rooms starting from RMB98, buffet breakfast for RMB28, buffet lunch for RMB68 and buffet dinner for RMB88.

The one-bedroom suite showcased

during the site inspection was spacious. The European décor is reminiscent of the French Riviera and the large balcony offers 180°-views of the surroundings. The suite can be used for small gatherings. About 1,500 of a total 6,668 rooms have opened and a soon-to-be-completed tower will feature "museum-themed" rooms.

MICE application The 10,000m² standalone Beauty Crown Grand Theater specially built in 2003 to host the Miss World pageant is one of Sanya's largest

spaces.

The International Convention Center, offering 6,600m² of space in a separate building, comprises the Moringa Grand Ballroom for 1,000 people classroom style, and the Beauty Crown Ballroom for 1,500 people classroom style.

The Moringa Conference Center offers five breakout spaces and the Miracle Conference Center has 17 breakout spaces.

Inspired by the Palace of Versailles in France, Beauty Crown's Hall of Mirrors leading to the ballrooms and meeting rooms is longer, wider, higher and equally grand.

On site are 48 F&B outlets, 11 cinemas, including an IMAX Cinema, a Spa Center, a soon-to-open International Luxuries Flagship Store, the Beauty Crown Seventh-star Yacht Club and Beauty Crown Boeing 737-800 Idly Club.

The complex has its own bar street.

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Clockwise from above: Yang Tae Ranch; view of Gangwon's mountain range; Alpensia ski jump

Going for conference gold

The 2018 Winter Olympics is putting both Pyeongchang and its province, Gangwon, on the world map for business events. By **Paige Lee Pei Qi**

Even as Pyeongchang city continues to get ready to host the 2018 Winter Olympics, the city in the Gangwon province already has plans underway to establish itself as a convention city once the games come to a close.

Songjae Lim, manager of the international media relations team, PyeongChang Organizing Committee for the 2018 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, said: "The games are giving Gangwon the opportunity to acquire and upgrade MICE-related hardware and raise its profile as a MICE city."

According to Gangwon Convention & Visitors Bureau (GWCVB) assistant marketing team manager,

Ji-Sun Jung, while Gangwon province has been actively pursuing MICE clients since the establishment of the CVB in 2013, the province has been attracting largely incentive groups and small meeting groups.

Jung said: "With the games, we are able to increase and upgrade the hotel facilities and also expand our MICE capacity in Pyeongchang by converting some venues into convention centres after the games end."

Currently, Yongpyeong Resort in Pyeongchang offers the largest venue in the province for corporate gatherings with 2,446 rooms, and the Yongpyeong Dome which can accommodate 3,000 people in their hall.

The Alpensia Convention Centre is also a popular option, with its ball-

room having a maximum capacity of 2,000 pax in theatre setting.

However Jung said it has been "very challenging" to meet requests from large companies who previously wanted to hold conferences for over 3,000 delegates. In this regard, she highlighted that the CVB has plans to convert the indoor sporting venues into a convention centre for 5,000 delegates after the Winter Olympic games.

"It will help to increase the appeal of the city as a serious city for business instead of a venue only for teambuilding and incentive activities," she said and added that at least 70 per cent of MICE activities come from the incentive sector.

While it will take at least three

{ Developments to watch }

1 Exclusive to business visitors attending large-scale congresses and events in the South Korea capital, the Seoul MICE Card, is given to event delegates attending qualifying business events in Seoul. These rechargeable and reusable cards come with a 5,000 won (US\$4) credit and can be used on public transport including the airport express as well as with selected merchants. This card forms part of the Seoul Metropolitan Government's meetings Master Plan, aimed at expanding and upgrading the city's business events services and infrastructure in response to increasing demand for Seoul as a MICE destination.

2 The South Korean government has approved the development of a huge new integrated resort complex at Seoul's Incheon International Airport, which will cover 3.2km adjacent to the country's main international gateway. The integrated hotel-casino resort, which is expected to be completed by 2019, will feature world-class entertainment and hospitality attractions, as well as the only casino-resort anywhere connected to a fixed-base private aviation operation.

3 Mokpo City (Jeollanam-do), located at the southwestern part of Korea, is sprucing up to develop itself as a MICE destination. To attract more local and international associations to hold their MICE events in Mokpo, the city is starting a new tourism project which includes the creation and development of cable cars, marine rail bike, monorail, auto-camping sites, and other tourism infrastructures. It is also planning to educate tourism human-resources in providing MICE services.



years to remodel the infrastructure into a convention centre, Jung said the city is already benefiting from being in the international spotlight.

With Pyeongchang becoming the first Asian city other than Japan to stage the 2018 Winter Olympics, Jung said: "We are able to benefit tremendously with all the publicity the city is getting internationally, which boosts the overall appeal of Gangwon. We already see (more interest) to hold international events in our city."

Jung said just two years ago, almost all events held in the province are domestic ones. However with growing awareness about the destination, international clients now account for almost 40 per cent.

The latest statistics from KTO show that Gangwon hosted 467 MICE events in 2014, bringing a total of 35,705 people to the region.

As a testimony to its growing dominance, Jung pointed out that earlier in 2015, Gangwon won the unprecedented bid to host Pan Asia Hash 2017, an international running event expected to attract about 50,000 participants.

According to the CVB, they intend to bid for international events related to nature and the environment, which align well with the region's branding on wellness.

Apart from the fresh infrastructure, accessibility to Pyeongchang will also be improved thanks to the Winter Olympics. Pyeongchang, which sits on the northernmost end of the country, is accessible by a two-hour car ride from Incheon International Airport.

With the coming of the games, construction is underway for a new railway which will operate at a maximum speed of 250km per hour. It will connect Alpensia Resort, the venue of the Olympics, with the capital of Seoul in under an hour.

Lim said: "In the past, some may find that travelling to the city is a bit far. The high speed train will remove this problem."

Also, Gangwon itself has both an international gateway – Yangyang International Airport, which connects with 10 cities in China – and a domestic airport, Wonjo Airport, which offers flights to Jeju.

{ Talking numbers }

6,000

The number of Aurance Group employees who arrived in Incheon on an incentive trip this year, participating in activities such as a massive beer and fried chicken party. This gives South Korea its largest single tour group

267

The number of international association meetings held in South Korea in 2015, up from 222 in 2014, placing the nation in 13th place in the global rankings of host countries by ICCA

3,000

The number of international delegates who attended the 17th edition of the Korea MICE Expo (KME), regarded as the nation's top business events trade show, at Songdo Convensia in Incheon this year



Traditionally thought of as a resort area, the province provides various outdoor activities and tour programs that can enhance a convention experience and make it all the more special.

Gangwon-do, apart from being the home province of Pyeongchang, the city that is to host the 2018 Winter Olympics, is full of natural attractions and unique venue experiences for MICE visitors. Gangwon-do offers expansive scenic mountain views and the clean, refreshing air of the outdoors.

Exploring the Mountainous terrain healing of Gangwon province

Seorak and Chiak mountains are attractions not to be missed for visitors and can the heavy snowfall the province receives means there are countless ski resorts for enthusiasts to choose from. Especially, often hailed as Korea's most beautiful national park, Seoraksan "snow peak mountain" is a UNESCO Biosphere Preservation reserve. A network of paths enables everyone, from the casual Sunday walker to the seasoned hiker, to explore the many granite peaks, mountain streams, verdant valleys, temples and steamed hot spring.

The forests of pine, birch, wild cherry, ash and oak are also a paradise for birdwatchers, harboring numerous birds, including rare woodpeckers. Covered with flowers in the spring or the vivid colors of falling leaves in the autumn, the park draws great crowd also during the July and August holiday season.

The unusual rock formations and jagged peaks that make up the landscape provide a challenge for climbers and inspirations to artists and poets. On October of 2017, around 5,000 worldwide hashers, international off-road trekkers, will be gathering at Sockcho city to explore the beauty of Seoraksan's autumn. For MICE, plenty of accommodation with convention facilities is at Sockcho city. In the deepest Seorak national park, the Kensington stars Hotel, the worldclass 5 stars, proudly welcomes you with middle size convention halls, garden BBQ with the superb panorama of Seoraksan. For those who want affordable price and long holiday, Guest Accommodation Complex very near to Seoraksan has been remodeled, which will be more restructured for trekking-love foreigners.



{ Review central }

Seamarq Hotel Gangneung By Paige Lee Pei Qi

Facing the vast East Sea and located at Gyongpodae, Gangneung, the Seamarq Hotel, designed by world-renowned architect Richard Meier, is positioned as a “luxtige hotel” (luxury + prestige) hotel featuring superior facilities. The hotel has been newly rebuilt as part of the region’s revitalisation ahead of the 2018 Winter Olympics in the neighboring city of Pyeongchang.

Rooms I was treated to a panoramic view across the open sea from my balcony, which was quite a sight to behold, what more with the sun emerging gently from the clouds as I awoke in the morning.

The thoughtful, original modern architecture executed by Richard Meier is unmistakably luxurious. I relished in the abundance of natural light, which I understand to be a standout feature of the hotel’s interior spaces. Think floor-to-ceiling windows which allow daylight to stream in, while a subtle but sophisticated material palette of polished stone and timber veneer reflects the light further. Coupled with the vast spaces in the room, I honestly thought I might have caught a tiny glimpse of heaven.

My room was also fitted with a flat-screen TV with cable channels, and they



all come with a private bathroom with a hot tub and bath, with bath robes and slippers provided.

MICE facilities As for meeting facilities, the grand ballroom, which can be divided into two, can accommodate 500 guests in theatre setting. In addition, there are two smaller ballrooms which can sit 288 and 126 delegates respectively in theatre setting. Complimentary Wi-Fi is provided throughout the property as well.



Other facilities One of the signature spaces there include the infinity-edge pool that provides panoramic views of the ocean. There are also two restaurants, a full-service spa, and an indoor pool in this smoke-free hotel.

Room count 150
Star rating 5
Website seamarqhotel.com

K-Style Hub By Paige Lee Pei Qi



International delegates to Korea can now explore the best of the nation’s culture all in one place at the new K-Style Hub, an education and experience centre in Seoul.

Designed to be the city’s main tourism promotion facility for the nation, the centre opened in April and offers a range of hands-on programmes – especially

food-related – ideal for visiting incentive groups and congress participants.

Concept Located within walking distance to the popular Myeongdong district, the hub is strategically located for business travellers who may be tight on time, but interested in getting a taste of Korean culture, as well as for event

planners keen to explore activities for their delegates.

MICE application The Korean Culinary Centre in the hub invites overseas delegates to sample traditional Korean fare, and also to learn how to make it themselves. The activity for up to 40 participants at any one time can be customised from 100 minutes to two hours, depending on the type of food the visitors prepare.

The centre also features a food exhibition hall, equipped with a display wall that shows the development of seasonal customs and foods. Other areas of the hub showcase interactive exhibits on themes such as K-Pop and visitors can even try on the Hanbok, the Korean traditional costume.

Service This extensive hub does well in allowing time-strapped business events delegates to get a comprehensive 101 on the nation’s culture.

Website korean.visitkorea.or.kr
Operation hours Daily from 10.00 to 18.00, except on Tuesdays

Taiwan gets future-ready

TAITRA and its stakeholders have been diligent in organising forums and initiatives to stay afloat in a choppy economic sea. By **Prudence Lui**

Despite the current global economic slowdown and e-commerce boom, the meetings segment in Taiwan outdid the other MICE segments in 1H2016, and saw a 37 per cent growth in terms of overseas participants.

On the exhibitions front, results have been healthy in terms of the number of shows held, booths sold, and overseas visitors. However, the incentive travel segment recorded a sharp drop in the number of incentive groups, especially from China.

In light of this, numerous efforts have been undertaken by the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) to stay competitive in the

global MICE sector.

Since 2014, TAITRA has been organising the annual Asia Super Team Competition. It is a game where companies go up against each other in online and offline games around Taiwan, and allows participants to experience the country's MICE environments. In this year's edition, it drew more than 150 corporate entries – 50 more than last year – from companies across Asia-Pacific.

The finalists were seven corporate teams from Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong and Macau, where each team won a trip to Taiwan from October 3-7. The champion was then awarded a MICE tourism package

valued at more than US\$50,000.

Aside from the game, TAITRA organised the 11th Asian MICE Forum 2016 in September. It brought together South-east Asian MICE leaders such as Zulkefli Haji Sharif, CEO of MyCEB; Supawan Teerarat, vice president of Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau; and Effi Setiabudi, chair of Indonesia Exhibition Companies Association.

TAITRA's executive vice president, Walter Yeh, said: "This year's forum was a resounding success thanks to over 600 participants from 17 countries. With the theme *The New Era of Experiencing and Sharing*, the annual Asian MICE Forum has served as a prime platform for Asian MICE profes-

Clockwise from below: A panoramic view of Jiufen; famous street food can be found at the Shilin Night Market; performers at the Dragon Boat Festival



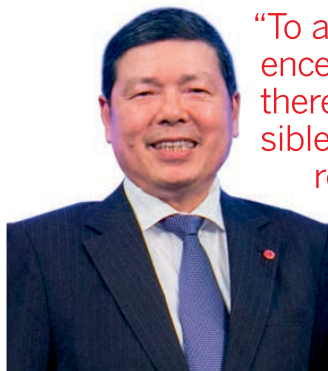
sionals to exchange ideas and trigger cooperation opportunities.”

Although details about the next four-year-long Meet Taiwan MICE promotion programme – due to start in 2017 – were still unknown at press time, Yeh said its features would take into account the viewpoints of local PCOs, PEOs, and MICE associations.

“Elements might include assisting cities such as Tainan and Taichung which have shown a strong interest in the MICE industry and requested help to construct new convention centres,” he elaborated.

Yeh added: “To attract more international conferences and incentive travel to Taiwan there is a need to integrate all possible central and local government resources, and help raise awareness of local cities. The major incentive travel target markets will include China and other Asian countries, especially those from South-east Asia.”

To this end, Meet Taiwan organised a MICE delegation to run networking events in Vietnam and Malaysia. Meet Taiwan supplements these efforts with participation in MICE tradeshows such as IT&CM Asia



Walter Yeh

Executive vice president,
Taiwan External Trade Development
Council

“To attract more international conferences and incentive travel to Taiwan there is a need to integrate all possible central and local government resources, and help raise awareness of local cities.”

in Bangkok.

GIS Group, CEO, Jason Yeh, said: “I think it is a good time for Taiwan to develop the ASEAN market, especially Thailand as they can now enter Taiwan visa-free. I can see that there will be more visitors from Thailand, not only as tourists, but also for corporate meetings and incentives.”

However, GIS Group’s Yeh added that the Meet Taiwan programme had to be more “focused on bidding, and be more proactive in initiating bids and sales”, because competition in the Asia-Pacific is tough.

K&A International’s president, Kitty Wong, added: “Taiwan is small and should focus on a niche market. It should not have just a one-size-fits-all plan. There should be different strategies when approaching different market segments.”

She added that “(business) growth would be slow (in 2017) as there are more second- and third-tier cities joining in (and adding to the competition for MICE)”, and if Taiwan cannot “create new routes, or activities for incentives, there will be a slim chance of winning business from other emerging cities”.

{ Talking numbers } { Developments to watch }

6,100

The number of participants at the 66th Junior Chamber International Asia Pacific Conference in Kaohsiung in June, making it the largest congress in Taiwan this year

330

The four-year Taiwan’s MICE Promotion Program project is now entering its final year, with targets set on bringing at least 330 international conventions, corporate meetings, and incentive tours in 2016, anticipating more than 243,000 MICE visitors from abroad

40,969

The number of overseas participants involved in Computex Taipei 2016. Held from May 31 to June 4, this is an increase of 4.7 per cent from last year. International visitors hailed from 178 countries, a growth of nine per cent

5,600

The number of participants involved in an event hosted by the Infinitus (China) Company in April, making it the largest incentive group to visit Taiwan this year

1

The shortage of exhibition spaces is a major bugbear for Taiwan’s MICE players. But relief will come once Nangang Exhibition Hall 2 is completed in approximately three years’ time. Both Nangang Exhibition Halls 1 and 2 will be able to contain 5,000 booths, and meet the demands of large-scale international exhibitions such as Computex and Taipei Cycle.

Further easing the shortage is the government’s plan to build new convention centres in Tainan and Taichung in the near future.



Expanding shows like Computex Taipei need more floor space

2

The e-commerce boom has caused much concern among PEOs in Taiwan, especially for those with international B2B shows. This is because new technology and business models have changed buyers’ purchasing habits and lowered the demand for booths. To adapt, TAITRA and other PEOs in Taiwan are working to transform and upgrade the content of their exhibitions. The successful transformation of Computex Taipei 2016 into a new platform for IoT applications, business solutions, etc, is a good example. It boosted foreign attendance to excess of 40,000.

3

The newly elected government has set up a New Southbound Policy that aims to foster cultural, investment, commercial and trade links with ASEAN countries. It will provide new opportunities for the Taiwan MICE industry to enter the ASEAN market. Another national strategic economic policy is to develop five core innovative industries: green energy, biotechnology, smart machinery, national defense and the Asian Silicon Valley. This will create more demand for conferences and exhibitions to help these five strategic industries with acquiring new technology, professionals and trade promotions.

Velo-city Global 2016: A success and showcase for Taiwan

MEET TAIWAN united Taiwan's MICE industry to host Velo-city Global, the European-based conference on the global cycling movement. The conference — part of the “Golden Triangle” of high-profile bicycling industry events — highlighted Taiwan's multidimensional capabilities and unique appeal as one of the world's leading MICE destinations.

Taiwan impressed not just the bicycling world but also the global MICE community when Taipei hosted the Velo-city Global conference from February 21–March 1 this year. The international conference attracted policy makers, engineers, planners, architects, environmentalists, industrialists and bicycle enthusiasts. Together with Taipei International Cycle Show and Tour de Taiwan, it formed a “Golden Triangle” of bicycling industry events that effectively showcased Taiwan's multidimensional capabilities in MICE.

Taiwan's MICE promotion program (MEET TAIWAN), organized by the Bureau of Foreign Trade at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, coordinated the efforts among many stakeholder groups to ensure the event's success.

Hosting a mega event

Taiwan — also known as Island of Cyclist — is world famous for its bicycle manufacturers and strong bicycling culture. This makes the capital city of Taipei a natural choice for a bicycling mega-event. A mega-team that consisted of Taipei City Government, European Cyclists Federation, Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) and Chinese Taipei Cycling Association collaborated under the leadership of MEET TAIWAN to ensure the organisers deliver a worldclass visitor experience.

Impressing international delegates

MEET TAIWAN and Taipei City Government rolled out the red carpet to



A cross-functional, private-public sector collaboration for the mega-event for Taiwan's bicycling industry. From left: Mr. Antony Lo, Chairman of Taiwan Bicycle Exporters' Association; Mr. Francis Liang, Chairman of Taiwan External Trade Development Council; Mr. King Liu, Founder and Chairman of Giant Group; Mr. Ma Ying-Jeou, Former President of the Republic of China (ROC); Mr. Shen Jong-chin, Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs (MOEA) of the Republic of China.

delegates and designed a program that appealed to the visitor's specific interests. Among them: Cycling tours, exhibition of bicycle innovations and designs, social events, technical visits, and a bike parade.

Building global support

The hosting of Velo-city Global in Taipei was the result of a strong and competitive bidding strategy, the support from key industry players in Taiwan and endorsement by international bicycling associations. With MEET TAIWAN coordinating cross-organizational activities and lobbying by private- and public-sector organizations locally and overseas, Velo-city Global 2016 proved to be a perfect showcase of

Taiwan's MICE capabilities.

Walter Yeh, Executive Vice President of TAITRA and Managing Director of MEET TAIWAN said the outstanding collaboration across the three cycling events demonstrated Taiwan's expertise in organizing international conferences and exhibitions with deep industry focus.

The joint efforts by MEET TAIWAN, various MICE venues, central and local governments as well as event hosts represented the kind of strong vertical partnerships that underpin all successful MICE events.

Contact MEET TAIWAN to learn more about the unique advantages Taiwan offers and the support available to MICE planners. ■



Taipei Cycle Leaders' Panel, a session at Velo-city Global.



Taiwan's MICE Promotion Program (MEET TAIWAN)
Organized by The Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs
Implemented by Taiwan MICE Project Office, Ministry of Economic Affairs
Ad. by The Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA

www.meettaiwan.com

{ Review central }

Marriott Taipei By Prudence Lui

This purpose-built MICE hotel opened in 2015 in the northernmost part of Taipei's Zhongshan District, a new precinct with wider roads, greener environs and a lower density of buildings. Marriott Taipei is the only five-star international hotel in the district, and it provides business travellers easy access to Neihs Technology Park and Nangang Software Park. It is also only a five-minute walk from Jiannan Road MRT station, and two stops away from Songshan Airport.

Rooms The hotel offers 320 rooms, of which 25 are suites, and four are specially-equipped rooms for handicapped guests.

I stayed in the 40m² Deluxe Room and enjoyed the floor-to-ceiling window which allowed in natural light and afforded unobstructed city views. I like how there were ample electrical outlets around the room for me to charge my gadgets.

A long wooden panel along the wall made up for the lack of a work desk. However, this space could use brighter lights.

MICE facilities Because of its massive international conference centre, MICE business accounts for 40 per cent of the hotel's overall traffic. With 3,000m² of space, the conference centre is the largest in town, and is suitable for all sorts of events, from small social parties to large-scale conventions.

The 1,260m² pillarless Grand Ballroom on the fifth floor has a 9.9m-high ceiling and has capacity for 1,000 people, cocktail-style. On the same floor are two junior ballrooms, which can be combined to accommodate 230 people, and three breakout rooms.

Eight salons on the third floor are suitable for smaller events, while the Garden Villa on the eighth floor is perfect for intimate social gatherings.

But what every event planner should check out at this hotel is the Panorama Ballroom on the 36th floor. The 360-degree view of Taipei city it offers is a winner.

The property can also cater for car show thanks to a heavy-duty cargo lift.



In August, the hotel partnered with a virtual reality firm to create a feature on its website that virtually walks clients through its MICE facilities. It's the world's first Marriott to roll out this initiative.

Other facilities On-site facilities include a gym, swimming pool and spa, as well as five F&B outlets, some of which offer private dining areas.

Room count 320

Star rating Five

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Headed for the future

Inbound MICE business has slowed but the trade remains optimistic as the government helps to turn fortunes around. By **Mimi Hudoyo**

Global events and economic conditions have weighed down MICE business into Indonesia, but the trade remains hopeful for the future. This in light of the tourism ministry's efforts in courting new markets, as well as renewed national carrier flights to the US.

Vienna Damanik, account director at Cakrawala Event Organiser, shared how the downturn has affected MICE business: "While some of our clients have (operations) in Indonesia which are doing quite well, they need to support their slowing business in other parts of the world."

Belts have also been tightened, and budget cuts have affected the choice of destinations and venues.

Abbey MICE's managing director, Abdullah Lajam, further noted: "Although the number of events are not necessarily down, we noticed corporates were more hesitant to spend. (For example), companies that previously looked for five-star hotels have gone down to four-star, while those (who used to book) four-star now look for three-star."

As for government events, Abdullah saw that the number of events had risen but spending had declined.

Ketut Jaman, managing director of Melali MICE Bali, said: "(Governments still) spend on meetings. The number of meetings may not be down, but we do not see many (large-scale ones)."

When asked about the future, Abdullah said: "It is hard to (predict how business) will go this year. Factors like the refugee (situation) in Europe, the US elections, and the uncertain global economy have caused companies to freeze budgets."

Moreover, some in the global community perceive Muslim countries such as Indonesia to be dangerous.

He stressed: "Indonesia has to present itself as a safe and secure country, otherwise international companies will (put a) stigma (on us)."

Still, the MICE industry is optimis-



Sunset over Tanah Lot, Bali



Jakarta city stays busy



Raja Ampat's glorious scenery draws fans

Destination: Indonesia



tic about the potential for growth.

Abdullah said: "I think the Ministry of Tourism is doing a very good job by not only promoting Bali for leisure, but also pushing the budget to promote Indonesia as a MICE destination. With their support, Indonesia is looking good."

Marantha Aryaguna, general manager of Duta Citra Internusa, concurred: "The Ministry of Tourism has been very active in tapping the China and Russia markets."

"The Russian (leisure) market declined (in the last couple of years) due to the ruble, but it seems that companies have started organising MICE events again," he said.

Marantha added that these markets presented a great opportunity, but "the problem is the lack of Russian-speaking guides and guest services" available.

In the meantime, MICE players expect that the US market will be interested in Indonesia as an incentive destination, especially when Garuda

Indonesia starts flying to the US.

"The plan to fly to the US is part of Garuda's business expansion to strengthen its position as a global (airline) player. With the FAA rating upgrade, we are trying to materialise our plan even sooner," said Benny Butarbutar, vice president corporate communications, Garuda Indonesia.

Awaiting the potential new connection is Mario Scozia, executive director A&A Incentives, Meetings & Conferences, US. He said: "With proper time and marketing efforts, as well as support to dedicated loyal suppliers, I believe that (Garuda's planned US flight) will do well and gain a solid share of the business, especially on the Los Angeles-Denpasar route. Bali would be the primary destination.

"We are using other airlines now with connections but losing the inflight Indonesian experience (without an Indonesian national carrier)," remarked Scozia. He added that Garuda's flights from the US to

Indonesia in the early 1990s helped the industry to grow.

Susilowani Daud, president director of PACTO Convex, agreed that having a national carrier with good air connections worldwide would definitely "help in promoting a country" on the global MICE stage, and comes especially vital at a time when security and accessibility are "top considerations" in securing bids. Garuda's prospective service to the US next year is also opportune, added Susilowani, as Indonesia will host the World Bank Conference in Bali in 2018 with 15,000 participants expected.

Iqbal Alan Abdullah, chairman of the Indonesia Congress and Convention Association, said: "Incentives from the US make a big market. Indonesia has received some groups from US-affiliated companies, but improved accessibility will definitely help."

But he also questioned Garuda's commitment, as he opined the carrier had in the past abruptly plugged services on routes that did not return quick yields.

"Marketing and preparing for MICE (groups) takes time, and we want to make sure that by the time the group travels the service is still there," Iqbal said, urging the national carrier to do a thorough assessment of the market before initiating the service.

"Indonesia has to present itself as a safe and secure country, otherwise international companies will (put a) stigma (on us)."

Ketut Jaman

Managing director,
Melali MICE Bali

{ Developments to watch }

- 1** The 1,100-hectare mixed-use Mandalika Resort development in Lombok is being positioned as an ecotourism development, with more than 51 per cent being dedicated to green spaces.
The plan includes 10,532 hotel rooms, MICE facilities that can handle 5,000 to 7,000 people, 1,586 residential units, the Mandalika Kuta Beachwalk, an arts centre, a hospital, 1,500-capacity mosque, theme park, water park and eco park. Marina, equestrian and golfing facilities are also in the works.
Five hotels will break ground soon, and a total of 1,500 rooms will open in the next three years.

- 2** Achmad Yani International Airport in Semarang, Central Java, is currently undergoing expansion and is set to start operations in 2018.
The airport, which is the gateway to Central Java, will see its terminal space grow from 6,700m² to 58,000m². It will be able to accommodate six million passengers a year.

Semarang is developing itself as a MICE destination. The city is also an entry point to destinations like Borobudur and the Prambanan Temple.

- 3** Garuda Indonesia is planning to start flying to the US next year after the airline received an upgraded status from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The FAA audit showed that the airline complied with the ICAO safety standard and hence granted the airline a Category One status on August 16, allowing it to fly direct to the US.

The plan is to utilise a Boeing 777-300ER via Tokyo Narita – leveraging the fifth freedom rights Indonesia carriers have with Japan – with possible destinations being Los Angeles and New York. The airline sees a potential of 400,000 passengers.

{ Talking numbers }

- 75** This is the percentage of international association business originating from Asia-Pacific that the Indonesia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (INACEB) is targeting by 2020

- 4** The revenue target – in billions of US dollars – the MICE sector will contribute to the economy by 2020, representing 10 per cent of total tourism revenue. This is in line with the increased events and participants, according to INACEB data

- 1,358** The number of delegates, hailing from 63 countries, who attended PATA Travel Mart 2016 in Jakarta. This is the fifth time Indonesia has hosted the event

{ **Review central** }

The Westin Jakarta

By Mimi Hudoyo

The Westin Jakarta opened in late August, marking the brand's entry into the Indonesian capital and laying claims to being the tallest hotel in the country. It occupies floors 50 to 69 of the mixed-used Gama Tower.

Rooms My Westin King is may be the lead-in category but with its location on the 56th floor, I felt like I was queen of the world. That, and a delicious welcome amenity of chocolates, tartlets and macaroons, indulged me completely. I found the room well equipped for a business traveller, featuring such things as high-speed Internet access and a smart TV that can project content from the guest's mobile phone via Bluetooth.

MICE facilities Function rooms sit separate from the rest of the hotel, on the ground and second level of the building, which also meant privacy for hotel guests.

The elegant Java Ballroom on the ground floor has direct access from the hotel drop-off via the West Gate and East Gate. Spanning 1,100m², it can take up to 1,200 pax and comes with a large pre-function area. I love the ballroom's 8.3m-high ceiling, from which chan-



deliers depicting hundreds of trumpet flowers hang.

Breakout rooms are on the second level. Medan and Padang Rooms can accommodate 160 pax each, theatre-style, while four other smaller ones have capacity for 36 to 68 pax theatre-style.

All function rooms come with audio-visual facilities and high-speed Internet.

The second floor's Retreat Lounge is a comfortable space where delegates can enjoy free flow of tea, coffee and snacks. It can also be rented for events.

All events held at the hotel are supported by a dedicated three-storey kitchen as well as spacious loading elevators with doors 2.6m wide.



Other facilities All-day dining restaurant, Seasonal Tastes, boasts seven open kitchens. For quick bites of pastries, coffee and tea, there is Daily Treats on the 52nd floor. The three-story Henshin, opening this month, specialises in Japanese-Peruvian cuisine and offers a rooftop alfresco bar on level 67.

Other amenities include a fitness centre, swimming pool and spa.

Room count 272 rooms, 13 suites
Star rating 5
Contact (62-21) 2788-7788
Website www.westin.com/jakarta

Royal Tulip Gunung Geulis Resort & Golf

By Mimi Hudoyo



The four-month-old property – a luxury brand of Louve Hotels Group – is located in Puncak, about 90 minutes' drive from Jakarta.

Rooms My Deluxe Room was spacious and minimalist in design. It had everything a bleisure traveller needed: a comfortable bed, work desk with good lighting, and Wi-Fi that works. However, I find it lacks the frills that guests might expect from a luxury hotel brand.

MICE facilities The hotel has a ballroom that can accommodate 450 people theatre-style and 280 people banquet-style. It has a 300m² pre-function area and boasts direct access from the drop-off area.

There are also three meeting rooms, two of which are further divisible to two each. All rooms feature a TV Projector and other high-tech meeting equipment.

There is also a grab-and-go refreshment counter, which is always stocked and available around the clock.

For outdoor events, there is the Zen Deck, perfect for a themed dinner or reception as it allows for a view of the surrounding greenery. There is also a semi-outdoor venue near the teambuilding area.

Spanning 450 hectares, the resort also has space for outdoor teambuilding activities, and the resort works with a third-party company to organise such programmes. There are plans to develop on-site facilities such as a flying fox, as well as three-day event packages for corporates.

Other facilities The property has three F&B options (LL One, an all-day dining restaurant; Fire, a grill and pizza eatery; Breeze, a bar and lounge), a kids' club, and three swimming pools. The resort is also flanked by two 16-hole golf courses.

Room count 173
Star rating 5
Contact rsvn@rtgununggeulis.com
Website www.gununggeulis.com

Reputation on the rise

Hosting the 2014 G20 meeting has swung Brisbane into the spotlight, allowing it to score yet another major coup, writes **Rebecca Elliott**

Despite being held in Brisbane two years ago, the G20 Leaders' Summit is the gift that keeps on giving for the Australian destination.

"When you think of major conferences or events, G20 is up there," said Brisbane Marketing's general manager of conventions and business events, Rob Nelson.

"Not every city can say they've hosted the world's business leaders. It certainly helped put Brisbane on the map and exposed the city to a market, which perhaps ordinarily wouldn't have a complete understanding of what Brisbane's offerings were."

Case in point was the attraction of the World Science Festival to Brisbane, held for the first time outside of

New York from March 9-13 earlier this year as part of a six-year agreement.

A production of the World Science Foundation headquartered in New York, the annual Festival has attracted more than 1.3 million visitors since its inception in 2008 in the Big Apple, and has been hailed by the New York Times as "a new cultural institution".

The inaugural edition in Brisbane drew in excess of 120,000 visitors.

"It's a magnificent coup for us, particularly in profiling the destination," remarked Nelson, adding that the Festival carries enough clout to attract local, interstate and international visitors.

"Obviously being science and tech related, it gives us tremendous scope to secure conferences that are aligned," he added.

"(As) I sit alongside the general manager of leisure tourism, we can look at (the Festival) holistically and think, how can we leverage off the back of a major event?"

As part of their strategy, Nelson and his team hosted 32 national and international clients on three concurrent familiarisations during the Festival, in partnership with Business Events Australia and Tourism and Events Queensland, with the view to securing business events during future Festivals.

As a principal Festival venue, the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre (BCEC) also supported the familiarisations.

"The Festival brings to Brisbane some of the greats from the international science and arts communities,"

Clockwise from below: Streets Beach, South Bank Parkland; heritage-listed Brisbane Arcade; view of Brisbane's skyline and river from Kangaroo Point



“Not every city can say they’ve hosted the world’s business leaders. (The G20 Leaders’ Summit) certainly helped put Brisbane on the map and exposed the city to a market, which perhaps ordinarily wouldn’t have a complete understanding of what Brisbane’s offerings were.”

Rob Nelson

General manager of conventions and business events, Brisbane Marketing

said general manager Bob O’Keefe.

“It is a wonderful opportunity to showcase and celebrate Brisbane’s science and research capabilities and reinforces the depth of the world leading expertise we have here.

“In conjunction with Brisbane Marketing, our team is working with clients to encourage them to align their events with future Festivals where they can potentially access visiting keynote speakers and leading academics.”

Securing the World Science Festival is a success story of the Brisbane 2022 New World Action Plan, which was developed by Brisbane Marketing and Brisbane City Council in partnership with industry and academia following G20 to keep the impetus going and formulate a growth plan for the city, according to Nelson.

Brisbane Marketing engaged over 1,000 industry stakeholders across 16 work groups to shape the economic development plan, which resulted in 140 different recommendations.

“What was pleasing in my role was that the visitor economy was up there as one of the top growth sectors, combining major events and business

events,” Nelson explained.

“For us it is about gaining market share. Part of our strategy is to secure one significant event per month for Brisbane.

“It’s a very, very competitive environment and what we’ve shown with our infrastructure growth combined

with events like G20, is the appeal of the destination is now increasing. Our capacity to host a variety of events and also capitalise on our medical research institutes and fantastic university network has enabled us to present a more compelling proposition,” he concluded.

{ How to do Brisbane }

- **Go central** Brisbane’s bustling city centre is easily accessible, offers plenty of venue and accommodation options, and is connected to the airport, cultural precinct and even the Gold Coast by train services. Easy to walk around, the city offers immense dining and shopping opportunities too.
- **Get cultural** You will not find a better, more appealing cultural/leisure precinct in Australia than Brisbane’s South Bank. Two of Australia’s leading galleries, a museum, performing arts complex, riverfront parklands and even a beach, all within a five-minute walk from the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.
- **Try a signature venue** Brisbane City Hall and Customs House are both in the city centre and offer spectacular historical surroundings. Powerhouse in New Farm offers a great industrial-chic option and there are dozens of venues throughout South Bank.
- **Bring life to your event with local entertainers** Brisbane boasts a great selection of entertainers and a thriving live music scene – everything from jugglers to orchestras can be sourced locally and you will be delighted by their high quality and enthusiasm.

Ashley Gordon

Proprietor and director client relations,
Carillon Conference Management

Fun abound in Brisbane

Cuddle a koala

No trip to Australia is complete without meeting the locals. Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary is the world’s oldest and largest koala sanctuary, home to 130 koalas and 95 species of Australian native animals. Wildlife encounters range from cuddling a koala to hand feeding kangaroos.
www.koala.net

Feed the dolphins

Approximately 75 minutes by catamaran from Brisbane will take you to Tangalooma Island Resort where the main attraction is the wild bottlenose dolphins. Every day at sunset, up to

ten dolphins make their way to shore to be hand-fed their supper from loving visitors.

www.tangalooma.com

Have a whale of a time

If your business event is between June and November, then a whale-watching cruise is a must. Each year, southern humpback whales migrate between Brisbane’s Moreton Bay and Antarctica, feeding, mating and playing as they go.

www.brisbanewhalewatching.com.au

Doughnuts, cronuts, potato slinkies

Eat Street Markets, open Fridays and

Saturdays from 16.00 to 22.00, are a haven for foodies. Housed in disused shipping containers just 15 minutes from the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, the markets offer everything from Italian to Indian alongside an outdoor cinema.

www.eatstreetmarkets.com

Brisbane by water

Pick up a paddle, jump in a kayak and explore Brisbane on the river by day or night. Tours are guided and take in views of the city centre, Story Bridge and South Bank – no paddling experience necessary.

www.riverlife.com.au

Tackling a gigantic gathering

A sudden doubling of attendance throws PEACH a logistic challenge, but the venue emerges unscathed. **Paige Lee Pei Qi** writes

Event brief

Pattaya Exhibition and Convention Hall (PEACH) was tasked to host over 6,700 delegates from World Ventures for a four-day business event that featured live theater performances and personal development sessions. World Ventures is a home-based direct selling company.

Challenges

A last minute change in attendance more than doubled the original count of 3,000 delegates, and this occurred with just two weeks to go, recalled Vitanart Vathanakul, executive director of Royal Cliff Hotels Group and PEACH. The result was a massive logistical challenge, especially in terms of crowd management and control, according to Vitanart.

In addition, accommodating F&B requirements for this large group, comprising of people of different nationalities and from diverse cultural backgrounds, was also a challenge.

Solutions

To accommodate the newly inflated group size within the limited time frame, PEACH mobilised staff from different departments to work round the clock to facilitate venue set-up and achieve speedy turnovers.

Vitanart told *TTGmice*: “A lot of intensive meetings between all concerned departments in the property took place in order to set up a plan for accommodating this massive group successfully.”

The meetings sorted out facility allotment and manpower assignment.

To resolve the crowd control aspect, Vitanart: “With thousands of attendees arriving and leaving the venue at the same time, teams were formed and assigned to handle a specific area. To (keep traffic flowing), many entrances were provided.”



Event

A View from the Edge

Organiser

Pattaya Exhibition and Convention Hall

Venue

Pattaya Exhibition and Convention Hall

Date

December 4-7, 2014

Number of participants

6,700

“A schedule was created with regards to the opening and closing of the doors during the group's arrival and departure. All entrances and exits were utilised to facilitate an organised queue system, with security guards assigned to strategic locations to ensure guests stay in line,” he elaborated.

To tackle the food and beverage challenge, Vitanart said the chefs prepared a combination of food items that would satiate different tastes. Pop-up food stations serving a selection of snacks, sandwiches and hot or cold drinks were also placed all over PEACH for those who were feeling peckish in between meetings.

To feed almost 7,000 multiracial and multicultural attendees during lunchtime and dinner time, PEACH activated 11 onsite restaurants and arranged for special buffets that featured a dazzling variety of world cuisines.

Key takeaways

Looking back on PEACH's planning and execution of the World Ventures event, Vitanart commented: “With very large groups in particular, clear and candid communication with the event organisers is critical, as is the need for a discussion on the venue's house rules which can help prevent property damage by careless accidents involving event attendees.”



“A well-trained team is very valuable and advantageous when handling large groups with high-level demands which must be addressed urgently. Dealing with high pressure situations in a professional and efficient manner contributes greatly to the success of these sort of events.”

Vitanart Vathanakul, executive director of Royal Cliff Hotels Group and PEACH

Calm in a last-minute storm

Despite the numerous challenges, the organising committee rallied together to ensure a successful event. By **Mimi Hudoyo**

Event brief

Panorama Group has an annual management conference for their middle and top management. The three-day programme usually includes a conference, a themed dinner, and teambuilding and outdoor activities. This year's theme was Truly Care.

Challenges

The original plan was to organise the conference in Malang and the outdoor activities around Mount Bromo. However, the organising committee had to change destination from Bromo to Batu, as the volcano erupted two weeks prior to the event.

As such, there were last minute changes such as finding accommodation, and logistical planning and the adjusting the programmes had to be done accordingly.

Amanda Gunawan, director of human resources and building management of Panorama Group, who led the organising team, said: "With all set for the Malang-Mount Bromo event, hotels and venues were booked and airline tickets bought, Batu (an hour's drive away from Malang) was our (best) choice."

She also added a school in Bromo area had been appointed and informed that they would be receiving a donation as part of the company's CSR programme.

Natalia Suwignyo, HRD & GA general manager of MG Group, who led the events team, said that there were things they had to sacrifice such as the Bromo outdoor dinner that had to be moved indoors to the hotel ballroom.

Moreover, incorporating "Truly Care" into the activities was a challenge.

Solutions

Natalia said she was in Malang when the decision to move the event to Batu was made. She was then tasked to survey Batu for accommodation and possible event venues.

From there, the committee decided to conduct a one-day trip to Batu comprising an outdoor activity and a Museum Angkut tour.

Martini, personal assistant at Panorama



Photos by Mimi Hudoyo



Event
Panorama Management
Conference 2016

Organiser
Panorama Group

Venue
Malang and Batu, East Java

Date
February 18-21, 2016

Number of participants
160 people

Destination, who is in charge of logistics, said: "We decided to stay another night at HARRIS Hotel & Convention Malang and moved the theme dinner there as well."

The outdoor Arabian-themed dinner was brought inside the ballroom and the concept changed to Indiana Jones Wild West.

"We incorporated the theme into the room through the décor, dress code, games and entertainment. We also brought some birds from Safari Indonesia Park, Prigen, for participants to pose with in our photo booth," Amanda said.

Instead of visiting the school at Bromo, the headmaster and a couple of students came to Batu to receive the donation.

The committee also needed a local event organiser. Sadewa said: "We needed people who knew the area and could translate our concept into programmes in a blitz."

The committee then incorporated the theme Truly Care into the culinary race that was organised around Malang Square.

Participants were tasked to find culinary spots in the surrounding area with the help of a map and money supplied by the committee. The group with the highest points, were quickest to finish, and spent the least would win. What they did not realise was that the committee had set up booby traps in the form of three

actors: a blind man trying to cross a road; a roadside cleaner; and a man with boxes scattered all over after bumping into participants.

Video cameramen followed closely and recorded how the participants reacted to the actors. Some merely ignored and moved on, while some actually did stop to help the blind man cross the road and pick up boxes.

"Here, Truly Care was tested. Sometimes, we are too busy with our work, trying to reach individual targets (hence) we forget things around us," Amanda said.

Key takeaways

"The (tourism) industry is an industry of constant change. It does not matter how well we prepare, as there will always be improvisation and adjustments that need to be made as the programmes are ongoing. So we always need to be prepared," Sadewa said.

It is also important to stay focused on the goal that the team sets out to achieve, and find ways around problems that emerge.

{ Hot moves }



Ahmet Antepli

Ahmet Antepli

Dusit International has appointed Antepli as general manager of the upcoming Dusit Hotel & Suites Doha. He has over 18 years of experience working in various hospitality positions for well-known hotel chains across the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

Carlo Bezoari

FCM Travel Solutions has appointed Bezoari as director of sales, South-east Asia. He joins FCM from Rosetta Stone, where he was responsible for the



Carlo Bezoari

corporate sales division across EMEA and Japan.

Indra Budiman

Budiman is now general manager of the luxury hotel, Shinta Mani Siem Reap. He joins from Hansar Hotels, where he held the dual role of CEO/general manager for six years.

Joanna Patterson

Patterson has joined FCM Travel Solutions as director of account management, Southeast Asia. She joins from China Eastern Airlines,



Indra Budiman

where she led the Global Corporate Sales Department.

Laura Tan

Tan now leads The Settlement Hotel Melaka as general manager. Prior to this, she was the general manager of Hotel Grand Continental Kuching.

Marc Sittl

Sittl now leads Mövenpick Siam Hotel Pattaya as general manager, having left his last role as general manager of Lebua at State Tower



Sudesh Sharma

and Tower Club at Lebua in Bangkok.

Michael Martin

Martin has been appointed to the dual role of general manager of InterContinental Singapore and regional general manager, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) Singapore, Malaysia and Batam. He brings with him over 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry.

Sudesh Sharma

Sharma has taken up the newly created role



Tommy Lai

of deputy director of operations at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. He has over 25 years' experience working in the hotel, banquet and convention industry in destinations including Singapore, Bali and Malaysia.

Tommy Lai

Lai has been promoted from his role as vice president, development with Onyx Hospitality Group to vice president, North Asia. He has been with the company since 2012.

{ Career inspiration }

Joanna Patterson

Director of account management, Southeast Asia, FCM Travel Solutions

You joined FCM from the airline industry. What inspired the switch?

I've worked in various airlines for over 20 years, and wanted the opportunity to re-invent myself.

I also wanted to get out of my comfort zone and thought FCM was a great choice. In the last few years, it has established itself as a leader in the TMC space. (And with) their recent expansion and brand transformation across technology, branding and services, this is the perfect time to join them and help bring the business to the next level.

How will your past experience in the airline business aid you in your new role?

Air spend usually represents more than 80 per cent of companies' travel budget; understanding how airlines deal with corporate clients will be of great advantage to FCM and our clients as we help them negotiate for the best deals.

I am also in the position to upskill my team to improve our customers' travel programmes, thus increasing savings and efficiency.

Change management is another valuable skillset I've brought with me that will help support new clients as they make the transition

from another TMC to FCM.

What do you hope to achieve in your career at FCM?

As a leader, the best result you can hope to achieve is to groom future leaders. My top priority is to develop my team to their maximum potential and for them to be recognised as the best account management team in South-east Asia. Concurrently, I am also mentoring the team in Greater China, and expect them to grow into their roles.

I've always wanted to spend a few years in New York, so once my teams are settled, I will be more than happy to explore a role in New York and live out my dream!

What do you love most about the travel business?

People! I love being able to meet new people from different cultures. It can be a client review meeting in Singapore, a conference in Hong Kong, a video conference with the US – everyone has experiences to share and stories to tell. The best ones are around a few drinks and lots of laughter.



Meeting of the professionals

IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2016 celebrated yet another year of success in Bangkok, Thailand in September, bringing meeting and business travel professionals together for intellectual and business exchange



A starlit evening

Centara Grand at CentralWorld in Bangkok, Thailand was the converging point for the year's best performers in the Asia-Pacific travel industry on September 29. The 27th TTG Travel Awards 2016 presented its signature Hermes trophy to 84 winners



TTGmice
Asia-Pacific's leading meeting, incentive, conference and exhibition magazine

What's next?

Time flies when you are having fun! The next issue of TTGmice winds down 2016 with a special issue that reminisces business in the year gone by, and pokes its nose into the holiday plans of MICE chiefs in the region, among other things. Also in the pages are destination features on Qatar, Japan, Malaysia and Finland.

Geoff Donaghy

The CEO of International Convention Centre (ICC) Sydney tells **Rebecca Elliott** why the venue is pivotal to the city's success in the MICE business

ICC Sydney opened to the public on October 22. What was the vibe among your staff in the lead up to the big day?

There was sheer excitement. All three years of planning and preparation had obviously paid off for us. They realised, even those new to the industry and that are very early on in their career, that it was an incredible privilege to be involved in the opening of one of the world's major projects in our business.

How is the business pipeline looking?

We have around about 45 international conventions locked in from now till 2022. Some are as large as 8,000 and across all fields and industries. Working with our Bureau in Sydney, we have a pipeline of about 100 bids and expressions of interest.

International business is very strong. We've been working on this since we commenced the project in 2014 because of the lead-time and the intense competition. We started establishing awareness, confidence and trust that this building would open on time, and right from day one we'd be a world-class venue.

National business is very strong, more than we had expected. There's a lot of pent up demand among national rotational business to come back to Sydney.

What impact will your venue have on Sydney's MICE performance?

The marketplace has told us in our international marketing that if ICC Sydney was not the most exciting project happening anywhere in the world at the moment, it was certainly among the top three. That's for a number of reasons. We have the privileged position of being the (venue) with all the latest innovations and technologies and the opportunity to be right downtown on Sydney's spectacular Harbour and within walking distance of 7,000 to 8,000 hotel rooms.

You recently said at an Australian Tourism Export Council event that a visitor shouldn't be siloed into any one segment. What did you mean by that?

We went through a period in our industry where we tried to establish that (business events) wasn't part of tourism. But I always felt that was a shallow and immature argument because we share a whole lot of things with visitors. While

our delegates are with us, they consider themselves on business, but their accompanying partners and families are here as leisure visitors and quite often delegates participate in pre- and post-tours, so we'd be far better served in taking a (single) visitor industry approach to the interests we share.

"You can't be serious in this business until you build proper convention and exhibition facilities. You can't be partly in this business just as you can't be partly pregnant."

So how can the two industries work better together to increase visitation and spend?

The very first thing is to eliminate constraints like visas, investment policy at a state and federal level, and aviation policy. All these things would potentially affect anyone coming to Sydney (whether as an event delegate or as a holidaymaker). I think the business event industry needs to work closely with the broader visitor industry in that regard. This is where we collaborate with Destination NSW (New South Wales); being able to offer all the activities that people can undertake before and after a visit here (ICC Sydney). That really drives the incremental spending and economic impact.

Is there a particular destination that does this well?

Singapore has always been up there. It has the enormous advantage of being a sovereign city-state and it does this seamless attraction of visitors effectively and strategically. Kuala Lumpur is probably learning from Singapore and is really successful in that area too. A couple of the European cities do it well but they tend to have older infrastructure.

But ask anyone in the world that same question in the first six months of 2017 and the name that will spring to their lips will be Sydney. We're already getting that. We think the world will be very

much looking to Sydney (for benchmarks) in the future.

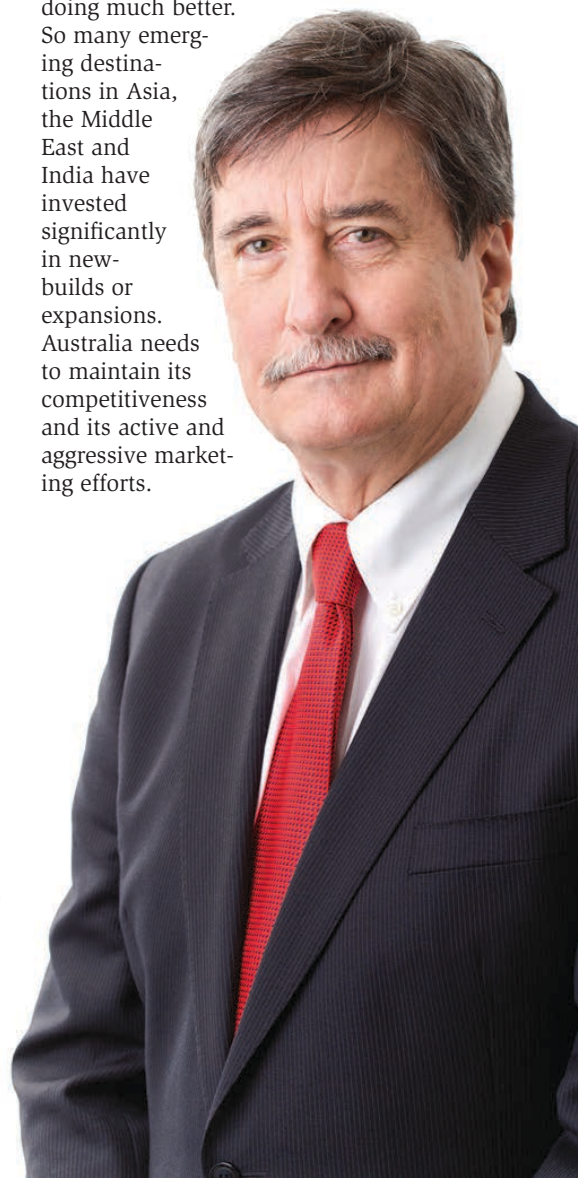
What role can your venue play in this?

You can't be serious in this business until you build proper convention and exhibition facilities. You can't be partly in this business just as you can't be partly pregnant. So we have built one of the leading venues in the world in terms of capacity, innovation and capabilities, and combined that with the fact that Sydney is already Australia's global city and the major gateway.

How do you think the Australian MICE market is faring compared to the rest of the world?

Australia is well served with first class infrastructure and it has always had a good understanding of the need for collective and collaborative marketing, as well as individual competition. The best measure is the annual ICCA rankings. Australia's ranking has gone down over the years but that's not because we've been doing worse – most of the numbers are growing. It's just that so many other places are doing much better.

So many emerging destinations in Asia, the Middle East and India have invested significantly in new-builds or expansions. Australia needs to maintain its competitiveness and its active and aggressive marketing efforts.





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