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October 21, 2015
Singapore

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Singapore



Asian cruise impetus

Indonesia lifts cabotage, huge windfalls expected for region

By Mimi Hudoyo

INDONESIA'S lifting of cabotage of the sea last month is expected to open up the country's cruise market and pedal up South-east Asia's ambition to be the Caribbean of Asia.

International cruise lines can now embark/disembark tourists through the seaports of Benoa (Bali), Tanjung Priok (Jakarta), Tanjung Perak (Surabaya), Belawan (Medan) and Soekarno-Hatta (Makassar).

Chairman of Indonesian Marine Tourism Association, Didien Junaedi, said: "We have been fighting for the country to lift the barriers to marine tourism. This will attract the fly-cruise market to Indonesia."

International cruise lines interviewed are salivating at the prospects of a larger domestic cruise market and more interesting itineraries.

Farriek Tawfik, director-South-east Asia of Princess Cruises, said: "The Indonesian government has permitted foreign cruise ships to drop anchor at selected Indonesian ports, which are the biggest ports at the moment. This will benefit cruise lines like Princess Cruises which have large ships."

"With the new regulation, we will be able to cater to domestic cruise passengers, allowing us

to expand a new source market." Rudiana, director of sales of WITA Tour, pointed out that Indonesian travellers who could not join a cruise in the Indonesian waters due to cabotage rules could now enjoy a wider variety of itineraries, which would attract more people to cruise.

He envisioned cruise lines to create more regional cruises or just all-Indonesia itineraries as a result of the new development. This would foster the growth of inbound, outbound and domestic cruising.

Melvyn Yap, regional director-Asia of Silversea Cruises, said: "The Indonesian archipelago is a long stretch. This will give us a lot of time to explore all the beautiful islands instead of trying to get to another country just to meet the cabotage requirements."

But as itineraries had already been planned for 2017, he expected changes only "perhaps in 2018", saying Silversea as forerunner in destination development welcomed this.

Despite the cruise impetus, industry players are aware of challenges. Edhi Sutadharma, general manager of Golden Rama Tours, pointed out: "The question now is whether the Indonesian ports are ready for these big ships to embark and

disembark passengers (conveniently)?"

Elly Malaihollo, general manager and operations director of Panorama Prestige Indonesia Cruise Specialist Bali, voiced similar concerns. "We appreciate the policy but that alone is not enough to boost cruise business. We need the infrastructure, the human resources and supporting facilities such sufficient number of immigration counters, baggage handling, excursion buses, and so on. We are talking about moving thousands of passengers at a time," she said.

Indonesia's Minister of Tourism Arief Yahya, meeting the media and buyers yesterday, said infrastructure development was a key programme of Joko Widodo's administration, and the government was focusing especially on maritime development.

"There are 100 marinas and 22 seaports to be built until 2019 and the existing seaports will be upgraded to facilitate the growth of marine tourism," he assured.

Last year 73 cruise ships called on Indonesia, bringing a total of 102,270 pax. Year to September saw 61 cruise ships bringing 106,653 pax to the country.

Tawfik saw competition from budget airlines and land vacations as challenges and engaging local agencies to promote cruising and organising on-shore excursions.



Elly: "Can Indonesia move thousands?"



Where you should be tonight

THE place to be after dinner tonight is Aqua Luna, Level 7 of Park Hotel Alexandra, the newest property in Park Hotel Group's portfolio in Singapore.

And you are invited to an outdoor party there organised by the hotel and TTG Asia Media, from 21.00 to 23.30.

The hotel will hold its grand opening on November 4, so get a preview now, apart from enjoying an enchanting night under the stars with views of the surrounding lush greenery.

Angeline Tan, general manager,

said the 443-key hotel is all about embracing nature, designed in natural woods, earthy shades and prints with a botanical theme. "Our newly-opened hotel is poised to provide guests with a unique, modern and elegant escape at the fringe of Singapore's city centre," she said.

To join the party, you must have an exclusive invite card. Get yours at TTG Cybercafe (R32) or Park Hotel Group booth (F10).

As for where to go for dinner before the party, see our tip on page 3 on the hottest in town.



OVERHEARD...

BANYAN Tree Hotels & Resorts is unveiling a new brand, alas it is keeping it under wraps until an official launch tomorrow. But from what we know, the first property carrying the brand is likely to open in Cuba in 2016, followed by launches in China and Thailand.

And seeing as the hospitality group currently holds three brands, Angsana, Banyan Tree and Cassia, our guess is the fourth will be a tree that starts with the letter D. We would cry if head honcho KP Ho, in Phuket yesterday to launch the first Cassia, calls it Dacrydium. May be Damson?



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News

Sabah on the way up again

New trail to summit of Mount Kinabalu to open December 1, boost for adventure/inbound operators

By S Puvaneswary

ADVENTURE and inbound operators are rejoicing that from December 1 climbers can trek again to the summit of Mount Kinabalu using a new trail from Laban Rata to Sayat-Sayat Hut.

There isn't much interest now in Mount Kinabalu because climbers cannot reach the summit and watch the sunrise, which is the main attraction, according to Diethelm Travel Malaysia's managing director, Manfred Kurz. The old trail was damaged by a 6.0-magnitude earthquake earlier on June 5.

"Once the new trail is completed, I am sure it will generate a lot of interest," Kurz said.

The new trail was chosen on the advice of international mountaineering experts and geologists from Canada and Japan. Currently, climbers can trek a 6km-long

trail from Timpohon Gate up to Laban Rata only at 3,300m above sea level.

Another inbound tour operator, Cheryl Wang-Shim, executive director of Exotic Borneo Travel Management, said: "We had many cancellations from mountain climbing groups from Japan after the earthquake as their main objective was to climb to the summit. Mount Kinabalu is a relatively easy mountain to climb, and can be done in two days/one night. For many, it is a stepping stone to climb other mountains."



Jamili: Slow and steady

Aside from the new trail opening, Sabah Parks will also consider increasing the number of permits from 100 a day now. Its director, Dr Jamili Nais, said: "We have not fixed the number (yet), but we will start small then gradually increase it over time. The safety of the climbers is our main concern."

Scarlett Sue, sales manager of Sutera Sanctuary Lodges which manages Laban Rata Resthouse, said accommodation enquiries for 2016 had already started to come in from both the longhaul and Asian markets. Laban Rata Resthouse is the largest accommodation provider there and is able to house up to 60 climbers.

An inbound operator in Sabah, KL Tan, general manager of Borneo Trails Tours & Travel, said allowing climbers to the summit would help revitalise the local travel industry, in particular the surrounding areas of Kinabalu Park. Homestays, restaurants, lodges and hotels should expect better days ahead.

But agency chiefs are divided on how quickly it will take to rebuild confidence. Wang-Shim opined: "It will take some time, because this is a natural phenomenon and out of (human) control."

Kurz gave another view: "Trekking from Europe are mainly young people and are

DON'T MISS THIS

Get the latest updates on Sabah and Nepal at **TTG Asia Media workshop 11.00-13.00 today at Basement 2 Hall D-F** within the mart. Hear also media's perspective on how crisis management should progress beyond fam trips post-crisis. As well, learn from data experts on how traffic redirects itself during and after a crisis.

adventurous. They know that the earthquake in Sabah is not a regular occurrence," he said.

Regardless, Noredah Othman, senior marketing manager at Sabah Tourism Board, said that promotions were being carried out as per normal and they were keeping overseas travel consultants abreast on the latest updates.

Youths love consultants

By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

CONTRARY to conventional assumptions that travel consultants are losing ground, especially among young adults in an era where entire trips can be booked on a smartphone, Millennials are engaging their services.

Steve Pirie, director of Sydney-based Unleashed Travel, which sends an average of 3,500 travellers from Australia and New Zealand overseas each year, said that's because the first overseas experience is daunting for young travellers aged 17-25 years old.

"The youth market is growing exponentially at about 20 per cent each year," said Pirie. "We pre-package everything; close to 99 per cent (of youth travellers) take up our tours."

For instance, the Pacific islands such as Fiji was once favoured as destination for gap-year students in Australia, but these travellers are now casting their sights further afield. Furthermore, the rising con-

nectivity to Asia arising from the emergence of LCCs such as Scoot is making the region "a lot closer and more affordable than it used to be" for Australia's youth travellers, added Pirie.

"The youth market is becoming more travel-savvy; they are now going to Bali, the Philippines, Cambodia and Thailand," said Pirie.



Pirie: Exponential growth

As well, the Millennials are not simply relying on the sharing economy, remarked Pirie, who sees greater uptake of sharing economy providers like Airbnb only when the young adults reach 25 years old and gain more travel experience.

Lac Hong Voyages' executive director Jonathan Tran is positive that agencies will remain relevant. "First-timers will still use package tours, especially if they are unfamiliar with Asia and don't speak the local language. But for subsequent tours, they are likely to harness the power of the Internet," he said.

Las Vegas raises stakes in pursuit of Asians

By Prudence Lui

Bolstered by rising air connectivity, Las Vegas is more interested than ever to lure longhaul visitors from Asia, sending a five-member trade delegation to ITB Asia including Korean Air this year.

Michael Goldsmith, vice president of international marketing, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), said: "The South-east Asian market is important for us and we hope to educate both the media and travel buyers about what makes Las Vegas a unique and exciting destination."

China is of particular interest to Las Vegas, showing an upward trend for the last decade to deliver 188,719 visitors in 2014, making up three per cent of the city's total international arrivals.

Observing that Asian travellers, especially the Chinese market, are increasingly shifting away from group tours to FITs, Goldsmith added: "Younger Millennials

look for personalised experiences in Las Vegas such as a helicopter ride or Grand Canyon hike. This younger generation is not keen on gaming and tends to venture into more lifestyle experiences."

In a bid to retain its destination allure, LVCVA has US\$10 billion worth of developments in the pipeline, including the 201-room Asian-themed Lucky Dragon (2016), a 3,000-room Resort World by Malaysia-based Genting Group (2018) and the 1,100-room Alon (2018).

But to attract repeat visitors from Asia, Guangdong China Travel Service's chief inspector Vico Wei hopes that LVCVA will "market more non-gambling offers such as shopping to change the perception of (Las Vegas as a gaming destination)".

However, Martin Wong, managing director, Hong Kong-based Citizen Thunderbird Travel, remarked: "For the Chinese market, Las Vegas is too far away; there is the convenient option of Macau."

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News

Haze burns business

Peak India incentive season burnt, with consequences spreading over months

By S Puvaneswary

MALAYSIAN agencies handling MICE groups from India are being affected by the haze in the current peak season and fear that arrivals in the coming years will drop due to bad experiences this year.

The haze is a result of uncontrolled fires raging in forests and peatlands in parts of Indonesia, coupled with the extended dry weather caused by a longer El Nino season this year.

Luxury Tours Malaysia senior manager, Arokia Das, said: "For the first time, our incentive business to Langkawi was affected due to the thick haze on October 4 and 5. On October 4, we had to cancel outdoor activities such as mangrove tour and island-hopping for an incentive group of 250 people. However, we were still charged for the boats.

"Then on October 5, Langkawi International Airport runway was closed for three hours due to poor visibility. Flights could not land or take off. Departures from Kuala Lumpur were affected and the group had to wait at the airport until services resumed. There was a gala dinner in Kuala Lumpur that night and about 70 people could not make it on time. Word of this event will definitely spread and I am

deeply concerned that Malaysia will lose incentive business from India to other destinations such as Hong Kong, Sri Lanka and Bangkok due to the haze."

He added MICE organisers from India had asked for assurance the haze would not be present when their group arrives in November. "We told them that the haze is

How can we give them an assurance the haze would not be present when their group arrives in November?

Arokia Das
Senior manager
Luxury Tours Malaysia

beyond our control and they should look at city destinations (where there are indoor options) and avoid going to islands," he said.

Hidden Asia Travel & Tours managing director, Nanda Kumar, fears an incentive group from India which the company is

handling will take legal action. "Their programme was disrupted when their flight from Kuala Lumpur to Langkawi was delayed for five hours and outdoor team building activities had to be done indoors. The MICE organiser wished to deduct payment for the team building activities which were not carried out as planned, said Nanda.

World Avenues executive director, Ally Bhoonee, said his company had a tough time convincing the organisers of two incentive groups from Mauritius and Morocco not to cancel their programmes in early October, which included twinning Kuala Lumpur with Singapore. He said: "Our pitch was that they could get a five-star property for below US\$100 per night in Kuala Lumpur. Also they could do more indoor activities.

"It will also be a challenge for me to convince agents at the World Travel Market (next month) and Arabian Travel Market to bring incentive groups to Malaysia from August to October next year.

"My fear is if it recurs with the same intensity next year, all my effort and money spent on marketing Malaysia overseas will be wasted. Agents will lose faith and confidence in this destination," he said.

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Dine at former Supreme Court

Creating Singapore's next F&B institution is Aura, located in an institution itself, the newly-minted National Gallery which was formerly the City Hall and Supreme Court.

While The National Gallery will open November 24, Aura has lifted its curtains on a four-in-one dining destination. It is the only F&B outlet in the building, whose grand, sweeping architecture, especially when lit at night, will wow you before you even so much as step into the place.

On Level 5 is Aura Restaurant, a 90-seat Italian restaurant led by Beppi de Vito, who has also just opened iLido Bali and Osteria Art Singapore. Aura Restaurant touts reasonable prices and homely recipes in a world-class venue. Guests are encouraged to share dishes in a casual family style so typical of Singapore eating-out.

On Level 6, the rooftop, is the Sky Lounge, which offers all-embracing views of the Padang and Marina Bay skyline. The whole Sky Lounge can seat 300 pax and holds three potential areas to fit groups or parties of all sizes and all occasions: Raw Bar (11.30-14.30 daily, free flow buffet of Mediterranean food), Tea Lounge (14.30-17.00 daily, classic European hi-tea;) and Lounge Bar (17.00-01.00 daily, after-work drinks and deluxe bar grub). Tel: +65 6866 1977; email: book@aura.sg



DEMAND for Hong Kong has dropped 17 per cent as Chinese leisure travellers are shunning the city for alternative destinations, notably Japan and Korea, according to Angela Skelly, SVP-sales,

marketing & commercial development, JacTravel (Hall F/Stand E5). One reason: price hikes put off visitors and make Hong Kong affordable only for the most affluent Chinese. "Tokyo and Seoul offer similar value for money and, with a fall in the yen, we are experiencing particularly strong interest in Tokyo, so much so we have opened an office there to source good quality hotel accommodation and expand our offer further," she said.

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Singapore Botanic Gardens

Inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site just this year, the 156-year-old, 74ha Singapore Botanic Gardens contains the National Orchid Garden – the world's largest display containing over 60,000 plants and orchids – a rainforest, the Ginger Garden and three lakes, among others.

Head down for a day of relaxation as many of the open fields and spots beside the lakes are ideal for a spot of afternoon tea. Just remember to bring your picnic mats!

ArtScience Museum

This innovative museum is located at Marina Bay Sands and showcases the power of creativity as it is manifested in the world of art and science. The museum features a permanent exhibition – *ArtScience: A Journey Through Creativity* – and also temporary exhibitions that change every couple of months.

The museum's theme for October is *Art and Science of Sustainability*, which

aims to use film as a positive medium to generate empathy and awareness about the importance of clean, sustainable water resources.

The two exhibitions scheduled for this month are *Living Yangtze* by Eric Valli for Swarovski Waterschool and *Sensing States: Healing Spaces*, the final presentation of The Substation Art and Science Open Call.



Gardens by the Bay

Travellers can treat themselves to amazing views of the island nation's city skyline as they bask in beauty of nature at Gardens by the Bay. Gardens by the Bay features attractions such as the Flower Dome, 128m-long and 22m-high OCBC Skyway, Cloud Forest and Supertree Grove.

Come evening, chill out at the base and watch the Supertrees come to life in a spectacular light and sound display that is sure to dazzle and delight. The current display will have an added SG50 twist to it to celebrate Singapore's 50th year of independence.

Colony, The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore

Recently opened in September, the name alludes to the overseas voyage that the British took to travel to South-east Asia for trade and commerce in the 18th century. As such, vintage maps and postcards adorn the walls of the restaurant, evoking a sense of nostalgia for diners.

The restaurant offers authentic Singaporean, Malaysian, Indonesian, Indian and Chinese and Western cuisine. It can seat a maximum of 260 people and is open for breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner daily. There's also a vintage Champagne brunch on Sundays.



TAO Seafood Asia

Like its name suggests, this chic restaurant in the CBD is popular for its fresh seafood which includes lobsters, crabs, prawns and scallops.

A must try is the Singapore Chilli Crab paired with deep-fried buns. If chilli is not

your cup of tea, choose the savoury black pepper crab instead.

Another dish that diners should have would be the TAO Seafood Asia Signature Soup – shark's fin with a choice of crab meat, chicken, or fish maw.

Bread Street Kitchen, Singapore

Located in the upscale Marina Bay Sands, Bread Street Kitchen marks Gordon Ramsay's first foray into Singapore.

The restaurant and bar has an industrial warehouse-designed setting and serves

classic British-European delights with an Asian twist. Try the fish and chips, the potted salt beef brisket, and the fried chicken wings spiced with tamarind, spring onion and coriander.



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MARINA BAY SANDS - SINGAPORE

Borobudur Temple
Central Java

Host city



Genting Hotel Jurong

This eco-friendly hotel is situated in the Jurong Lake District – an upcoming commercial and business area. With its unique “hotel in a garden” theme, guests can look forward to a relaxing stay amid roof gardens, sky terraces and lush greenery.

The hotel is five minutes from Jurong East MRT and also provides a free shuttle bus to Resorts World Sentosa.



The South Beach

The South Beach is a recently-opened luxury hotel located in the Marina Bay area.

The 654 rooms are furnished with French designer Philippe Starck’s quirky works. While Starck came up with the interiors, world-renowned architects Foster

+ Partners designed the property, which features two towers with slanting facades.

The hotel is a stone’s throw away from Suntec City and Raffles City, with both malls offering travellers a huge range of shopping and culinary delights.

Park Hotel Alexandra

This 443-key property is situated at the fringe of Singapore’s CBD, a 10-minute drive away from the Orchard Road shopping district. Its Crystal Club Lounge boasts stunning views of the city skyline and gives suite and club guests access to exclusive privileges such as personalised check-in and check-out services.



Sentosa Cable Car

Travel around Sentosa with a new cable car line which will bring visitors to three stations – Siloso Point, Imbiah Lookout and Merlion.

The cable car not only serves as a mode of transportation around the island but

also a vantage point from where scenic views of the surrounds can be had.

Spot the dolphins at Sentosa Cove and take a closer peek at Universal Studios Singapore, all from the comfort of an air-conditioned cable car cabin.



Amped Trampoline Park

For those looking for a full-body workout, head over to Amped Trampoline Park, Singapore’s first trampoline park. The Amped brand has two outlets in River Valley and Jurong East.

Each trampoline park features almost 50 trampolines lining both the walls and floors of the indoor play area, accompanied by soft padding to ensure safety of guests. The trampoline parks are also available for rent in the event of corporate events or birthday parties.

Homerun Baseball

Featuring a fully automated batting cage, Homerun Baseball is the place to go for those looking to let off steam, and at the same time get some exercise in as well. It has three baseball batting lanes, a softball batting lane and a pitching lane.

It is located at 200 Pandan Gardens, Jurong and open from 13.00 to 23.00. Corporate and group bookings are also available for those looking for teambuilding activities.



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Host city



Anthony Chan
Managing director
Chan Brothers Group

I would recommend experiential activities such as authentic gastro-nomic tours through local hawker centres; doing tai chi at the Singapore Zoo – complete with breakfast in the wild where you get to meet resident orangutans and snakes; or even traipsing through Kampong Glam or Chinatown.



Satay



For those interested in the art scene, my suggestion is to immerse yourself with a museum hop.

Simply dedicate two to three days with a planned itinerary and visit museums such as the National Museum of Singapore, the oldest museum and custodian of national treasures; the Peranakan Museum, a heritage

place; and more modern ones like the Museum of Independent Music.

Then there's the recently-opened National Gallery Singapore is a visual arts institution and this emergence in the art scene only strengthens Singapore as a regional and international hub for the arts. Home to 11 international art galleries, Gilman Barracks is also a good choice for art lovers.

In fact, most hotels here are also home to regional and international art pieces and scul-

tures. At Regent Singapore, our owners showcase their own personal collection of original South-east Asian artefacts, a reflection of Singapore's diverse cultural heritage.

Look out for city events like the annual Affordable Art Show or the Art & Culture Meetups in Singapore, where you can enjoy an enriching day out with other like-minded art fiends.

Peter Draminsky
General manager
Regent Singapore



Singapore is a food paradise and one of my favourite dishes is fish steamboat. My favourite place to

eat it is at Whampoa Keng Fish-head Steamboat at Rangoon Road. The dish is served in a traditional charcoal fired pot and the fish slices are always fresh. The soup broth is also very tasty.

For those looking for local fare, I recommend a visit to Old Airport Food Centre which is very popular among locals for its cheap dishes like *char kway teow*, prawn noodles, Hokkien mee, *lor mee*, *kway chap*, satay and *rojak*. This hawker centre has the highest number of famous food stalls in comparison to other places.

Perry Neo
Chairman
Dynasty Travel



National Museum of Singapore



Frequently described as the city that never sleeps, there are numerous activities that one can enjoy

after dark. From late night eating at Newton Circus to shopping at Mustafa Centre; night prawning and fishing to late night karaoke, the activities are endless.

In particular, I would like to recommend Crossroads Café. Located at the junction of Orchard and Scotts Road, the café is at the centre of all the action. Watch the night go by while enjoying cocktails until 02.00 on Friday and Saturday nights. It is the perfect place to see and be seen.

Martijn Dekker
Director of marketing
Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel

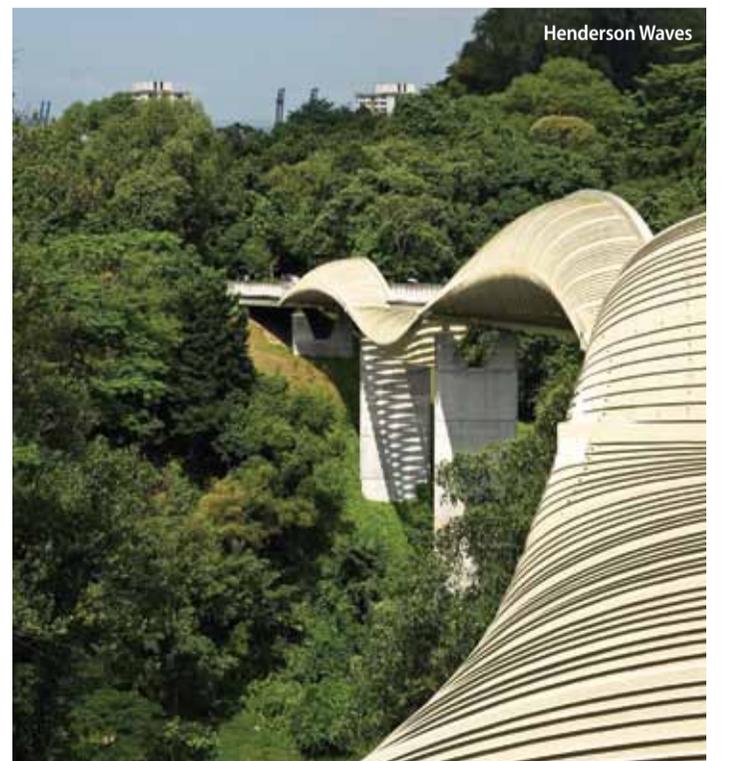


Check out The Southern Ridges to experience a different side of the island nation.

Stretching across 10km and connected to several nature parks, it is a peaceful oasis for those who want to be away from the city's hustle and bustle.

Bask in the serenity and panoramic views as you walk along the Henderson Waves, the highest pedestrian bridge in Singapore. You can also get up close and personal with the abundant wildlife at The Forest Walk and Canopy Walk cutting through the forest.

Mohd Rafin
Chief corporate officer
Park Hotel Group



Henderson Waves



Crossroads Café

Marketplace

Best Western hotels expands reach in SE Asia

Best Western is expanding rapidly in South-east Asia, with three new properties in the region all set to open by this year-end.

Already up and running are its Indonesian properties, namely the Best Western Papilio Hotel in port city Surabaya, and the Best Western Premier Solo Baru in Solo, Central Java.

Both have recently opened in 3Q2015 and are the respective city's first Best Western-branded property. With these openings, Best Western now boasts a portfolio of 15 hotels across eight destinations in Indonesia.

Slated for a grand opening by end-2015 in North Bangkok

is the 183-key Best Western Plus Wanda Grand Hotel, which will be the parent brand's seventh property in the Thai capital.

All three hotels feature a full range of F&B options, such as the Mariposa Restaurant at the Best Western Papilio Hotel which serves up local and international cuisine.

The Sky Lounge at Best Western Premier Solo Baru is also worth mentioning, as it provides a stunning bird's-eye view being the tallest perch from a hotel in the city.

Fully-equipped meeting spaces, including banquet and convention halls, are also available at all these properties.



Harbour Plaza Hotels and Resorts showcases extensive Asian portfolio

Harbour Plaza Hotels and Resorts, a member of Cheung Kong Property Group, is a major player in the Asian hospitality industry, providing a distinctive blend of comfortable elegance, understated luxury and value for money in all of its hotels.

The company currently manages nine full-service hotels, namely the 828-room Harbour Grand Hong Kong, the 555-room Harbour Grand Kowloon, the 821-room Harbour Plaza Metropolis, the 669-room Harbour Plaza North Point, the 1,102-room Harbour Plaza Resort City, the 704-room Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees, the 736-room The Kowloon Hotel in Hong Kong, and the 389-room Harbour Plaza Chongqing over in China.

The latest addition to the group's property portfolio is the all-suite Kowloon Harbourfront Hotel at Hung Hom Bay in Hong Kong. It commenced operations in July 2015 with 240 units.

In addition, the company manages the 800-room Rambler Garden Hotel and the 822-room Rambler Oasis Hotel in Hong Kong, both of which offer affordable accommodation in a uniquely relaxing environment surrounded by urban conveniences.

Over in the Bahamas, the hotel group manages the 1,271-room Grand Lucayan.



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Marketplace

Hertz expands Prestige Collection fleet in Australia

The Hertz Corporation has expanded its Prestige Collection in Australia with four luxurious Audi models. The high-end Audi A3 Hatch, A4 Sedan, Q5 Wagon and the Q7 Wagons are now available to rent exclusively with Hertz at airport locations in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth.

“Audi is a leading brand in the premium automobile segment, with sporty, progressive and sophisticated vehicles. I am delighted to announce that Hertz is introducing four refined Audi models into the Prestige Collection in Australia,” said Chris Rusden, vice president of Hertz Asia Pacific.

“The stylish Audi vehicles will appeal to those with a taste for luxury and performance and anyone looking for something special to drive on a short or long-term basis.”

The Audi A3 Sportback offers class-leading space, allowing for a flexible arrangement of either passengers or possessions – the perfect rental option for a weekend getaway or a city break.

Ideal for small families, or those after a slightly larger rental option for longer trips, the spacious A4 sedan is the ideal combination of comfort and practicality.

The Audi Q5 SUV offers renters the ideal versatile mid-sized mode of transport with outstanding levels of safety and performance. Quattro permanent all-wheel drive makes this vehicle the perfect choice for the beach, the mountains or even the snow.

The Audi Q7 offers designer looks and unbeatable performance. As chic as it is spacious, this is among the most luxurious family-friendly vehicles available on Australian roads.

The Hertz Prestige Collection features luxurious vehicles that will transform an ordinary business or leisure trip into an extraordinary journey. Hertz’s other distinctive lines of specialist vehicles in Australia comprise the Adrenaline, Fun, Dream and Family Collections.

Hertz customers travelling to the selected locations where the Audi models are available can select these vehicles for their next rental by visiting www.hertz.com.

Plaza Premium rebrands, expands into airport hotels space

Airport hospitality provider Plaza Premium Lounge Management has rebranded its name to Plaza Premium Group and rolled out two new brands, Aerotel and Allways, as the company marks its 17th year in the business.

“The new name marks a step towards reflecting the group’s increasingly diversified airport hospitality businesses. We believe airports are a destination in themselves and our services and facilities will give travellers more reasons to enjoy their travel experience”, remarked Song Hoi-see, founder and CEO of Plaza Premium Group.

An airport transit hotels line, the first Aerotel will debut in Singapore Changi Airport soon. A second hotel will open in Abu Dhabi International Airport by the end of this year and a third will open in London Heathrow Airport in 2016.

Allways will represent the group’s airport concierge and butler service, providing conveniences such as welcome gifts, pick-ups, baggage handling and itinerary recommendations to travellers.

Plaza Premium Group will launch Allways by phases in seven airports worldwide, first at Toronto Pearson International Airport and New Delhi’s Indira Gandhi International Airport, followed by airports in Singapore, Macau, Kuala Lumpur, Muscat and London.

The group has also announced its plans to expand to 200 locations by 2018, encompassing management and operation of independent and airline lounges, transit hotels, meet and greet service locations, and dining facilities.

Sentosa Development Corporation offers a preview of island attractions

Sentosa Development Corporation will be showcasing its wide array of new attractions available on the island during ITB Asia 2015. One of the latest being the new intra-island cable car line, Sentosa line, which now provides visitors greater convenience as it allows guests to fly over the jungle and sea and into over 20 attractions on the island.

Representatives from Sentosa Development Corporation will be present to share more about the latest offerings which include Kidzania, an indoor family education and entertainment centre and the multimedia night show *Wings of Time*.

For a preview of what Madame Tussauds

Singapore has to offer, catch one of the figurines at the booth – and of course, bring along your cameras for a selfie opportunity.

Business event planners can look forward to speak to representatives on the types of unique meeting and dining options available that range from beach dining set-ups to tranquil alfresco dining that overlooks the harbour.

Sentosa Development Corporation will be offering free entries to selected Sentosa attractions in collaboration with City Tours to ITB Asia visitors.



Park Hotel Alexandra opens its doors

Park Hotel Group has launched the Park Hotel Alexandra, located on the fringe of Singapore’s CBD and close to business and leisure areas alike.

Singapore’s famous shopping district Orchard Road and island retreat Sentosa are 10 minutes away, while Singapore Changi Airport is only a half-hour’s drive.

The 443-key hotel offers six different room types – Superior Room, Deluxe Room, Premier Room, Crystal Club Room, Executive Suite and Park Suite.

Guests will also find within hotel premises the Crystal Club Lounge, a 25m infinity pool on the seventh floor, signature restaurant The Carvery which specialises in Western recipes and techniques, and The Coffee Belt in the lobby.

Crystal Club Lounge, located at the top level of the hotel, commands stunning views of the city skyline and gives suite and club guests access to exclusive privileges such as personalised check-in and check-out services, buffet breakfast, all-day refreshments and complimentary business facilities.

The hotel is also fitted with four well-lit function rooms that can be combined to accommodate up to 150 pax, while cocktail receptions and private events can be held at the elevated pool deck.



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Suntec raises the bar on banqueting options for events

Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre is offering an extensive collection of customisable dinner menus that offer clients 168 dishes to choose from.

Twenty-one eight-course Chinese menus across seven series have been created, with the cheapest series being the Special Series, priced at S\$788++ (US\$554++) per table while the priciest is the Summit Series at S\$1,238++ per table.

Each series will offer two Halal menu options, while one series will cater for vegetarian diets.

Event planners are able to swap dishes from menus in the same series at no extra cost, while changes made between menus from different series will come with "a little bit more money", said Suntec Singapore's CEO, Arun Madhok.

Describing the new banquet programme as a revolutionary one in the MICE business, Madhok said: "Venues in the

market today typically offer only two or three set menus with fixed items. We see the opportunity to do things differently and better by giving price-sensitive clients who appreciate good food the chance to provide their delegates with a great dining experience at Suntec Singapore, but without breaking the bank."

Madhok emphasised that while the menus are "affordable", quality is not compromised and featured dishes include luxurious options like Chinese Four Treasure Soup, Lobster Broth with Seafood, and Honey Soya Glazed Cod Fillet with Mango Salsa.

"Industry colleagues have told me that my new banquet programme is suicidal for business; how could the kitchen manage so many dining options for multiple large-scale events, they asked. But this is not an issue for us, as our kitchen operations have been computerised and optimised with new processes," he said.

"Take for instance our new induction ovens which can cook many dishes at once but are safe and use less heat, which also brings down electricity usage as our air cooling system will no longer need to work as hard. We have also reduced the number of suppliers, keeping only the top quality ones and employing a Just In Time delivery system to keep produce fresh and use less storage space."

To spread demand away from the popular Friday and Saturday evenings, Suntec Singapore is offering a discount of S\$50++ per table for banquets hosted on Sundays to Thursdays.

All menus come with free-flow soft drinks and Chinese tea, fresh flower centrepieces, one VIP table service per 50 tables booked, and other perks. Terms apply.



Millennium Hotels and Resorts brandishes new brand



Millennium Hotels and Resorts (MHR) has refreshed its brand in tandem with its growth and expansion. Its previously gold logo is now red to represent reinvigoration of the brand.

The group has also adopted a new tagline, *More than meets the eye*, which represents a subtle hidden implication that there is always more with a Millennium stay, according to Bhupesh Yadav, chief business and administration officer of Millennium Hotels and Resorts.

This new credo will, for the first time in Asia, be boldly displayed at the booth to showcase to ITB Asia visitors.

With this move, all MHR hotels will be grouped and rebranded into three collections: Millennium, Copthorne and Leng's.

Yadav elaborated: "The Millennium brand will be corporate hotels at gateway cities focusing on MICE, while Copthorne will be regional hotels that focus on leisure and corporate with less on MICE. The Leng's brand highlights heritage and designer influenced hotels."

M Social Singapore, which is the latest addition to the Leng's Collection, will be introduced at ITB Asia. This 293-key designer hotel which overlooks the Robertson Quay precinct is targeting the younger, discerning travellers who have cosmopolitan tastes.

Visit the booth at F37 for more information and look out for unique giveaways in line with this newly refreshed brand.



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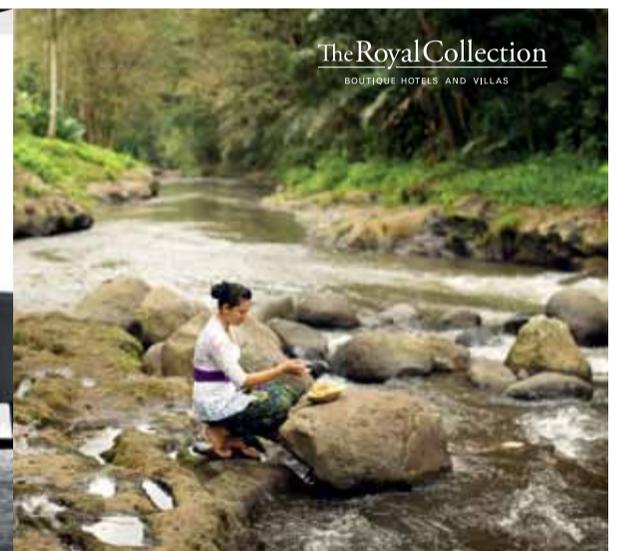


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MICE feature

Stronger by association

Asian association leaders are now sprinting to professionalise the sector and stronger associations are a boost for the region's MICE industry. **Raini Hamdi** analyses the development



In respond to a beseeching question from a young association executive: “What can we do to help advance association management as a career choice – how do we even begin to explain to people what it is that we do?”, John Graham, president and CEO of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), replied wistfully, to a ripple of laughter from the audience: “My mom does not even know what it is that I do.”

The Washington-based ASAE was founded in 1920 and today counts an impressive 22,000 members and 11,000 organisations in its fold. Imagine what the landscape is for the fledgling associations sector in Asia.

In Asia, association executives do not even know they are one, according to Octavio (Bobby) Peralta, secretary-general, Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and the Pacific, based in Manila. When Peralta launched the Philippine Council for the Advancement of Association Executives (PCAA) in November 2013, he asked the 200 attendees from mostly national associations in the Philippines: “Who among you use the name ‘association executive’ as your profession?”

“Only one rose,” Peralta said. “Afterwards, a few of them told me, Mr Peralta now I have a profession.”

Fertile sector

Yet, Asia does have a fertile associations sector. In the Philippines, PCAA's research finds about 5,000 registered associations, and thousands more if other civic societies and small groupings are counted. In China, as of June 2013, there are over 506,700 legally-registered ‘social organisations’, comprising traditional government-linked associations, modern independent organisations, commercially-driven ones, at national and provincial levels. In South Korea, there are more than 100,000 association executives, according to Hee Kon Hwang, president of the Korean Society of Association Executives (KSAE), which

was just formed on November 11, 2014. Of that massive number, only 50 individuals have joined KSAE to-date.

So far Asia has seen the light of only the PCAA and KSAE – ironic that the very people who do association work do not themselves have a platform to forge a sense of belonging, advance their profession and learn what it takes to create strong, sustainable associations.

But it won't be long before there will be more societies of association executives across Asia and things are moving at a breakneck speed. Already, PCAA and KSAE, along with counterparts in Australia, the Associations Forum and Australasian Society of Association Executives, signed a charter in Hong Kong during the inaugural *ASAE Great Ideas! in Association Management Conference in Asia-Pacific* last March to form an Asia-Pacific federation. And more association leaders from other Asian countries are looking at PCAA and KSAE and are asking: “Why can't we have that too?”

Ajay Kakar, a periodontist who founded the BITEIN Dental Portal which now has a multi-tier membership fee structure, said he was talking to ASAE to create a chapter in India. “I've suggested forming a society of Indian association executives to three or four people from different industries and this is going to be my endeavour this year.”

With rising economies, Asia's association leaders have gained experience and stature, bringing world congresses to their shores and being elected as presidents of international associations. Kakar, for example, is president-elect of the International Academy of Periodontology. And these leaders are passionate about giving back and making the fertile associations sector in their respective countries thrive.

PCAA's Peralta is a good example. A mechanical engineer by training, he had to learn the hard – and long – way about association management.

“When I started as an association executive, I was clueless: how do I manage an

association? So what I did first was to be a member of ASAE, in 1990, when I was in Washington. I used a lot of their books but I had to self-learn. That's why I formed PCAA, as a give-back,” he said.

Peralta's dreams for PCAA reflect the current poor standing of the sector in Asia. In the Philippines, there is a commission that regulates all professions – doctors, real estate workers, etc – but not association executives, he said. Certification programmes are non-existent. “In the States, if you are a Certified Association Executive (CAE), you get 30 per cent more pay – this is a big motivation for association executives to professionalise themselves,” Peralta said.

Good governance

At the heart of it all is the fact many associations in Asia are not properly run and governed. “Hardly an association in India has a CEO,” said Kakar. “Ninety-nine per cent are run by volunteers.”

But now, factors such as government deregulation and the rise of a new generation which demands more VOI (value on investment) than ROI (return on investment), Asian associations are slowly recognising that the old ways won't work.

In South Korea, for example, associations 10 years ago were largely controlled and financed by the government, according to KSAE secretary-general, Glynn Cho. “But with the government having to look at other issues such as healthcare and welfare, although there is still support for associations, it wants them to be more independent, transparent and to seek finances themselves,” he said.

China is veering towards getting associations to be more self-supporting.

John Peacock, general manager of Associations Forum, Australia, which has been providing consultancy to Asian associations, observed: “Associations in Asia need to seek more professional advice, but there is a tendency for them not to spend money on hiring professional lawyers, consultants, etc. In our experience, the volunteer on a board or council committee of an association often does not ask, what is my legal responsibility and liability? Am I going to get sued? That's a big thing. Associations in Asia also need to start paying for managers, and let the managers have a budget and employ people.”

He added: “The models of associations are generally the same everywhere but, excluding China (which is an association world of its own), I respectfully venture to say the Asia-Pacific democracies have to catch up. If you look at the strong Western associations, they have good governance, good management and charge what they are worth in terms of fees. One of the problems (with Asian associations) is they don't charge enough and the board needs to appoint a CEO who is in charge of the management and strategic plan.”

Asked why many associations in Asia are in this state, Peacock said, “To a degree, there aren't enough role models of good, well-run associations for them to emulate. They don't realise what they don't know.”

This is why, Peacock added, the Hong Kong charter to form the Federation of Association Organisations is not an idea whose time has come but one that “is long overdue, done by committed individuals such as Bobby (Peralta) and Glynn (Cho)”.

“People are generally inspired by ASAE and see that if ASAE can have a vibrant sector, we should try and have our own body to suit our own circumstances. Running an association can be a lonely job – you need a platform where people meet each other and talk about common issues,” Peacock said.

Peralta hoped the Hong Kong charter would spawn the birth of more societies of association executives in Asia, which would advance the cause for the Asia-Pacific federation.

The Power of A

But why do associations matter? This too is a story that has not been properly told, according to association leaders.

“You know about the public sector and the private sector, but there is a third sector, and that's the associations sector which also contributes a lot to a country – education, development, providing recommendations and advice to governments, among others,” said Peralta.

ASAE has a dedicated brand, *The Power of A – Stronger by association*, and encourages all associations and nonprofits in the US to tap into its campaign materials to broadcast how they help build a stronger nation and the world.

One area why associations matters is of course meetings – almost every association holds meetings, conventions, congresses – some large, some small – and the value of meetings to a society is not just its direct revenue impact and multiplier effect, but the intellectual content that it generates.

This is why CVBs such as Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau and convention centres in Asia such as the Philippine International Convention Centre have jumped into action to help bring association executives in their countries together.

ASAE meanwhile is hesitant to form chapters in Asia-Pacific currently, although it has set up an office in South Korea and in China. Greta Kotler, ASAE's chief global development officer, said its goal for the region is not membership drive, but “engagement and relationship” with Asia-Pacific partners.

“They are asking for talent and so we help them to develop talent in association management,” said Kotler.

“Membership may be something in the future. We don't have the products and services for Asian associations, for example, and we're so far away. We're so pleased this first *ASAE Great Ideas! conference in Asia-Pacific* is off to a good start, with more than 170 attendees, and we have preliminary plans to return to Hong Kong and eventually to rotate the conference in the region,” she added.

Without question, many Asian associations and CVBs would say ‘What a great idea!’ to that.

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MICE feature

10 incentive ideas

There's nothing better than unique travel ideas to motivate top achievers to strive for greater targets. Here are 10 of our picks from around Asia



1 Uncovering the secrets of Bhutan
Delve into the secrets of this beautiful Himalayan kingdom. For this tour, there will be an exclusive arrangement made with Eddie Jose. Jose is a conservationist who has devoted much of his life working with the local monks on Thangka reservation and conservation, to gain a deeper understanding of their work and to study the treasures in monasteries and dzongs not usually seen by foreigners. One of the highlights will be meeting the typical local family who will whip up an authentic Bhutanese lunch.

Capacity: Maximum 16 pax
Email: enquiries@countryholidays.com.sg
Website: countryholidays.com.sg

2 Raise a glass in Bali
Depart in the morning to visit one of the local vineyards up in Bali's north. While there, learn about the local winery, type of grapes and their harvesting time from a local expert. Then taste the local wine, and have them with Indonesian snacks prepared by The Ritz-Carlton, Bali's chef.

Back at the resort, refresh and get ready for a wine pairing dinner at the resort's Indonesian restaurant Bejana. Pair an Indonesian Rijsttafel dinner with local wine while learning about the tippel from Sansan Pratama, winner of the Indonesia Best Sommelier 2015 title.

Capacity: Maximum 20 pax
Website: ritzcarlton.com/bali



3 Aerial views of Cambodian temples
Serving as an ideal pre- or post-event incentive for high-end groups staying at the luxurious Soneva Kiri, flights from the resort on Koh Kood in the Gulf of Thailand to Siem Reap, Cambodia afford delegates a unique aerial view of the area which is famous for its temples, including the Bayon, Ta Prohm and Angkor Wat. An expert guided tour of the complex is thrown in. Additional elements can be tailored too.

Capacity: Eight pax
Email: kiri@soneva.com
Website: soneva.com

4 Picnic on an elephant's back in Chiang Mai
Explore Chiang Mai in style with 137 Pillar House's signature picnic basket, filled to the brim with tasty treats for your incentive winners to nibble on as they journey through a jungle atop an elephant. They can toast their adventures with flutes of champagne while they sightsee from within a howdah, or visit the elephant hospital to watch a veterinarian take care of sick and injured elephants.

After having lunch at a restaurant in Lampang, they can ride a horse-drawn carriage – a famous symbol of the town – around the market, before heading to Ban Sao Nak, a huge ancestral mansion built in 1895 with 116 teak pillars.

Capacity: Maximum five pax
Email: info@137pillarshouse.com
Website: snhcollection.com/137pillarshouse

5 Chasing time in Beijing
Launched in October 2013 and reintroduced this year, this is an Amazing-Race-meets-Beijing history lesson and participants race in vintage motorcycle sidecars to piece together the story of China's capital since the days of Dadu in Kublai Khan's Yuan Dynasty.

Participants "travel" through four eras of Beijing history from the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties to the Republican/Mao era. From the hidden corners of the Forbidden City to old Gothic churches and bomb shelters, time chasers have three hours to complete as many challenges as they can. It ends at a restaurant for a slap-up celebratory meal and award ceremony.

Capacity: 40 pax
Email: info@bespoke-beijing.com
Website: bespoketravelcompany.com

6 Delve into Hong Kong's traditions
Hosted by local artisans who are masters of art forms such as bamboo and flower displays, shadow puppetry, qipao-button crafting and lion dancing, the classes at The Peninsula Hong Kong offers guests an insight into the country's disappearing crafts.

After choosing their preferred artisan, participants are split into groups and they get to support the city's traditional crafts by contributing to their sustainability through education and awareness building. More than simply a learning experience, these programmes immerse participants in the local culture.

There are half- and full-day programmes to choose from, allowing more flexibility and options depending on participants' itinerary and areas of interest. It is ideal for small incentive groups.

Capacity: Four to eight pax
Email: academyphk@peninsula.com
Website: peninsula.com/hongkong

7 Soaring over The Land of the Thunder Dragon
Fly over central Bhutan's Phobjikha Valley in a hot-air balloon and watch in awe as the 360-degree view reveals the snow-clad Himalayan peaks. The valley below is dotted with villages, farmhouses and temples, while the 17th-century Gangtey Goenpa monastery nestles a 5,000m spur at the north end of the valley. The area is home to snow leopards and black-necked cranes – both of which are rarely sighted – and a host of other wildlife.

Capacity: Unavailable at press time
Website: easternsafaris.com

8 Glamping next to Angkor-era ruins
Banteay Chhmar tented camp offers small groups the opportunity of staying overnight in the jungle right next to a 12th century Khmer temple in Cambodia, near the border with Thailand.

While the glamping experience has plenty of luxury elements it is a community-based tourism project. Local villagers are employed and help run the initiative, from looking after guests to cooking food and more, providing an ideal corporate social responsibility element for groups.

Capacity: Maximum six pax
Email: sales.cambodia@khiri.com
Website: khiri.com/cambodia

9 Explore the way of the mountains

Shrines on Dewa Sanzen, the three sacred mountains of Yamagata in Japan, have long been visited by pilgrims who undergo tests of physical and mental endurance. The experience is now popular with tourists and a three-day programme is offered for participants to meditate under a waterfall, jog through the serene mountains, detoxify in an incense room, and cleanse the body with a traditional meal of *shojin ryori* (vegetarian temple cuisine). Participants are also offered the opportunity to harvest their own vegetables and fruits for their meal, an arrangement unique to the shrine experience in Dewa Sanzen.

For incentive groups that lack time for a complete Dewa Sanzen experience, they can check into one of the many history-rich ryokans at the foot of the mountains and partake in prayers and meditation every morning, led by ryokan owners, and enjoy *shojin ryori*.

Capacity: Unavailable at press time
Email: kanko@city.tsuruoka.yamagata.jp/
rkonno@solarisspace.com

10 Skip the city for the depths of Java
For a retreat deep among lofty mountains and ancient temples, look no further than a stay in Java's Villa Borobudur. Each of the traditional *joglo*-style villas' teak arches and carved roofs were handmade by expert carpenters. While some villas feature outdoor showers and others infinity pools, all of them offer stunning views.

Your incentive winners can go on an excursion to Mount Merapi on a jeep safari, hike to rice fields and waterfalls, or go rafting on Progo River. For the less adventurous, they can learn batik printing and pottery lessons at a nearby village.

Capacity: 10 rooms in six villas
Email: info@villaborobudur.com



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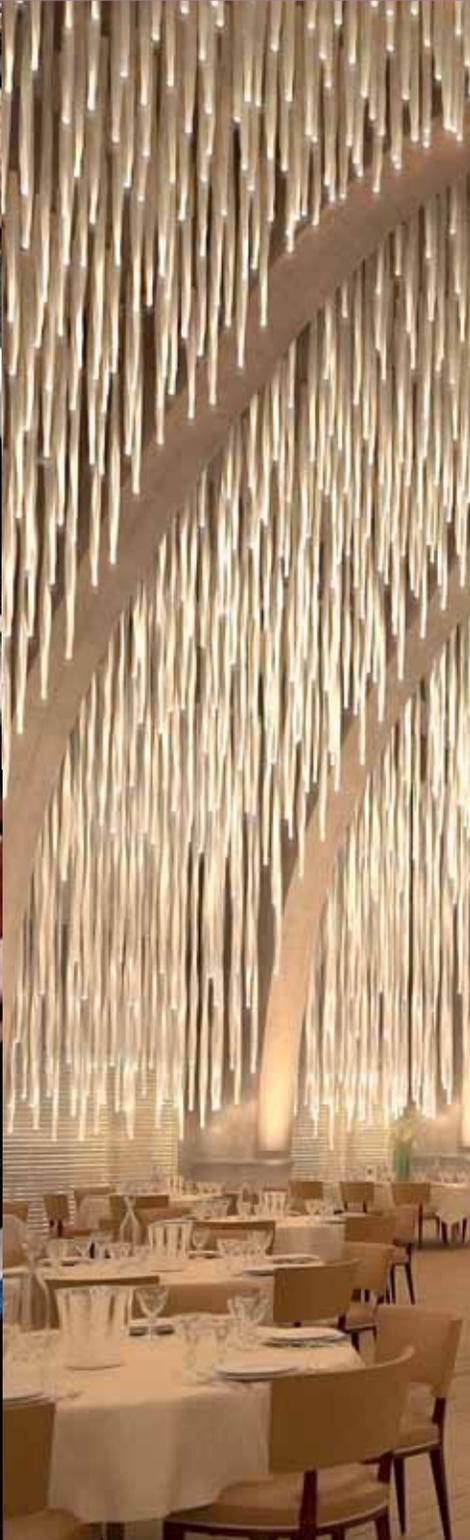
Be Inspired at The South Beach

Every detail in the 654 rooms and suites Luxury & Lifestyle Hotel of Design is brilliantly curated and meticulously crafted by renowned French designer, Philippe Starck and creative individuals from around the world, ensuring only the finest of the experiences.

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Destination Middle East

In pursuit of family visitors

Hotels, theme parks and other tourism hardware are mushrooming in Dubai, which is positioning itself as an ideal destination for family travel, reports **Feizal Samath**

There is a building fever across Dubai. Cars on spacious high-ways inevitably whizz past construction sites of upcoming malls, hotels or attractions, evident of the huge infrastructure development aimed at creating a showpiece city.

In fact, Dubai is trying to position itself as the “ultimate family destination in the world”, thus it is pulling out all the stops to develop its tourism hardware towards its visitor arrival target of 20 million in 2020, doubled from 10 million in 2010.

Supporting this ambitious pursuit are 15,000 to 20,000 new rooms in the pipeline, many in the mid-range category and due to be ready by 2015-2016.

“Five-star hotels don’t appeal to couples while families would rather spend more money on shopping or entertainment than on a hotel room. Hence we know there will continue to be growth in the three- to four-star segment,” said Issam Kazim, CEO, Dubai Corporation of Tourism & Commerce Marketing (DCTCM).

Highlighting Dubai’s strengths in the family tourism segment, Kazim cited the results of a family travel study released by YouGov, the UK’s Internet-based market research firm, at Arabian Travel Market 2015. According to the study, 64 per cent of the 2,000-plus Middle East and North Africa-based survey respondents had travelled with their children in the past year. Families also take an average of two trips per year, and those with younger children (0-12 years old) tend to travel more often than those with 13 to 18-year-olds.

But Dubai is looking at the entire spectrum of family travel. Kazim told the *Daily*: “We are talking about different types of families coming to Dubai – couples and honeymooners, couples with kids, families with grandparents etc.”



Dubai Aquarium & Underwater Zoo in The Dubai Mall draws visitors of all ages

To lure these visitors, three upcoming theme parks await – Legoland Dubai, Bollywood Parks Dubai and Motiongate Dubai. They are located at the same site between Dubai Airport and Abu Dhabi Airport, with Phase 1 opening planned for October 2016. Alongside this mega entertainment site will be the Marriott-managed four-star Lapita hotel with 503 keys. Riverland, a posh retail, dining and entertainment walkway can also be expected in the vicinity.

Also opening in 2015-2016 is the IMG Worlds of Adventure, expected to be the world’s largest indoor theme park, which will offer four zones – Marvel, Lost Valley – Dinosaur Adventure and Cartoon Network.

Meanwhile, Dubai’s cruise industry has also contributed to tourism growth following the opening of the emirate’s third cruise terminal. This year, 425,000 cruise passengers are expected, a 30 per cent in-

crease over the previous year, according to DCTCM.

In terms of air connectivity, the emirate boasts two international airports, which connect hundreds of destinations across six continents. It is planning to allow multiple-entry visas, especially for Asians seeking to make several visits.

Amorntheep Bhatia, managing director of Bangkok-based Orient Travels, said the multiple-entry visas would definitely encourage more visits.

Shujaat Yyar, deputy general manager at the Le Meridien Dubai Hotel and Conference Centre, noted that Dubai’s vision to welcome 20 million visitors by 2020 is significantly accelerating the infrastructural development of the city.

“The number of flights to and from Asia, the extensive choice and quality of hotels, event venues, indoor and outdoor incentive activities as well as the reassur-

Viewpoints

What needs to be done to attract more family travellers?

Justin Jacob, managing director, Connect World Tours, Dubai

Blessed with beaches, wonderful hotels, year-round activities, dining and shopping options, Dubai has everything an individual or family traveller would like to indulge in. Having said that, perhaps hotels and airlines could offer reasonable rates to support the growth of the industry.

T L S Iyer, general manager, SNTTA Emir Tours, Dubai

We need to see an enhanced collaboration within the tourism sector to offer family-oriented packages. Hotels need to entice families with an unbeatable offer that makes them choose the destination during the summer holidays. Special family fares would be helpful as well, while a special family visa at a reasonable cost should also attract those needing a visa to travel to Dubai.



ing fact that Dubai is virtually crime-free, make this emirate a preferred choice for Asian travellers,” Yyar commented.

As part of its strategy towards achieving the 2020 arrivals target, the city also strives to treat today’s business visitor as tomorrow’s leisure tourist.

“To achieve that goal, we need strong branding and marketing, which are in the works, while infrastructure is already in place,” opined Steen Jakobsen, director for Dubai Business Events, the city’s official convention bureau.

WHAT’S NEW

1 Al Maktoum International Airport

Dubai Airports and Emirates are working in tandem to create the world’s largest and most advanced airport for handling more than 200 million passengers annually by 2030.

The US\$32 billion expansion is at the Al Maktoum International Airport, the city’s second international airport which opened for civilian traffic in 2013, and will be undertaken in two phases, with the first phase expected to be ready by mid-2020. It is expected to be able to handle up to 100 A380 aircraft at any one time.

The UAE is hosting the Expo in 2020, which is expected to attract 20 million visitors from the across the world during the six months of the event.

2 Taj Dubai

India-based Taj Group has opened its second property in the UAE – Taj Dubai.

Located in downtown Dubai, the hotel features 296 rooms, including Taj Club Rooms, 16 Junior Suites and 15 Luxury Suites with views of the Burj Khalifa and the Dubai Mall. The hotel’s luxury suites include the Maharaja Suite, inspired by

palaces in Rajasthan.

F&B options include the Peruvian restaurant Tesoro; al fresco restaurant Kui’s; gastro-pub The Eloquent Elephant; all-day dining restaurant Byzantium Lounge; and Indian restaurant Bombay Brasserie.

The hotel’s Jiva Spa offers signature treatments inspired by traditional Indian therapies.

3 Time Royal Hotel

Dubai’s focus on medical tourism has led to the launch of an upscale hotel targeting this niche segment.

Time Hotels, which manages seven midscale and budget hotels in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah, said it would open its first five-star property close to Dubai Health Care City (DHCC) by 2016.

Located near Wafi Mall on Sheikh Rashid Road, the 277-room Time Royal Hotel will have two rooms on each floor accessible to guests with disabilities, besides wheelchair-friendly access to public areas.

4 Mall of the World

Phase 1 of the Mall of the World, which will become the world’s largest shopping

mall, will be completed by 2020 in time for the Expo 2020.

The climate-controlled development is located along Sheikh Zayed Road and will include the world’s largest mall and the world’s biggest indoor theme park. It will also feature cultural theatres and wellness resorts, and is expected to host 180 million visitors annually when completed.

5 InterContinental Dubai Marina

InterContinental Hotels Group last

month opened the InterContinental Dubai Marina, a 132-guestroom luxury hotel with 196 fully serviced InterContinental Residential Suites.

Located in the centre of one of Dubai’s most popular and vibrant neighbourhoods, the hotel is a showcase of cutting-edge design and décor, with bespoke modern art, design and sculptures throughout. Adding to the list are stunning views of the marina and nine F&B concepts.



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Best Local Hotel Chain

Special feature

Riding out the yuan storm

China's sudden currency devaluation recently rattled stock and financial markets worldwide, but the Asian travel sector seems to be weathering the economic turbulence well – at least for the time being. By **S Puvaneswary**, **Paige Lee Pei Qi**, **Julian Ryall**, **Michael Mackey**, **Prudence Lui** and **Feizal Samath**

When China sneezes, the world catches a cold. And when China's series of surprise yuan devaluations comes on top of a steep slowdown in the world's second-largest economy, destinations from South Korea to Singapore are bracing for the potential fallout as China has become an important source of growth in recent years.

A weaker yuan has caused ripples in the Maldives, a popular destination for Chinese travellers and where China represents the largest inbound market. An immediate impact was felt in July when arrivals from China dropped four per cent to 41,527, which the trade attributes to the yuan devaluation and stock market crash.

However, Hussain Lirar, Maldives deputy minister of tourism, is optimistic that a recovery from the Chinese market will be seen in the coming months. “(There’s) no cause for alarm,” he opined.

Among the most vulnerable are attractions like Ocean Park Hong Kong, which is highly dependent on the mainland China market.

Said executive director of sales and marketing, Vivian Lee: “The renminbi’s slight depreciation may dampen travel sentiment for (Chinese) consumers and could modestly reduce the spending power of mainland visitors.”

The Chinese are still coming

Despite the market reaction, the potential currency effects are mixed for the travel industry. The regional trade played down the immediate impacts of the renminbi woes on tourism, although there are concerns about the after-effects in the months ahead.

Ng Hi-on, director of CTS International Science-Technology & Culture Exchange in Hong Kong, said: “The two per cent depreciation poses no significant effect unless it devaluates by double digits. In fact, we (consultants) and hotels settle bills in Hong Kong dollars so there is no negative impact to us so far.”

The Langham Hong Kong’s director of sales and marketing, David Fung, said: “We have not noticed any direct booking impact on our business. It’s too early to say what will happen.”

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) believes the renminbi devaluation will have an “insignificant impact” on Chinese tourist arrivals to Thailand, according to an official *TTG Asia* spoke to.

Thailand has seen good growth from China to date, with Chinese arrivals surging 112 per cent year-on-year to reach 4.7 million from January to July 2015, based on preliminary figures from TAT.

Chinese visitors are also spending more as TAT reported tourism revenue of 229 billion baht (US\$6.3 billion) so far, a growth of 139 per cent from the same period in 2014.

The devalued yuan has “not yet affected outbound travel (from China)”, said Patrick Bassett, COO for Accor, who added that the company is expecting “double-digit growth” in the Chinese market to



The drop in yuan is insignificant compared with the drop in ringgit over the last year. The Chinese still enjoy better value in Malaysia.

Kem Siew

Vice president sales & marketing, Swiss-Garden International Hotels, Resorts & Inns

Thailand for the next decade.

Likewise, South Korea and Japan will retain their appeal for the increasingly salaried Chinese. Chinese make up 50 per cent of the customers at Accor’s ibis properties in Seoul, where shopping and cheap plastic surgery are top attractions, while Japan has become even more accessible following a 40 per cent depreciation of the yen, Bassett added.

“At the moment, we are not too worried,” JTB Corp spokesman Motohisa Tachikawa told *TTG Asia*, adding that some 2.8 million Chinese visited Japan in the January-to-July period, up from 1.3 million in the same period last year.

“That increase has been very large and very fast, so even if numbers do fall back, that is still a large number of Chinese coming to Japan,” he said. “Even if the numbers fall back later in the year, we expect to see stable growth in the number of inbound travellers from China over the longer-term future.”

For the coming months, travellers who have already booked their holidays are unlikely to cancel now, but the real test

of Chinese consumers’ sentiment might come at Chinese New Year when more Chinese may opt to stay at home rather than travel overseas, Tachikawa remarked.

Maho Ito, a spokeswoman for All Nippon Airways, agreed: “At this point, we do not see any effect on our business. Chinese consumers are still very keen to come to Japan and they enjoy shopping here; we expect that to continue.”

Alicia Seah, director of marketing communications at Dynasty Travel Singapore, added: “If the lower yuan exchange rate continues in the next two to three months, it will result in travel (consultants) having to make adjustments to their rates to remain competitive and attractive to the China markets.”

More bang for yuan for some

Buyers from China at the recent PATA Travel Mart 2015 in Bengaluru said their customers are still booking travel packages in earnest despite the weak yuan.

Shanghai-based outbound specialist, Alex Zhang, regional manager for Thailand and South Asia department at Spring

Tour, said: “My company has seen a year-on-year increase in bookings to popular destinations such as Thailand, India and Sri Lanka. These destinations are inexpensive for the Chinese.”

Also observing an uptick in Chinese demand for Sri Lanka is Romeo Luo, FIT specialist with Spring Airlines Chongqing business office & Chongqing International Travel Service.

“The demand is up, especially from honeymooners who are drawn to beach resorts (which Sri Lanka has aplenty),” Luo said.

And thanks to the yuan’s relative strength against the ringgit, which has slumped significantly against the US dollar by nearly 30 per cent in the past few months, Chinese inbound growth still looks robust for Malaysia for the time being.

Kem Siew, vice president sales & marketing, Swiss-Garden International Hotels, Resorts & Inns, said: “The drop in yuan is insignificant compared with the drop in ringgit over the last year. The Chinese still enjoy better value in Malaysia.”

According to Mint Leong, managing director of Sunflower Holidays and secretary-general of the Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association, ground arrangement costs have reduced by six to 10 per cent from a year ago due to currency conversions for the Chinese inbound market.

“With the lower ringgit, we’ve seen a definite increase in shopping especially for branded clothes, watches and bags. While imported goods may cost more because of the devalued ringgit, it is still a good buy as many items are duty-free in Malaysia.”

From October 1, the Malaysian government will grant temporary social passes of 15 days for group sizes of at least 20 people from China travelling with tour operators registered with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

“However, this move was too late to capitalise on the Chinese Golden Week Holiday (which started on October 1),” said Leong.

A boost in inbound travel?

Conversely, a weaker yuan has worked in favour for outbound tour operators like Dynasty Travel in Singapore, which saw a 20 per cent spike in enquiries and bookings to China for travel during the 4Q2015 period, said Seah.

“China is a very popular and economically priced destination, thus with (the) lower yuan, Singaporeans being a travel-savvy lot, will latch on especially quickly to currency fluctuations to save on shopping and dining,” she commented.

“If the low exchange rate continues, this will definitely push forward some bookings for 4Q2015 and the upward trend will continue to surge with greater demand from visitors to China.”

Ocean Park’s Vivian Lee concurred: “The weaker renminbi may increase China’s appeal as a travel destination, thereby benefiting Hong Kong as a stopover en route to China.”

Special feature

Remedies for agencies

The recent spate of abrupt travel agency closures in Singapore has affected many travellers and given the industry a bad name. Paige Lee Pei Qi examines why these businesses fail and what should be done to address the root of the problem



As more travellers turn to the Internet to plan their own trips and the proliferation of OTAs continue to pose a strong threat, the heat has proven too much for a growing number of players in the traditional travel agency sector.

Managing the bottom line of businesses while keeping pace with the dynamism of rapidly evolving customer needs is a constant challenge in a mature travel market like Singapore, opined Jane Chang, head of marketing communications, Chan Brothers Travel.

Chang said: “We are constantly at the mercy of health epidemics, natural calamities and political unrest, among a whole host of possible travel disruptions that can wipe out months of sales collection.”

CTC vice president of marketing and PR, Sylvia Tan, commented: “While there is still demand for traditional travel agencies from the more mature age group, there is a lot of competition today with more choices and options available for travellers via different distribution platforms, with travel offerings directly from suppliers to consumers.”

A total of 86 travel agencies have shuttered in the first five months of 2015 according to the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), and this number looks set to exceed the 114 that ceased operations last year.

There are currently 1,195 travel agencies in operation in Singapore as of end-May this year.

Major player Asia-Euro Holidays surprised the trade and consumers alike with its sudden closure in May, leaving hundreds of customers in the lurch.

Likewise, Five Stars Tours, another well-known travel agency, went bankrupt in January last year and affected thousands of travellers.

NATAS spokesman Gregory Tan attribute high operation costs, a sluggish economic outlook and poor business planning or management as some of the factors that cause agencies to fold up.

Michael Chiam, senior tourism lecturer at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, agreed: “Agencies who are prone to failure include those small agencies with limited capital and those who compete purely based on price. Competition is becoming more intense

and that may lead to price cutting and low margins for the agencies.”

These abrupt closures have resulted in industry experts rallying for tighter regulations on travel consultancies to prevent more of such shutdowns that cast the industry in poor light.

According to STB’s director, travel agents and tourist guides, Ong Ling Lee, all travel consultants operating in Singapore are licensed by the board under the Travel Agent (TA) Act & related regulations.

“The intent of the legislation is to weed out fly-by-night TAs and provide safeguards for the public against malpractices,” explained Ong.

“When applying for, renewing their licences or at all times during their operation, TAs have to fulfil certain requirements, such as maintaining a minimum of S\$100,000 (US\$74,000) in paid-up capital and net worth, or minimally S\$100,000 cash for sole proprietors or partnerships.”

The barrier to entry is not enough though, remarked Alicia Seah, director of marketing communications at Dynasty

Travel. She said: “We can increase the paid-up capital to at least S\$500,000 or even up to \$1 million so that the owners will be more committed and not set up a “pop-up” store.

“This will show that these TAs are making a serious commitment and they have the capacity to last in the industry.”

Seah added that STB, in addition to its annual audits of TA licensees, should perform stringent checks on the background and qualifications of owners or directors before issuance of the TA licence.

Likewise, Chan Brother Travel’s Chang proposed a minimum capital amount of S\$1 million as well as stricter financial audits to “flush out those without financial strength or with financial woes to continue their businesses”.

Ngee Ann Polytechnic’s Chiam suggested for STB to also assess applicants based on their prior experience and business model – on top of the capital amount – before issuing them with a TA licence, although he added that it is not STB’s duty to monitor the travel agencies’ operational cash flow to ensure that they will not go into the red.

To protect travellers in the meantime, all licensed travel consultants in Singapore must now ask outbound leisure customers if they would like to purchase travel insurance covering travel consultant insolvency.

This new licensing condition, which was introduced in July this year, requires travel consultants to offer their customers travel insurance against the company’s insolvency and to record their customers’ final decision.

It is applicable on a per person basis whenever a consumer makes a deposit or payment of S\$500 or above, or purchases a travel package costing S\$1,000 or more.

According to STB, the new rule “serves to educate consumers of the measures they can take to protect their interests when they make travel bookings”, and was launched following STB’s discussions with the trade assessing consumer protection measures over the past year.

STB, assistant chief executive, Yap Chin Siang, said: “With the implementation of the new licensing condition, consumers will now be better informed on steps that they can take to protect themselves against unforeseen circumstances including travel consultant insolvency.”

Yap said STB will assist industry stakeholders with implementation of the new condition and will “layer on with continued consumer education efforts”.

However, Dynasty Travel’s Seah said the insurance does not provide 100 per cent coverage hence more has to be done to address the “root of the problem” and the financial health of travel consultants.

In response to whether new measures will be rolled out to protect outbound travellers, STB’s Ong said: “As the tourism landscape is constantly evolving, STB keeps a close watch on industry trends and developments. We are already engaging our industry stakeholders on this and will share more details when ready.”

Destination China

Mapping a new Silk Road

China is shining the spotlight on the ancient trade route with fresh tourism strategies. *Caroline Boey* reports



China has begun a campaign this year to attract more visitors to the legendary Silk Road

Photo: /2396.com

Since Chinese president Xi Jinping laid out plans to establish the Silk Road Economic Belt as part of China's *One Belt, One Road* strategy in 2013 and the Chinese government last year set up a US\$40 billion Silk Road fund to improve infrastructure, the region has received considerable attention.

The China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) has earmarked this year *Beautiful China, 2015 – Year of Silk Road Tourism* and mounted a three-year tour-

ism cooperation and development strategy. The NTO led a delegation of tourism departments and companies from 13 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities to participate in trade and consumer activities in cities overseas including Berlin, Moscow and Taipei, before culminating in a grand launch at Expo Milano 2015 where China was the biggest exhibitor.

He Wei, director, Gansu Provincial Tourism Bureau, said the CNTA's Silk Road initiative presented "rare opportunities"

for local tourism organisations along the Silk Road to boost their profile and develop inbound tourism.

Steven Wang, director of sales and marketing, The Westin Xian, agreed that UNWTO's efforts to promote Silk Road tourism have likewise generated a lot of buzz for the region on the international arena.

"Tourism will develop because of the government's support and because the Chinese are now willing to spend money on travel. So far, the most popular

route is Xi'an-Gansu-Xinjiang and most travellers are from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong," he said.

Wang also remarked that Gansu and Xinjiang still have to improve service quality and add high-end international hotels, while local tourism bureaus need to invest money to promote the Silk Road to targeted markets.

Sharing similar sentiments, Linda Wang, managing director of Destination Asia (China), said the popularity of Silk Road tours have led to many products on the shelf although the infrastructure in some places is "not ready" especially for high-end travellers.

The unrest in Xinjiang, for example, limits tours from Beijing to Xi'an to as far as Jiayuguan, the first pass at the western end of the Great Wall of China in Gansu province, she added.

Meanwhile, the launch of high-speed trains to the region is giving DMCs like Asian Trails China the impetus to market Silk Road programmes more aggressively.

Said the company's managing director, Kris Van Goethem: "European travellers can fly direct to Xi'an with Finnair from key cities in Europe via Helsinki and travel on the high-speed train during the day to visit karst formations in Zhangye, the Great Wall near Dunhuang, the Mogao Caves,

view the Hexi Corridor between snow peaks and the Gobi, go to the lost cities near Turfan and make an extension to Kashgar to complete the experience.

"We are promoting travel on the high-speed trains all over the world and are seeing quite a bit of interest this year," he added.

Furthermore, the similarity of Silk Road food to Middle Eastern cuisine – which Asian Trails China's main customers from the UK, Italy, Spain and France are more familiar with – as well as the opening of a Radisson Blu in Kashgar in Xinjiang province also boost the region's appeal, Van Goethem shared.

On the other hand, dining could pose a challenge for travellers who do not eat lamb or beef or are vegetarians, observed Hope Xu, deputy general manager, Xi'an Daymaker MICE Company.

"It is especially challenging catering to vegetarians from India outside of five-star hotels," he said. "In the more remote areas, the quality of the produce may not be up to international standard and the solution for vegetarians from India is to bring in their own cooks.

"Xi'an has the best infrastructure in terms of good hotels, F&B and entertainment. The farther away you go, adventure and culture have to be the focus," Xu added.

VIEWPOINTS

What initiatives are helping the development of Silk Road tourism?



Steven Wang, director of sales and marketing, The Westin Xi'an

The *One Belt and One Road* strategy of China's central government is definitely raising the profile of Silk Road

tourism and it has the potential to become a tourism product that can be positively promoted to the international tourism market.



Kris Van Goethem, managing director, Asian Trails China

The launch of a high-speed train service between Lanzhou and Urumqi in January is a breakthrough especially for

the European market and we are now offering 11- and 15-day itineraries with daytime travel on high-speed trains. Travel from Lanzhou to Urumqi is now in less than 12 hours, compared with 24 hours in the past.

WHAT'S NEW

1 Asian Trails China's Silk Road tour

Asian Trails China is offering a five-day trip from Xining in Qinghai to Dunhuang in Gansu.

The route follows a southern branch of the Silk Road north of the majestic Qilian mountains to descend upon the Hexi Corridor, a narrow stretch of fertile land between mountain and desert.

Travellers will be taken to Buddhist caves, a hanging monastery, the ancient Great Wall in the desert and ruins of lost oasis strongholds.

Depending on the group size, the ground handling package price per person on a twin-sharing basis ranges from RMB7,350 (US\$1,148) to RMB9,840 with a single supplement of RMB1,295. Prices are valid from November 2015 to end-October 2016.

2 China Southern Airlines

The airline commenced direct flights between Urumqi in Xinjiang to St Petersburg in July. Operated on a Boeing 757 with 380 seats, the service is available on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. This new service makes Urumqi China's second-biggest hub for flights to and from Russia, second only to Beijing.



Mandarin Oriental, Sanya

3 Forbidden City

To protect the Beijing icon, the Forbidden City – also known as the Palace Museum – has introduced a daily limit of 80,000 people. During the peak summer season, early warnings will be issued to visitors when the number exceeds 64,000.

When off-season begins in November, the attraction will offer visitors who book tickets online a 50 per cent discount, and all travel agencies are now required to book tickets online.

4 Mandarin Oriental, Sanya

From now until December 31, 2015, guests staying in the Ocean Breeze Pavilions, Ocean Front Pavilions with Plunge Pool, suites, villas or who book the Best Available Rate at Mandarin Oriental, Sanya can test-drive the limited-edition Mini Inspired By Goodwood.

Only 1,000 such cars have been produced in collaboration with Rolls-Royce Motor Cars.

Destination Macau

Beyond the glitz and glamour

The city aims to shed its gaming skin and position itself more as a leisure destination, reports Prudence Lui



Macau's skyline is constantly changing thanks to new hotel openings

extend beyond 2016/17 as Lisboa Palace, Palazzo Versace Macau, The Parisian Macao, the Karl Lagerfeld hotel, Wynn Palace and MGM Cotai are now under construction.

Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO), director, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, said: "The MGTO, along with the city tourism stakeholders, have been working to diversify both the tourism products and source markets to the city so that visitors from around the world have more reasons to come and stay longer."

"Our strategy all along has been to leverage the city's well-known leisure and entertainment industry to develop related areas, such as reinforcing our calendar of events and festivals, organising MICE events and world-class shows, while enhancing elements such as shopping and dining."

Galaxy Macau's Phase 2 has seen the addition of more non-gaming elements. For instance, the expanded Grand Resort Deck features the Skytop Aquatic Adventure River Ride with the world's longest skytop aquatic adventure river ride at 575m. Also, young ones can be kept entertained at the world's largest JW Kids Club at JW Marriott Macau with its abundance of interactive activities.

When Studio City opens in 3Q2015, the US\$3.2 billion destination will boast

attractions such as the Golden Reel, Asia's highest Ferris wheel; a Warner Bros-themed family entertainment centre; the Batman Dark Flight themed ride; a 5,000-seat multipurpose live performance arena; a live magic venue; as well as 1,600 hotel rooms, a vast array of F&B outlets and 32,500m² of retail space.

MGM Cotai, set for a 2016 opening, will feature a convertible theatre capable of accommodating a variety of shows, and restaurants with American and Peruvian-Japanese cuisines.

Macau's new offerings have so far found favour with travel consultants.

EGL Tours (Macau), general manager, Sabina Long, noting that Galaxy Macau's pool has drawn many South-east Asian families this summer, said: "If Macau wants to vie for more traffic, it needs newer elements like playgrounds, theme parks, circus and magic shows to appeal to kids."

China Travel Service (Macau), travel department sales and marketing manager, Pun Cheng-man, also observed strong South-east Asian traffic this summer. He commented: "Macau's small size limits its offerings but hopefully the current reclamation projects will generate more land supply in the long run to feed future growth."

Macau is currently undergoing a rejuvenation drive, with a spate of new hotels and integrated resorts coming online within these few years.

Following the lavish opening of the Galaxy Phase 2 development and Broadway Macau in May, upcoming debuts this year include Studio City, St Regis Macao and Crowne Plaza Macau. The list would

VIEWPOINTS

How successful is Macau's shift from a gaming mecca to a leisure destination?



Irene Wong, vice-president of sales, public and community relations, MGM Macau

All gaming operators have been coming up with a variety of programmes and attractions. The Macau Government Tourist Office has been creating tours that highlight UNESCO Heritage sites and the city's Chinese-Portuguese culture. At MGM Macau, we debuted Joana Vasconcelos' art installation, and that is just one of many experiences we've been bringing in to help position

Macau as a leisure destination.



Bruno Simoes, CEO, smallWORLD Experience

The diversification is moving too slowly. The Macau government should push gaming operators to further implement the projects promised in the gaming concessions. They also need to move faster with the infrastructure. The maritime terminal in Taipa/Cotai has been under construction for more than 10 years!

The airport is turning 20 years old next year, but has never upgraded although visitor numbers have boomed. Also, the light railway has no budget and no finish date!

WHAT'S NEW

1 Crowne Plaza Macau

The 208-room Crowne Plaza Macau is scheduled to open in late 2015 and boasts a non-gaming hotel. Situated in a brand-new complex near Border Gate, it'll be equipped with a Chinese restaurant, café and lounge bar.

2 Pak Loh Chiu Chow Restaurant

Established in 1967, Hong Kong-based Pak Loh Chiu Chow Restaurant has opened a new branch at Galaxy Macau where it continues to wow diners with its authentic high-end Teochew cuisine. One of its signature dishes, braised goose, is prepared with extra old master stock delivered from the main outlet in Hong Kong.

3 ESPA in The Ritz-Carlton Macau

In May 2015, ESPA debuted in The Ritz-Carlton Macau and is designed with

traditional Chinese and Portuguese elements. Men and women have identically-designed but separate pools, steam rooms, saunas, ice fountains, experience showers, reflexology lounges and changing areas. Signature therapeutic offerings included Pearl River Chi, Jade Reviver, Reflex Meridian Massage and Macau Body Smoother Ritual.

4 Step Out, Experience Macau's Communities

Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO) has eight walking tour routes themed *Step Out, Experience Macau's Communities*, covering different areas such as Macau Peninsula, Taipa and Coloane. These join the hop-on, hop-off highlight bus tour that MGTO and a local travel agency had rolled out in August. The bus tour offers three routes that con-



ESPA in Ritz-Carlton Macau

nect various points across the eight walking tour routes. Visitors can easily visit different neighbourhoods and attractions in a more convenient way.

5 Inn Hotel Macau

The 287-key Inn Hotel Macau – formerly the Best Western Hotel Taipa Macau –

has opened following an extensive refurbishment. Owned by Hong Kong-listed Emperor Hotels Group now, the hotel is positioned as a boutique hotel. Rooms are equipped with a flat-screen television, mini fridge, central air conditioning, coffee and tea service, IDD phone service and complimentary Wi-Fi.

HOT

HAPPENINGS!

TTG ASIA MEDIA | BOOTH R32

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BE A CELEBRITY



21 - 23 October

10:00am - 5:00pm

Have your photo taken at TTG Cyber Cafe and

Stand A Chance To Be Featured In:

- **The Official ITB Asia 2015 Show Daily**
- TTG Asia November Issue (PRINT & DIGITAL)
- www.ttgasia.com
- TTG Asia Facebook Page

PLUS, you get to bring home a copy of your photo!



LATE NIGHT FUNCTIONS

Bloom in the Park

Co-Hosted with Park Hotel Group

21 October, Wednesday

9:00pm - 11:30pm

Park Hotel Alexandra

AQUA LUNA, 7th Floor, 323 Alexandra Road

One way transportation provided

Meeting Point: MBS Coach Terminal (Basement 1)

Pick Up Timings: 8:45pm, 9:00pm and 9:15pm

Entry is strictly by invitation card*

Limited availability. Get yours at TTG Cyber Cafe!

HAPPY HOUR



21 & 22 October

3.30pm - 4.30pm

Keep Calm and Have A Drink on Us!

Yes Exhibitors, You're welcomed too!

Let our partner, DrinkDings impress you with their special concoctions.

The South Beach Showcase

An Official ITB Asia Late Night Function

Co-Hosted with The South Beach

22 October, Thursday

9:30pm - 12:00am

The South Beach

Grand Ballroom, 30 Beach Rd, 1897763

(Access via Nicoll Highway)

Open to all ITB Asia 2015 delegates

Our Partners:



Intelligence

Asia-Pacific inbound visitor arrivals 2014

By Strategic Intelligence Centre, PATA

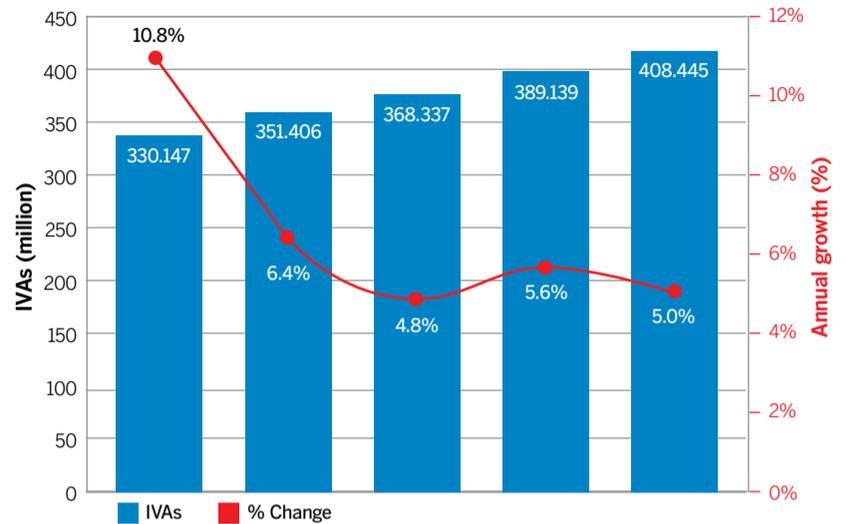
Aggregate results for the Asia-Pacific* destinations, for which data was available at the time of preparing this article, indicate international visitor arrivals (IVAs) growth of 5.9% in 2014 (year-on-year) and an AAGR of 5.4% per annum between 2010 and 2014 (adjusted for Guam and Hawaii). This translates into a gain of almost 30.6 million additional IVAs over 2013 and well more than 103 million since 2010.

*44 destinations in total were covered, with two of those – Guam and Hawaii – having their arrival counts recorded both at the individual destination level and within the count for the US. As such, in terms of total Asia-Pacific arrivals, these data are adjusted to avoid double counting, which reduces the Asia-Pacific destination count to 42. At the subregional level however, there are 42 individual destinations.

ASIA

Foreign arrivals into Asia rebounded strongly following the global financial crisis and have now settled into a more moderate – but still strong – average growth rate of around 5% to 6%.

IVAs to Asia, 2010 to 2014



South Asia was the strongest growing subregion within Asia for the year with an annual rate higher than 8%, but from a relatively smaller inbound volume base. North-east Asia expanded by more than 6% (year-on-year), and with its large starting inbound volume base, generated an additional 15 million foreign arrivals into the subregion over that of 2013.

West Asia also had a strong 2014, growing by 5%. Only South-east Asia, which up until 2014 had been expanding at strong and often double-digit growth rates, fell to a mediocre 1.5% gain in 2014.

Much of this was driven by overall declines from just three source markets – China, Malaysia and Russia. Together, and despite some increases into individual destinations in the subregion, these three origin markets nevertheless registered a drop of almost three-quarters of a million arrivals into South-east Asia in 2014 (year-on-year).

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Revel and party as we heighten your senses in our brand new Hotel of Design. Featuring the stunning designs of Philippe Starck and acclaimed artists from around the world, join us for an evening under the Forest of Lights in The South Beach's Ballroom.

DATE: 22 OCTOBER 2015 (THURSDAY)

VENUE: BALLROOM

THE SOUTH BEACH

(ACCESS VIA NICOLL HIGHWAY)

TIME: 9.30PM - 12.00AM

Dress Code: Smart Casual

Entry is strictly by invitation or delegate badge

CO-HOSTED BY

THE
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Intelligence

Overall, the decreases from various source markets were such that they collectively pulled the South-east Asia and hence Asia growth average down to just 5% for the year.

IVAs to Asia by destination subregion, 2014

Destination	IVAs (million)	Annual change (2014/13)		Period change (2010 to 14)	
		Per cent (%)	Volume (million)	AAGR (%)	Volume (million)
North-east Asia	258.596	6.2	15.133	4.4	40.624
South Asia	10.839	8.4	0.840	8.9	3.142
South-east Asia	99.246	1.5	1.441	8.0	26.202
West Asia	39.765	5.0	1.893	6.1	8.329
Total Asia	408.445	5.0	19.306	5.5	78.298

Even so, the change in the relative market share positions of each of the subregions has not been substantially altered over the last five years, with South-east Asia still gaining ground somewhat at the expense of North-east Asia.



CHINA

IVAs from Mainland China into Asia-Pacific destinations have continued to climb over the last half decade (at least), and by the end of 2014, reached close to 100 million cumulative arrivals.

The bulk of these arrivals are intra-regional, however South-east Asia also saw in excess of 12 million arrivals from this market in 2014 (slightly down year-on-year), while North America received more than 2.6 million and Oceania over one million.

With the exception of South-east Asia, all other subregions saw double-digit annual growth from China ranging from 12% to 64%. Also, over the longer term, the majority of growth rates have been in the strong double-digit range over the period 2010 to 2014.

Several individual destinations saw a doubling of arrivals from China in 2014, with Palau in particular seeing a massive jump in arrivals from just under 9,500 in 2013 to close to 39,400 in 2014.

The largest volume increases over the last 12 months have however all been intra-regional, with the Greater China flows absorbing most of that. Of the 10 Asia-Pacific destinations that receive in excess of one million arrivals from China annually, five are in North-east Asia, four are in South-east Asia and the US represents North America.

IVAs from China into Asia-Pacific, by annual growth (% & volume), 2014/13

Destination	IVAs 2014, count	Growth 2014/13, %	Destination	IVAs 2014, million	Volume change 2014/13, million
Palau	39,383	317.6	Hong Kong	47,248	6.502
Sri Lanka	128,166	136.1	Macau	21,252	2.620
Niue	16	100.0	South Korea	6,127	1.800
French Polynesia	3,268	74.2	Taiwan	3,983	1.108
Laos	422,440	72.4	Japan	2,384	0.993



INDIA

Indian arrivals were growing at extremely strong rates at the beginning of the last five-year cycle, but that has now moderated to a still strong, but much lesser annual rate of growth. This source market now generates in excess of 6.7 million arrivals annually into the Asia-Pacific region.

Surprisingly, intra-regional flows are quite limited when compared with other destination subregions, especially in North America, South-east and North-east Asia. Those three subregions captured 87% of all arrivals from India into Asia-Pacific in 2014; South Asia on the other hand, only managed to capture a 6% share of those IVAs in 2014, despite a very healthy AAGR of 12.5% between 2010 and 2014.

The strongest annual growth was into Central America, with a number of other subregional destinations seeing growth at double-digit rates. Overall, the annual and AAGR rates are above the world average for arrivals of international tourists.

A number of individual destinations reported very strong growth rates for the year, including Japan, which also saw an increase of 34,000 arrivals in 2014 alone. Interestingly enough, Japan initiated multiple entry visas for Indian nationals in early July 2014, so the impact of that policy change will be one to watch with this origin-destination pair.

Based on the annual growth volumes for 2014, the US will soon receive more than one million arrivals from India.

IVAs from India into Asia-Pacific, by annual growth (% & volume), 2014/13

Destination	IVAs 2014, count	Growth 2014/13, %	Destination	IVAs 2014, million	Volume change 2014/13, million
Fiji	3,047	62.9	Malaysia	0.770	0.119
Myanmar	32,306	53.5	US	0.962	0.103
Japan	111,295	43.1	Hong Kong	0.516	0.081
Taiwan	30,085	29.0	Sri Lanka	0.243	0.034
Mexico	42,682	26.1	Japan	0.111	0.034



JAPAN

Outbound international travel from Japan has been softening over the past two years. After recording an increase of 8.8% in 2012, outbound travel then contracted by 5.5% in 2013 and 3.3% in 2014 and the arrivals of Japanese travellers into Asia-Pacific destinations clearly reflects this same pattern.

However, this generalised decline is not uniform across the subregions, with Oceania, Central America, South Asia and Melanesia all reporting aggregate gains in 2014. Unfortunately, these destinations capture only a very small share of the Japanese travellers so their gains have been easily lost in the deluge of decreases into some of the other subregions.

The net change for Asia-Pacific in 2014 was a decrease of 3.5%, which translates into a net loss of 730,000 arrivals for the year. Perhaps more worrying is the AAGR which, over the period 2010 to 2014, has remained static with very little growth overall, driven by enormous losses into North-east Asia destinations over that period.

On the positive side, a number of destinations reported strong percentage gains in 2014, but off very small absolute numbers.

Taiwan was perhaps the winner under the 2014 dynamic, gaining an additional 200,000 arrivals from Japan to lift its annual inbound volume from this market to more than 1.6 million.

IVAs from Japan into Asia-Pacific, by annual growth (% & volume), 2014/13

Destination	IVAs 2014, count	Growth 2014/13, %	Destination	IVAs 2014, million	Volume change 2014/13, million
Niue	52	73.3	Taiwan	1.634	0.213
Samoa	629	39.2	Vietnam	0.649	0.045
Sri Lanka	39,136	24.2	Malaysia	0.553	0.040
New Caledonia	19,053	21.6	Canada	0.258	0.034
Myanmar	83,434	21.3	Philippines	0.464	0.030



SOUTH KOREA

South Koreans have shown a remarkable tenacity and desire for international travel, with very strong increases into Asia-Pacific destinations in four of the last five years. As is the case with Japan, the outbound growth rates correlate very strongly with arrivals into Asia-Pacific destinations – Korean departures for example, grew by 37% in 2010, then 1.2% in 2011, 8.8% in 2012, 7.5% in 2013 and 8.3% in 2014.

North-east and South-east Asia destinations collectively capture the majority of the South Korean international travel movements although North America receives more than 1.6 million arrivals from this source market annually.

Very strong percentage growth was reported into Central America and West Asia during 2014. However, it was North-east Asia, South-east Asia and North America that captured most of the additional absolute numbers during the year (88%).

Taiwan, Malaysia and Turkey all had the double advantage of strong inbound growth rates from this source market and a reasonable volume of arrivals to begin with. That is not however, to downplay Bhutan, which is rapidly approaching an annual level of 1,000 arrivals from South Korea each year.

North-east Asia generally, however, picked up the largest individual origin-destination volume increases for the year.

North-east Asia generally, however, picked up the largest individual origin-destination volume increases for the year.

IVAs from South Korea into Asia-Pacific, by annual growth (% & volume), 2014/13

Destination	IVAs 2014, count	Growth (%), 2014/13	Destination	IVAs 2014, million	Volume change 2014/13, million
Taiwan	527,390	50.1	Japan	2.755	0.299
Bhutan	858	44.0	China	4.182	0.213
Malaysia	385,769	40.5	Taiwan	0.527	0.176
Turkey	248,910	33.1	Hong Kong	1.251	0.168
French Polynesia	746	31.3	Malaysia	0.386	0.111



AUSTRALIA

Across the Asia-Pacific region, Australia represents a little less than 2% of total IVAs, a figure that has remained relatively constant, at least for the last five years. While 2010 to 2012 saw a relatively strong increase in arrivals from this market, the last two years have fallen from annual gains of almost one million in 2010 (over 2009) to just 314,000 in 2014 (over 2013).

Around three-quarters of arrivals from Australia into Asia-Pacific destinations are to just three subregions namely South-east Asia, North-east Asia and North America while around 20% of Australian arrivals are intra-regional – to destinations within the Pacific subregion.

IVAs from Australia into Asia-Pacific, by annual growth (% & volume), 2014/13

Destination	IVAs 2014, count	Growth 2014/13, %	Destination	IVAs 2014, million	Volume change 2014/13, million
Laos	44,964	26.9	Indonesia	1.098	0.160
Japan	302,692	23.8	US	1.276	0.071
Taiwan	78,532	19.4	Japan	0.303	0.058
Nepal	21,641	18.5	Malaysia	0.571	0.045
Myanmar	29,175	18.0	New Zealand	1.248	0.030

BOONW in the Park

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FRANCE

Growth in arrivals from France into Asia-Pacific destinations has once again begun to increase after plateauing a little in 2012. Aggregate arrivals are now very close to seven million per annum, although it has taken four years to increase by an additional one million.

North America dominates the distribution of arrivals from France, capturing around 30% of all IVAs from this source market in 2014 with North-east Asia close behind with a 24% share. South Asia saw the strongest annual growth, while North America captured the largest incremental increase in volume.

Over the longer term, the AAGR is consistent with the global growth rate in international tourist arrivals.

Fiji proved to be a popular destination for French visitors in 2014, lifting the annual inbound volume from less than 1,200 in 2013 to over 4,000 in 2014 – an annual growth rate of more than 240%.

The US captured the majority of additional French arrivals into Asia-Pacific during 2014, with Canada also gaining an additional 23,000. The US and Turkey were the only Asia-Pacific destinations to receive more than one million French arrivals in 2014.

IVAs from France into Asia-Pacific, by annual growth (% & volume), 2014/13

Destination	IVAs 2014, count	Growth 2014/13, %	Destination	IVAs 2014, million	Volume change 2014/13, million
Fiji	4,018	244.3	US	1.625	0.120
Sri Lanka	78,883	22.5	Malaysia	0.170	0.025
Malaysia	169,973	17.1	Canada	0.482	0.023
Myanmar	41,453	16.9	Thailand	0.632	0.021
New Zealand	30,608	13.5	Sri Lanka	0.079	0.014

GERMANY

German arrivals now exceed 11 million per annum and despite a rollercoaster growth profile since 2010, have nevertheless added 1.7 million additional arrivals into the Asia-Pacific region since then.

West Asia is a particularly strong regional destination for this market, capturing close to 48% of all arrivals into Asia-Pacific in 2014, followed by North America with a 20% share of arrivals. Very strong growth was recorded into Melanesia during 2014 (89%) while Oceania, and South and Central America all grew at double-digit rates.

At the destination level, the strongest annual percentage growth was into Fiji, which more than doubled its inbound count from this source market while Samoa and Papua New Guinea each also saw significant growth but of smaller numeric bases. Strong growth was also recorded by a number of other destinations, including Japan and Sri Lanka.

Turkey and the US however, saw the strongest expansion in absolute numbers.

IVAs from Germany into Asia-Pacific, by annual growth (% & volume), 2014/13

Destination	IVAs 2014, count	Growth 2014/13, %	Destination	IVAs 2014, million	Volume change 2014/13, million
Fiji	5,641	168.4	Turkey	5.250	0.209
Samoa	1,342	40.8	US	1.969	0.052
Papua New Guinea	1,822	26.9	Japan	0.152	0.030
Japan	151,667	25.0	Malaysia	0.158	0.022
Sri Lanka	102,977	20.5	Mexico	0.207	0.020



RUSSIA

Russians fuelled a strong expansion of visitors into Asia-Pacific for a number of years with annual growth rates in the moderate to high double-digit range. But that all reversed in 2014 with a marginal decline driven by currency and socio-political issues across the Russian Federation.

These declines were most noticeable in North-east and South-east Asia, where some 270,000 arrivals were lost collectively. Within those subregions, the destinations of Thailand and China were the hardest hit, losing more than 140,000 arrivals each.

In a reversal of that trend however, West Asia gained well over 200,000 additional arrivals to bolster its annual numbers from the Russian Federation to just short of five million for the year and hold the aggregate Asia-Pacific count to a loss of less than 1% for the year.

Fiji and Guam both doubled their respective arrival counts from the Russian Federation, while South Korea saw its annual count climb to over 200,000 on the back of a 22% annual growth performance. South Korea features again in the top five by volume increase list along with Turkey and Sri Lanka, as well as Malaysia and Singapore to a lesser degree.

IVAs from Russia into Asia-Pacific, by annual growth (% & volume), 2014/13

Destination	IVAs 2014, count	Growth 2014/13, %	Destination	IVAs 2014, million	Volume change 2014/13, million
Fiji	1,010	196.2	Turkey	4.479	0.210
Guam	16,293	101.9	South Korea	0.214	0.039
Sri Lanka	69,718	36.1	Sri Lanka	0.070	0.018
South Korea	214,366	22.2	Malaysia	0.062	0.009
Myanmar	4,835	17.4	Singapore	0.091	0.008

UK

A traditional source market for much of the Asia-Pacific region, arrivals from the UK nevertheless went through some decline between 2010 and 2012, but it appears to have recovered, posting a record high volume of more than 13 million arrivals in 2014.

North America is the dominant destination subregion with a share of more than one-third of all arrivals from the UK in 2014, followed by West, South-east and North-east Asia after that. While 2014 was a reasonable growth year for arrivals from this source market, the longer-term growth rate is sluggish at just 1%.

Taiwan, Myanmar and Guatemala not only showed strong percentage growth increases during 2014 (year-on-year) – along with others – but they also had the added advantage of growing off a reasonable volume base as well.

The US and Turkey captured significant volume gains, improving their respective positions by close to or more than 100,000 for the year.

IVAs from the UK into Asia-Pacific, by annual growth (% & volume), 2014/13

Destination	IVAs 2014, count	Growth 2014/13, %	Destination	IVAs 2014, million	Volume change 2014/13, million
French Polynesia	4,834	48.5	US	3.973	0.137
Taiwan	58,079	36.9	Turkey	2.600	0.091
Niue	136	29.5	Mexico	0.459	0.045
Myanmar	40,921	23.2	Malaysia	0.446	0.032
Guatemala	35,065	19.9	Canada	0.676	0.031

US

While the annual growth rates for arrivals from the US into Asia-Pacific destinations may appear to be just average, the base volume of arrivals is such that even a 1% increase on the 2014 volume will generate close to an additional 37,000 arrivals, so its numeric weight should not be underestimated.

Intra-regional flows are significant for the US outbound market, with the Americas capturing roughly 56% of the US international arrivals during 2014. Even so, Asia sees some 10 million arrivals from the US each year, while the US-to-Polynesia (read Hawaii) flows are also significant.

More than half of the destination subregions treated here received in excess on one million (or substantially more) arrivals from the US each year.

A number of destinations had double-digit growth rates in 2014, however, they did not generate any sizeable volume increases.

The increases came from the neighbouring destinations of Mexico and Canada, which together, increased their combined inbound count from this source market by almost 800,000.

IVAs from the US into Asia-Pacific, by annual growth (% & volume), 2014/13

Destination	IVAs 2014, count	Growth 2014/13, %	Destination	IVAs 2014, million	Volume change 2014/13, million
Maldives	25,641	28.0	Mexico	7.164	0.685
Niue	144	24.1	Canada	12.113	0.106
Samoa	8,458	18.8	Japan	0.892	0.092
Northern Marianas	8,910	18.4	Hawaii	4.976	0.063
Myanmar	62,631	16.7	Philippines	0.723	0.048

Snapshots

Early birds at the show By Eugene Tang



Prom Peru's Rocio Florian



Black IbeX Expeditions Mongolia's Tegshgerel Oyuntogtokh and Dalaikhishig Tsogetsaikhan



Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau's Barbara Tutu and Christopher Nemaia



Supranational Hotels UK's Natalia Hall and Adriano Albertino



Skyscanner UK's Shane Corstorphine



Derby Soft Japan's Partha Bommatapally



Sabre Singapore's Kelvin Neo



Grand Canyon Resort Corporation USA's Robert Mendez and Wilfred Whataname



AccorHotels Singapore's Daniel Fang



Unleashed Travel Australia's Steve Pirie



Grand Canyon Tour & Travel USA's Kevin Streit



Palomino Hospitality India's Piyush Mathur, Aayan Journeys India's R.Kumara Guru and Palomino Hospitality's Pushpinder Singh

Bali Tourism Promotion Board's Bagus Rama, Discovery Kartika Plaza Hotel Bali's Alice Matulesky, Bali Tourism Promotion Board's Cheyenne Maelissa, A.A Sri Dian Ekawaty and Ari Iswara





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Marina Bay Sands, Hotel Lobby Tower 2

RSVP: Jennifer Tay
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Committed to growing our presence, Brand USA's in-market team in South-east Asia will be focusing on travel trade outreach, trade shows and educational missions to inspire the industry to sell the complete U.S. multi-state experience.

On the consumer front, we are pleased to announce the release for IMAX* and giant-screen theaters - NATIONAL PARKS ADVENTURE - in partnership with MacGillivray Freeman Films. Narrated by Academy Award* winner Robert Redford, the film takes audiences on an ultimate off-trail adventure into the USA's awe-inspiring great outdoors and untamed wilderness, revealing a tapestry of natural wonders that will inspire adventure seeker in all of us.

Brand USA takes this opportunity to thank you for partnering with us.

Together, let's market the USA!

Christopher L. Thompson
President
and CEO
Brand USA



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In **Los Angeles**, the waters of **Newport Beach** contain nutrients that attract whales, dolphins and many other types of marine wildlife and nature lovers have the opportunity to go on an amazing whale watching trip.

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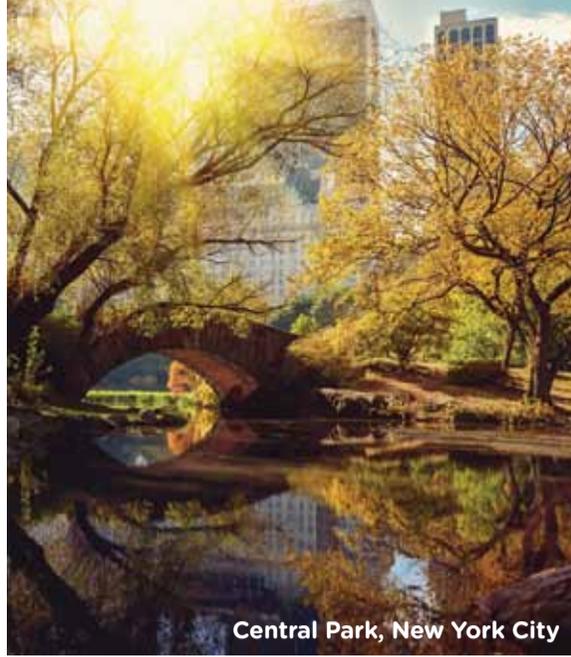
Back on the Pacific coast, **Ocean Beach** is not only **San Francisco's** longest beach. Surfers say it is the most reliable spot and where hardcore surfers head to.

When the swells are up, visitors can see hundreds of surfers in black wet suits bobbing offshore waiting patiently for their wave.

The cold water and challenging break are not for beginners, but this 3.5-mile stretch of sand and shore is one of the best places to spend a sunny afternoon and watch the action. Locals come here



Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona



Central Park, New York City



Orange County Beach, California

Connecting man and nature is the Hualapai legacy



Some Key Facts

- Owned by the Hualapai Tribe, Grand Canyon Resort Corporation oversees the operations of Grand Canyon West, Grand Canyon Skywalk, Hualapai River Runners and the Hualapai Lodge.
- Stepping onto the Grand Canyon Skywalk, the rim of the Grand Canyon is 70 feet behind, while the other side is three miles in front.
- Dare to look down and there is nothing but 2,000 feet of air between the skywalk and the bottom of the Grand Canyon.
- Until recently, a sensation like this could only be experienced in dreams. But now, on the Hualapai Indian Reservation that is just East of Las Vegas, dreams and reality will meld into one with the Grand Canyon Skywalk.
- The Hualapai, meaning People of The Tall Pines, are native people of the South-west.
- As hunter-gatherers, they inhabited an area of more than five million acres. Their homeland stretched from the Grand Canyon southward to the Santa Maria River and from the Black Mountains eastward to the pine forests of the San Francisco peaks.

to skimboard, fly kites, bike and skate along the esplanade, or stroll on the dunes.

Over in the Big Apple, fitness fanatics can get physical and go bouldering in **New York City's Central Park** as this world-famous green space has become the gathering place for the city's outdoor climbing community.

Bouldering is a demanding intense variety of rock climbing requiring strong muscles to cover short, very steep distances. Sometimes the climb is entirely vertical.

Central Park has three venues - Cat Rock, Wave Rock and the most popular Rat Rock attracts climbing enthusiasts on a nice sunny day.

Visitors to **Las Vegas** can most certainly enjoy the glamour and bright lights of a big city. But there is also a natural side in and around the city for those who want to venture outdoors for fresh air and a different experience.

Remarkable greenery, unique hiking

grounds, lake activities and one of the seven natural wonders of the world are anywhere from a short 30-minute to a five-hour drive away

Exploring the **Grand Canyon**, driving across the **Western Deserts** and visiting a **Navajo Indian reservation** are some experiences not to be missed.

Many people enjoy exploring the Grand Canyon on their own, but guided tours via bus, Jeep, helicopter, airplane or even a combination of a few modes of transportation give those in a hurry the option to do so.

Lake Mead, one of the largest man-made lakes in the world and less an hour's drive south-east of Las Vegas is a fun

escape from the hustle and bustle of the city. Swim, boat, water-ski, fish or kayak in the lake or hike around the surrounding area.

Apart from Lake Mead, there is **Lake Powell**, considered one of the beautiful lakes in America, for leisurely cruising.

Visitors can also drop by **Bryce**

Canyon, home to the most amazing natural sculptures in the world.

In **Philadelphia** enjoy a relaxing stroll through classical English landscape structures and sculpture gardens at **Morris Arboretum**, a 92-acre Victorian garden located in the north-western corner of the city.

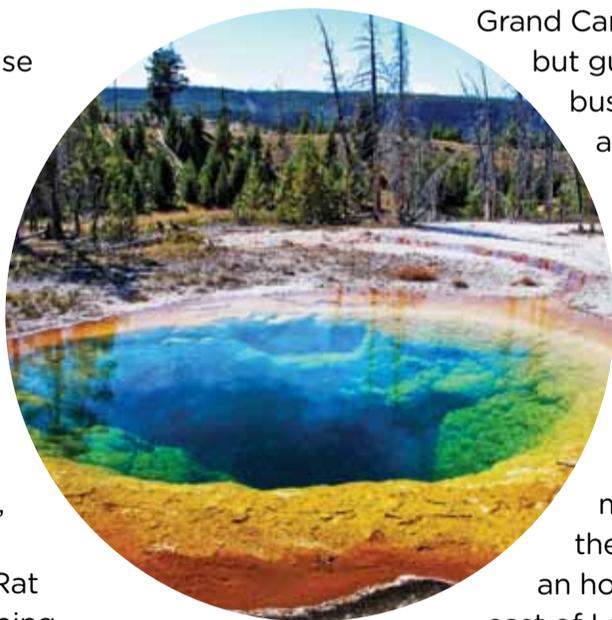
The elegant beauty of the early-19th Century grounds is complete with a formal rose garden, majestic old trees and unusual plants from North America, Asia, Africa and Europe.

The arboretum's railway, as it trundles through a miniature landscape and hidden tunnel underneath a loggia, will no doubt delight small children and grown-ups alike.

There is also the **Tree Adventure**, with a bird's-eye view of the forest on a 450-foot-long canopy walk that is more than 50 feet above ground level.

For the wildlife enthusiast, **Forever Florida** is a 4,700-acre conservation area with nine diverse subtropical ecosystems that are home to alligators, black bears, white-tailed deer, the endangered and elusive Florida panther and hundreds of species of birds.

It is just one hour south-east of **Orlando** and visitors can explore on horseback or in the comfort of the all-ages Coach Safari.



OUTSTANDING AMERICAN ICONS

Watch history come alive, be awed by engineering wonders and witness movie magic

The **Las Vegas Strip** is home to icons such as **Caesar's Palace** plus many new themed resorts that pay homage to cities and attractions such as Paris and the Eiffel Tower, Venice and gondolas, New York and the Statue of Liberty.

A spectacle not to be missed in Las Vegas is the signature jumping fountain and eye-catching water-based show at the **Bellagio**, designed as all-American Italian villa.

Also see the Strip from the **High Roller**, the highest observation wheel in the world with 28 cabins and each can hold 40 people. It is higher than the London Eye and Singapore Flyer.

For entertainment and movie buffs, **Los Angeles** is home to **Universal Studios Hollywood, Six Flags Magic Mountain and Disneyland Resort**, well-know attractions everyone - young and young-at-heart - must not miss.

For movie lovers, there is the **Hollywood Walk of Fame**, the **Chinese Theatre**, the **Hollywood sign** and the **Griffith Park Observatory** where actor

James Dean enhanced American culture in *Rebel Without a Cause*.

Movies have also immortalized many of **New York City's** attractions such as the **Statue of Liberty, Central Park, Times Square**, the **Empire State Building, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art and Ellis Island** to name a few.

Midtown and Uptown New York are also home to some of the city's most iconic buildings and attractions such as the **Chrysler Building, 42nd Street** for Broadway shows, **Rockefeller Center** and **Times Square**.

Liberty Bell, which dates back to 1752, is an iconic symbol of American independence.

Formerly placed in the steeple of **Philadelphia's Pennsylvania**

State House, now renamed Independence Hall, the bell is located in the **Liberty Bell Center in Independence National Historical Park**. The bell cracked when it was first rung and had to be recast twice.

In its early years, Liberty Bell was used to summon lawmakers to legislative sessions and to alert citizens to public meetings and proclamations. The bell acquired its distinctive large crack sometime in the early-19th Century.

San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, another popular movie backdrop, spans the mile-wide, three-mile-long channel between San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean.

Opened in 1937, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world at 4,200 feet until 1964.

For family-friendly **Florida** trips, **Walt Disney World, The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, Epcot Theme Park, SeaWorld Orlando, Disney's Hollywood Studios, Walt Disney World Resort and Universal Orlando**

Resort are among some of the most well-known attractions. The 150-acre **LEGOLAND® Florida** theme park has a botanic garden and LEGOLAND Water Park.

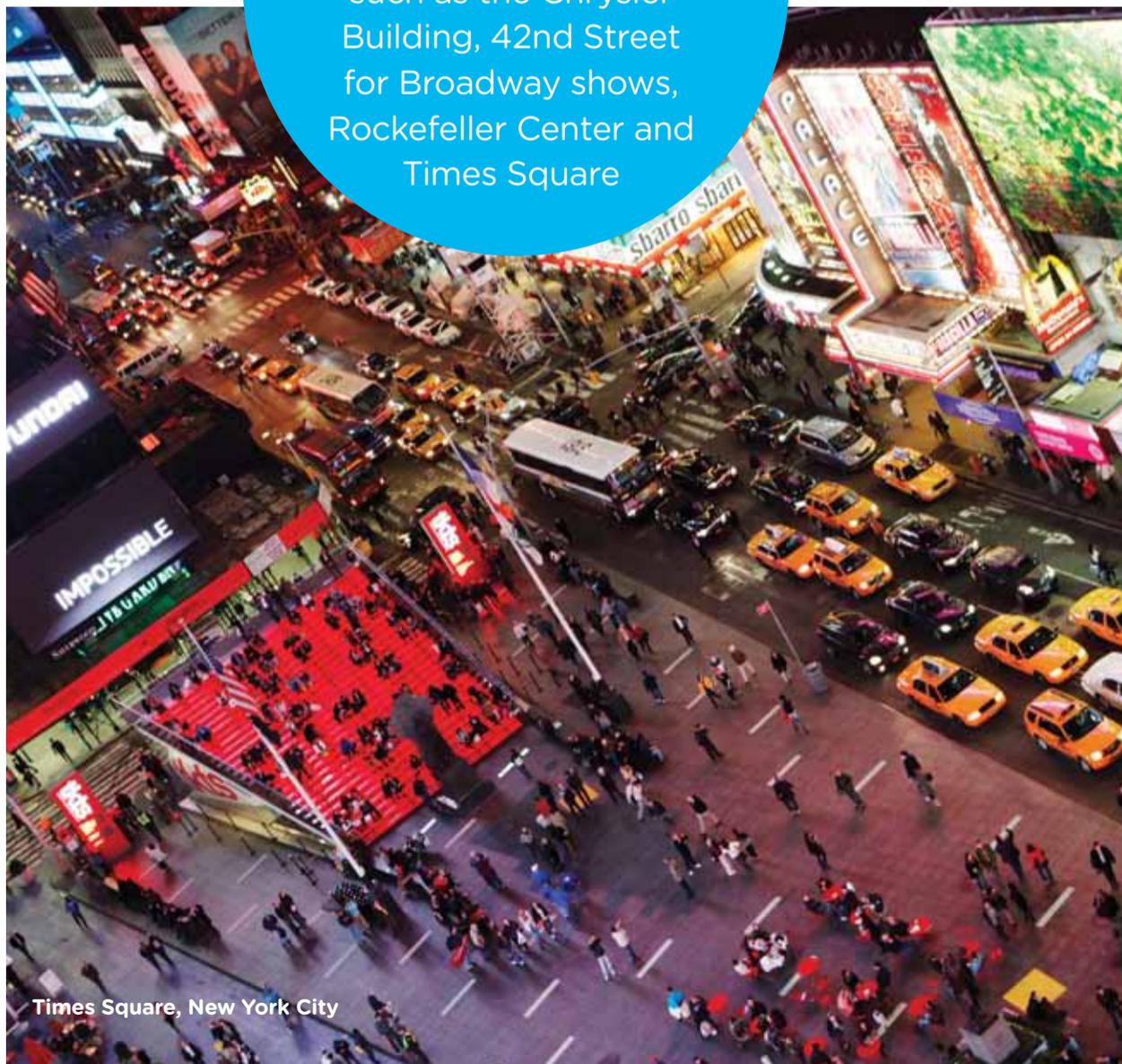
Midtown and Uptown are home to some of New York's most iconic buildings and attractions such as the Chrysler Building, 42nd Street for Broadway shows, Rockefeller Center and Times Square

There are about 125 Marriott hotels in and around New York



Some Key Facts

- **Amadeo Travel Solutions** offers premier mini tours on a daily or weekly basis
- Day trips and multi-day trips that do not last longer than five days depart from New York City, Los Angeles or Las Vegas.
- There are about 125 Marriott hotels in and around New York.
- **Marriott** has opened North America's tallest hotel in New York City, and the US\$320 million development houses the 378-room **Courtyard Hotel** and the 261-suite **Residence Inn**.
- The 68-storey building is just steps from Central Park and Times Square.
- For a hotel stay with a bit more history, visitors can check out the **Wellington Hotel**.
- The historic 113-year-old hotel offers an affordable and elegant experience and is located near Broadway, Carnegie Hall, Central Park and Rockefeller Center.



Times Square, New York City



Cirque du Soleil, Las Vegas

Some Key Facts

Discover premier golf and shopping in Las Vegas



- Guests who stay at Caesars Palace and other hotels in Las Vegas operated by Caesar's Entertainment, such as Paris, Bally's, Flamingo and Harrah's, have access to premier golf courses just minutes away from their hotels. Rio Secco and Cascata Golf, are both located just minutes away from the Strip. Golfers can also brush up on their skills at the Butch Harmon School.

- Wynn Las Vegas, directly across from The Fashion Show Mall, offers 76,000 square feet of retail space. Together with the adjacent Encore hotel, the entire Wynn resort complex has a total of 4,750 rooms, making it the world's sixth-largest hotel.

EXCITING EVENTS

CAPTURE THE COLOR AND EXCITEMENT

From entertainment to parades and much more

No other city can compete with the events, concerts and shows in **Las Vegas**. It is truly the Entertainment Capital of the World and there are Las Vegas shows with dancing, singing, acrobatics, magic comedy, drama and more that are family-friendly or for the grown-ups.

Concert lovers are spoiled for choice as nowhere else are so many stars performing night after night, including Celine Dion, Motley Crue and more.

Of the permanent fixtures that dot the Strip, there are now eight different **Cirque du Soleil** shows in Las Vegas, ranging from the interesting to the bizarre to the risqué.

Cirque du Soleil's most sophisticated show, **O**, features more than 70 swimmers, divers, aerialists, contortionists and clowns performing acrobatic feats around a pool stage containing 1.5 million gallons of water.

Jersey Boys, Blue Man Group, Frank Marino and Penn & Teller are other

popular acts to catch.

In **San Francisco**, the start of the Lunar New Year offers the **Chinese New Year Parade**, its best procession with acrobatic dragons and stilt walkers.

The annual Treasure Hunt, which attracts nearly 1,600 people scurrying around Chinatown is also enormously popular. But the Lunar New Year is not limited to the Chinese as the Tet Festival – the Vietnamese celebration of the New Year – takes place at the U.N. Plaza and also draws Cambodian, Latino and African-American families that turn the city center into a multicultural carnival.



Since 1890, the **Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade** in **Los Angeles** has been a New Year's Day tradition.

Broadcast to millions of viewers worldwide, the parade features more than 40 elaborate floats as well as dozens of bands and equestrian units marching through downtown Pasadena. The parade also features a Queen and Royal Court picked from students of local high schools.

Tennis fans can earmark a late-August date with **New York** when the **U.S. Open** takes place in Queens.

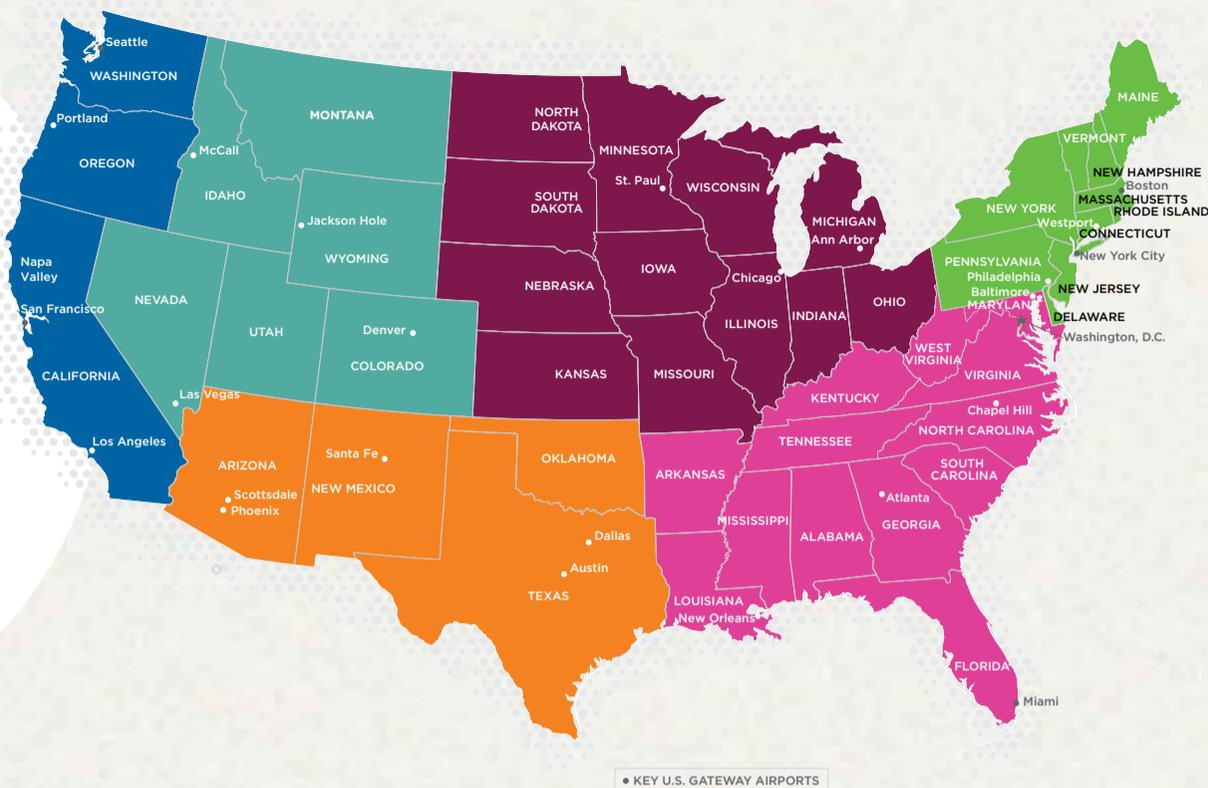
In recent years, the daily average attendance has inched up to 28,000 at the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center and the plan is to add 10,000 bleacher seats to the site.

Also mark down April to be in the Big Apple for the **Tribeca Film Festival**, helmed by actor Robert De Niro and producer Jane Rosenthal in 2002 in an effort to help lower Manhattan recover after 9/11.

Since then, Tribeca has screened more than 1,400 films from 80 different countries.

WELCOME TO THE USA

NON CONTINENTAL STATES AND TERRITORIES



ENTRY INFORMATION

Are you a Visa Waiver Program traveler? If you're planning a trip to the United States, make sure you get your travel authorization first. The ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) application process is fast, easy, costs only US\$14 and is valid for up to two years or until your passport expires. Apply for your ESTA and learn more on the only official website: esta.cbp.dhs.gov.

Before entering the country, make sure you know what items you must declare. Educate yourself on U.S. travel regulations for a quicker, simpler entry process, whether you're coming home or taking a holiday with family and friends.

What are the rules regarding large amounts of money?

Anyone traveling with US\$10,000 or more in cash — whether it's in U.S. dollars, another currency or any other monetary instrument — you must declare it.

What may I bring in duty-free?

- No more than 200 cigarettes and 100 cigars per individual 18 and older
- Up to one liter of alcoholic beverages per individual 21 and older
- Gifts and purchases valued at a maximum of US\$100 in total



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