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ATF 2016
January 20, 2016
Manila, Philippines



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ATF 2016
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Halal tourism gets wider push in South-east Asia

ASEAN nations are becoming more Muslim-friendly to tap on the lucrative market

By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena and Mimi Hudoyo

AS THE Muslim travel market becomes a growing force worldwide, ASEAN countries are developing new strategic directions in a bid to wrestle a bigger piece of the lucrative halal tourism pie.

This fast-growing sector is projected to grow to 150 million visitors comprising 11 per cent of the global travel economy with an expenditure of US\$200 billion by 2020, according to a 2015 study by Singapore-based CrescentRating.

Halal tourism is being recognised as “an opportunity market” for the Philippines, as its sizable Muslim population as well as increasing visitor arrivals from the Middle East, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore in recent years place it in a good position to attract more Muslim travellers, said Arturo P Boncato Jr, assistant secretary, tourism regulation, coordination and resource generation, at the Philippine Department of Tourism (DoT).

The DoT has joined hands with the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos to launch the Philippines Halal Tourism Project last year to improve halal facilities in the country, according to Boncato. “We are targeting at least 50 halal certified establishments in the four major regions (Manila, Cebu, Boracay and Davao) in time for Madrid Fusion Manila in April,” he commented.

Similarly, Indonesia is positioning Lombok in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) as a Muslim-friendly destination, after the Muslim-majority island was recognised as the world’s top halal tourism and honeymoon destination at the 2015 World Halal Travel Summit in Dubai.

Indonesia minister of tourism Arief Yahya said: “The awards will sharpen Lombok’s position...especially in (attracting) travellers from the Middle East and other

Muslim countries.” Aceh and West Sumatra will be touted as a role model for Muslim-friendly destinations in Indonesia.



Boncato: aiming for more certification

The move will expand Lombok’s visitor source markets to Muslim travellers, commented Awan Aswinabawa, advisor to the Association of the Indonesian Tours and Travel Agencies NTB chapter.

“We have been getting inquiries from travellers from the neighbouring countries as well as the growing domestic market whether we have halal facilities such as restaurants and hotels,” he said. “Lombok naturally has Muslim-friendly products although not all are certified halal, so we just need to improve and highlight what we have.”

Furthermore, a halal branding will also distinguish Lombok from neighbouring Bali’s Hindu-influenced culture or East Nusa Tenggara’s Christian-dominated

culture, he opined.

Hasiyanna Ashadi, president director of Marintur Indonesia, said: “It is up to the destination how far they want to apply the label, but as a tour operator, we welcome more halal facilities to widen the choices for travellers. Even Aceh, whose rule is based on the Syariah law, has eased some of the rules for non-Muslim travellers.”

Awan, however, reminded the government to balance the halal branding and not intimidate the other markets, which have been enjoying Bali. “We do not want (non-halal) markets to think that we limit ourselves to the Muslim travellers only and apply rigid (Syariah law) in the destination,” he said.

Within South-east Asia, with the exception of Myanmar and Laos, all other countries already have their own halal certification and logo, stated Nirwan Noh, undersecretary for industry development at Malaysia’s Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

India woos repeat travellers through social media

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

India’s tourism board is leveraging social media platforms to play up lesser known destinations in the country in a bid to grow its number of repeat travellers from South-east Asia.

Speaking to the *Daily* on the sidelines of the 15th ASEAN-India Tourism Working Group Meeting yesterday, Rajendra Suman, assistant director of India Tourism in Singapore, said: “We are going to be doing more destination promotions through our Facebook, Twitter and YouTube channels by sharing new images and videos more frequently.

“India is very big and there are a lot to offer in cities like Kolkata, Pune and Kerala as well as the North-eastern ones like Darjeeling which are not as well known as popular destinations like



Rajendra: social media marketing will bring more footfalls to India

New Delhi, Agra and Jaipur. We will be able to change all that with social media,” he said.

Suman said India Tourism had uploaded beautiful destination photos of Leh Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir on its Facebook page last week.

“Social media creates real-time contact between people and it is easily accessible and understandable, and it appeals to travellers of all ages,” he opined.

As most travellers often visit the main Indian cities, Suman said there is a tremendous amount of untapped potential in luring repeat travellers deeper into India.

According to Suman, the bulk of tourists from South-east Asia hails from Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore, hence the India Tourism’s social media outreach campaign also aims to increase tourism traffic from other source markets in the region, such as the Philippines and Indonesia.

CHi brings new resort to Rayong

CENTRAL Hospitality International (CHi) has added the Centara Q Resort Rayong to its portfolio of properties. The 41-room boutique resort sits on the beach of Laem Mae Phim, on the eastern coast of the Gulf of Thailand, and is a three-hour drive from Bangkok.

F&B options include the Quicksand Beach Terrace, Qube Pool Bar, Quattro Rooftop Lounge and the QZeen Restaurant. For recreation, guests can expect a pool, a fitness centre, a kids club and a spa. As well, a range of fully-equipped function rooms can cater to both corporate and informal events.



ASEANTA aligns itself for global impact

By Rosa Ocampo

ASEANTA, which is expected to play a bigger role in the AEC, has mapped out several initiatives, including having a wider membership base and joining international organisations, in order to better align itself with regional and global tourism bodies.

Its president, Aileen Clemente, said that “to fully represent the travel industry”, ASEANTA has amended its by-laws to allow taking in members from recreational facilities, parks and convention centres. It has also widened its limits to include global members who have a business interest in ASEAN.

Previously, members have mainly comprised hotels, airlines, travel agencies, tour operators and NTOs within ASEAN.

The widening of ASEANTA’s membership base is in line with the goals of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025 and

the *Visit ASEAN@50* campaign, set by the ASEAN NTOs during their meeting this week at ATF 2016 to encourage greater private sector participation.

After all, the private sector, especially ASEANTA, will be the one to come up with, push for and sell tourism products, reasoned Clemente.

“We’re hoping that as private sector partners, we are more in tune and aligned with (the government’s) marketing plans instead of just being told what to do. There’s a big difference,” she pointed out.

Clemente also said ASEANTA will be applying for membership with the UNWTO and WTTC so it “will be aligned with global tourism bodies”.

Membership is a big task that will require the studying of policies and agreements to comply

with and figuring out how ASEANTA can fit themselves in, added Clemente.

The Federation of ASEAN Travel Agencies, one of the three ASEANTA sub-groups, will also seek membership in the Worldwide Summit of Presidents of Travel Agencies Association, usually held in Europe.

Other initiatives that the association is embarking on includes the presentation of the ASEANTA Special Award on Friday to Sabah Malaysia’s Ministry of Tourism and Culture for its extraordinary contribution to the tourism sector.

These initiatives are “small steps but with big impact,” said Clemente. “We don’t want to put a lot on our plate but we want to be focused and aligned (to create) greater impact.”



Clemente: wider membership

News/Snapshots

New awards lend power to niche accommodation

Homestay experiences spread tourism earnings to rural communities

By S Puvaneswary

THE inaugural ASEAN Homestay Standards Award to be presented this Friday will honour 40 quality homestay operators from South-east Asia who will be able to use the recognition in their branding and marketing communications.

Eight ASEAN member countries, with the exception of Singapore and Myanmar, will nominate five homestay operators each for these awards, said Ong Hong Peng, Malaysian head of NTO delegation and secretary-general of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia.

Speaking to the *Daily* in

an interview, Ong said: "(The award) is a significant development as it shows the progress of the development of homestay standards, while sharing best practices."

Winners will be promoted through the ASEAN tourism marketing website, www.aseantourism.travel, and social media platforms, and the efforts are expected to help homestay operators market their products and draw more local and foreign guests.

All award recipients must fulfill the ASEAN homestay standards which were established based on inputs from ASEAN NTOs, covering areas such as accommodation requirements,

cleanliness in food preparation, provision of environmentally-friendly activities that do not have a negative impact on the environment, and involvement of guests in local activities.

Malaysia was appointed the lead country in 2010 for the development of the ASEAN Homestay Standards and it implemented the programme in full last year.

Homestays promote rural tourism, revitalises the rural economy, and provides additional income for the rural population.

For the first 11 months of 2015, some 64,599 international tourists visited and stayed in Malaysian homestays, of which 22,065 had come from South-east Asia.



Ong: homestay is making progress

Weak ringgit spurs inbound demand, longer stays

By S Puvaneswary

INBOUND travel players in Malaysia are seeing a silver lining in their country's ringgit woes, with some reporting that tourism demand has gone up as the value of the Malaysian currency dips.

Raaj Navaratnaa, general manager of Johor-based New Asia Holiday Tours & Travel, told the *Daily* that group and FIT demand from India, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand has risen since 4Q2015.

He said: "The cost of ground package is cheaper in Malaysia. There are good five-star hotels in Malaysia at affordable rates. Some (clients) have chosen to increase their stay in Johor by another 1.5 nights on top of the average two nights and are reducing time spent in Singapore to a day for sightseeing and shopping."

He noted that a tour plus stay in an international branded hotel in Singapore for two nights costs 40 per cent higher than the same offering in Malaysia.

To capitalise on this emerging trend, New Asia Holiday Tours & Travel has developed different packages combining nature and man-made attractions in Malaysia to appeal to the varied interests of tourists.

Raaj added: "Our proposition to outbound travel consultants in South-east Asia, In-

dia, Australia and New Zealand is to extend the stay in Malaysia and sell Singapore as a day trip. This will result in big savings (for their travellers)."

As of January 16 the ringgit had depreciated 19 per cent against the greenback from a year ago.

Richard Ng, business development director of Dream Holidays Planner in Singapore, has also seen more requests for Malaysia from Indonesian budget travellers since mid-2015. He said most stayed in Johor Bahru and made day trips to Singapore, while some spent a night each in both countries. Those with more time to spare stayed a night in Johor, a night in Kuala Lumpur, and took day trips to Resorts World Genting and Singapore.

Mohammad Rosly Md Selamat, senior vice president, Economic & Investment (Tourism) at Iskandar Regional Development Authority, said the state authority has been encouraging foreign travel consultants and tour wholesalers to "take advantage of the weakened ringgit" and combine Johor with Singapore.

"The benefit is a holiday in two destinations," he said, adding that Johor is rich in nature, cultural attractions and food, which makes it a "value-for-money family destination".

NUMBERS THAT MATTER

93 The percentage of outbound luxury travellers from China who prefer Asian destinations, found a recent study conducted by Malaysian Association of Tour & Travel Agents (MATTA) and GfK, of which 47 per cent favours South-east Asian locations

61 The percentage of respondents in the same MATTA-GfK study who listed island travel as their favourite activities. History and culture activities come next with 48 per cent of respondents, and themed travel activities get 44 per cent of votes

340 The number of new hotels that opened in Myanmar in 2015. In 2014, the destination had a total of 1,106 hotels countrywide providing 43,243 rooms

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Good business partners

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News

Indonesia, Malaysia share strengths in halal tourism

Focus will be on creating Muslim-friendly combination tours

By Mimi Hudoyo

INDONESIA and Malaysia have come together to leverage each other's expertise in developing Muslim-friendly products to draw more Muslim travellers to both destinations.

The way forward for this collaboration was discussed at a bilateral meeting between the two tourism ministries during the 43rd ASEAN NTO Meeting on Monday.

I Gde Pitana, deputy minister for international tourism marketing development, Indonesia Ministry of Tourism, highlighted a number of reasons backing the collaboration.

Pitana said: "First, although Indonesia is made up of predominantly Muslims, we still get enquiries from Malaysian Muslim travellers on whether we have halal products. The cooperation is expected to raise confidence in Indonesia as a friendly destination among these travellers.

"Secondly, Malaysia has managed to attract millions of Middle Eastern visitors while Indonesia is only getting a few hundred thousands. Middle-Eastern travellers have a month-long summer holiday and they spend an average of 10 days in Malaysia. We would like to get them to spend more time in South-east Asia by extending their stay in Indonesia."

Ong Hong Peng, secretary general of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, said the collaboration seeks to "find a common ground and share experience" to "strengthen each other".

"We will start off with having common Muslim-friendly packages that will meet the expectations of Muslim tourists."

Both ministries have identified the Middle Eastern market as a target, but will also court other sources.

A series of technical meetings

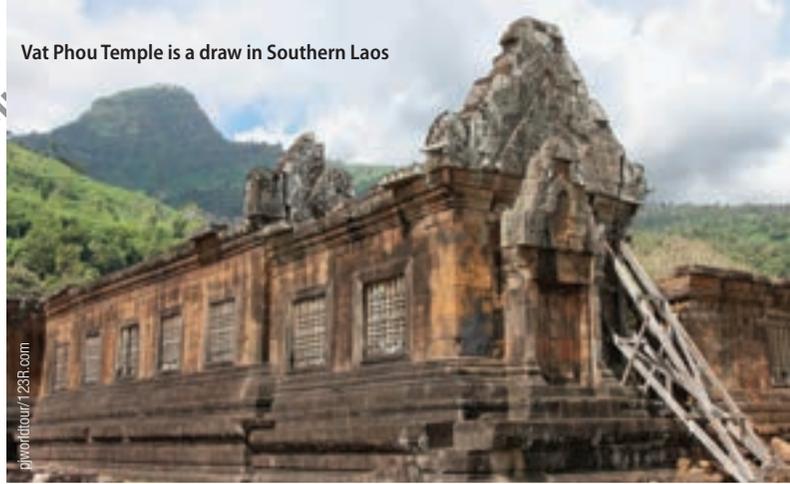
involving travel trade players will follow the ministerial-level bilateral meeting on Monday.

Hamzah Rahmat, president of the Malaysia Association of Tour & Travel Agents (MATTA), welcomes the initiative and told the *Daily* that "Indonesia Ministry of Tourism has already taken steps (to involve the trade) by inviting inbound operators to provide product updates on Batam", so as to create combined packages incorporating Malaysia and Indonesia products.

Hamzah added that the Indonesian ministry will work with MATTA to conduct more familiarisation trips to Jogjakarta, Surabaya and Padang this year.

Elly Hutabarat, PanTravel Indonesia president, said: "Developing a joint product between Indonesia and Malaysia is in line with the spirit of developing ASEAN as a single destination. We can start from (bilateral cooperation) and grow from there."

Vat Phou Temple is a draw in Southern Laos



Laos unveils new destination brand for southern provinces

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

LAOS is ready to promote the four southern provinces of Saravan, Xekong, Attapeu and Champasak as a single tourism destination through a new brand, *Southern Laos, Charming by nature*, which was launched last month.

According to Sengsoda Vanthanouvong, deputy director general of tourism marketing department, Laos' Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, the region of Southern Laos has a wealth of natural, cultural and historic attractions, yet it lacks awareness.

"We know how popular heritage and eco-tourism is today and there is a lot of potential to offer (in Southern Laos)," she told the *Daily*.

She added that attractions in the region include the UN-

ESCO-listed Vat Phou Temple complex and the Mekong river-side town of Pakse.

Champasak, which is the most popular province among the four, attracted the heaviest footfalls. It welcomed 535,413 visitors in 2014, up 8.6 per cent from 493,180 in the previous year – and approximately half of this number are fueled by domestic tourists.

Vanthanouvong said international travellers are mostly from Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. With this new brand that unites the four provinces in the south, the ministry hopes to also court more longhaul travellers.

Along with the new brand, an accompanying website was created to heighten interest and awareness about Southern Laos, revealed Vanthanouvong.



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Trade delegates rise early for a tee off

Buyers, sellers and media representatives showed up bright and early at Villamor Golf Club on Tuesday morning for a friendly game of golf. The event, co-sponsored by Crimson Hotels & Resorts and Philippine Airlines, allowed delegates to mix and mingle before the start of TRAVEX while showing off their putting skills.

IN BRIEF

Plaza Premium in Cambodia

CAMBODIA's first Plaza Premium Lounge has landed at Phnom Penh International Airport. The airport lounge, measuring 1,393m² with a capacity of close to 300 seats, can be used by anyone regardless of airline or seating class. Prices start at US\$35 for two-hour access and US\$50 for five-hour access.

Yoga and kickboxing retreat
BOUTIQUE villa estate Samujana,

located in Koh Samui, is offering guests a yoga and Thai kickboxing retreat package in the months of February and May. The wellness programme lasts eight days with prices starting from US\$2,661 per person.

Island getaway for Valentine's Day
SUMBA Island's Nihiwatu Resort is offering couples a three-night package consisting of spa treatments, picnics, dinners and more for US\$600 a night during the period from February 12 to 15.

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Analysis



Clear skies, muddled ground

South-east Asia's carriers may be benefiting from greater air traffic freedoms, but with infrastructure not keeping pace, the benefits afforded by looser regulations are not being fully capitalised on. By **Paige Lee Pei Qi** and **Mimi Hudoyo**

ASEAN's open-skies dream, which was anticipated to come true by end-2015, has gone unfulfilled as the deadline came and gone.

Alan Tan, professor of aviation law at the National University of Singapore (NUS), said: "It remains a myth that any ASEAN airline is able to fly between any two points in ASEAN."

"What we still do not have is the all-important seventh freedom rights, which means that a Singapore carrier cannot station itself in Bangkok then fly from there to Hanoi. They must return home first."

"There are still various issues that need to be ironed out and it will only be settled in a subsequent stage definitely post 2015," he added.

Dermot Mannion, deputy chairman, Royal Brunei Airlines, is sanguine: "(At least) we see the gradual progress now which is an improvement. We do have more liberal access across the region."

For example, under the third and fourth freedom which has been fulfilled since the open skies policy was first mooted a decade ago, Singapore carriers can now carry passengers from Singapore to points in Thailand and back – without any restrictions on frequency, capacity or aircraft type.

Mannion said: "It is about making incremental progress, which is a pragmatic approach in the long term."

According to ASEAN secretariat, head of infrastructure division, Megasari Widyaty, this issue of liberalisation was brought up in a meeting involving the ASEAN ministers last November. She said: "The ASEAN members all agreed to work towards a more competitive market, so this opens the possibility of discussion and (progress) towards the seventh freedom."

"(However), we cannot force member states as it is based on their level of convenience in executing these policies," she added.

Even so, Brian Hogan, COO of Global Aviation Consultancy, said further liberalisation will be meaningless if the infrastructure cannot cope.

He said: "All of these do not matter without proper

infrastructure. For example, in the Philippines, there are massive restraints. Manila is a nightmare as (a lot of) the slots are not available. Infrastructure is the biggest issue."

Sharing similar sentiments, Tan highlighted that while Indonesia "finally accepted" the protocols under the Multilateral Agreement on Air Services (MAAS) in 2014, airlines know that there is no available slot capacity at Jakarta's congested Soekarno-Hatta Airport.

Speaking at the Indonesia Aviation Day in Jakarta last March, Tony Tyler, director general and CEO at IATA, said: "Indonesia's airports are in urgent need of additional capacity, or risk the opportunity cost of unmet demand."

"The terminal expansions at Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport will be very welcome relief at an airport that is handling about three times the traffic that it was designed for."

"But the capacity problem in Jakarta is nowhere near being solved even with the terminal upgrades. Indonesia needs a hub," he added.

Similar capacity constraints also afflict other airports in the region. Jaime Bautista, president & COO of Philippine Airlines, said: "Airports (in ASEAN countries) are already congested. Even if we have open skies (policy) to fly to capital cities, it is very difficult unless there are additional runways and terminal capacities. Infrastructure is key... We need governments to support the infrastructure requirements."

NUS' Tan added: "The challenge now is for the relevant states to follow up with their outstanding commitments and for ASEAN to devise a post-2015 plan for the many other items that require liberalisation and harmonisation."

Furthermore, the vast economic disparity between member nations is another factor inhibiting the full integration of ASEAN and realisation of the open skies dream, acknowledged the region's aviation leaders.

Andrew Herdman, director general of Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA), said: "Singapore is very rich, Indonesia is very big; there are some poor countries in

Indochina. You have very big variations in income levels, size of population, size of economy, quality of regulatory oversights, government strengths and weaknesses, so you have to accept that you will not get immediate progress from everybody."

He added: "ASEAN has had a history of setting an ambitious target and when it's slipping, they cover up by postponing the dates and announce even more ambitious goals."

"However, let's take a look back 15 years. Are we not making progress? Of course we have. We have seen the proliferation of new services, new routes, new airlines in the market. We also see consumers having more choices and the market is developing and we see a lot of regional integration," said Herdman.

Infrastructure woes and economic disparity aside, Asian airline industry leaders interviewed during the AAPA assembly of presidents in Bali in November 2015 are still optimistic despite the challenges.

In Garuda Indonesia president and CEO Arif Wibowo's opening speech at AAPA, he said: "In September, airlines in the Asia-Pacific carried over 22 million international passengers; this was an increase of six per cent compared to the same period last year."

"When measured in revenue passenger kilometers (RPK), demand actually increased by 7.4 per cent. Despite available seat capacity also increasing by 6.2 per cent, the average international passenger load factor edged 0.8 percentage points higher to a total of 77.2 per cent for the month."

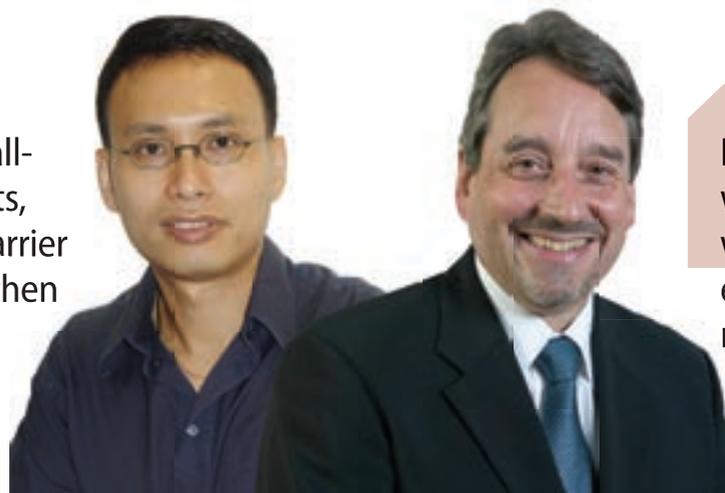
Wibowo further explained that while passenger growth remains high within ASEAN, LCCs have fostered greater competition and growth at the same time. "Without competition we will see no growth," he added.

Bautista agreed: "Competition will make you a more efficient and more responsible airline, given a level playing field in the region."

Wibowo added: "(The agreement) has been ratified, there is no point of return. There are some hurdles, but ASEAN's open-skies will become a reality."

What we still do not have is the all-important seventh freedom rights, which means that a Singapore carrier cannot station itself in Bangkok then fly from there to Hanoi.

Alan Tan
Professor of aviation law
National University of Singapore



Let's take a look back 15 years. Are we not making progress? Of course we have. We have seen the proliferation of new services, new routes, new airlines in the market...

Andrew Herdman
Director general
Association of Asia Pacific Airlines



Borobudur temple - Central Java

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In November 2010, TravelPeople acquired the ownership of TravelServices Inc. from a top financial conglomerate in the country. TravelServices Inc., previously known as Travelex or Thomas Cook, is a travel agency that started its operations in the Philippines since April 1969.

Booth No: S15



Furama Hotels International

Furama Hotels International (FHI), a Singapore-based hotel management company, is committed to providing excellent accommodation choices in the Asia-Pacific region (Australia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand).

As one of the largest global hotel chains situated in Singapore, FHI manages more than 60 hotels, villas and resorts, availing over 7,500 rooms with an increasing inventory, as the company continues to expand.

An award-winning chain of mid-range hotels situated in the vibrant Asia-Pacific region, Furama hotels offer leisure and business travellers alike a well-appointed backdrop to indulge in restful play and invigorating work.

Its commitment to green initiatives also ensures that the refreshing sojourn away from home is supported by eco-friendly and sustainable

practices where guests can relax and luxuriate in the best possible environment.

Some of its hotels in South-east Asia are Furama RiverFront in Singapore, Furama Bukit Bintang in Malaysia, Furama Chiang Mai in Thailand, and Furama Villas & Spa Ubud in Indonesia.

Booth No: N18



Mekong Cruises

Mekong Cruises offers two unique cruises on the Mekong River in Laos and one luxury hotel in Luang Prabang, a UNESCO World Heritage City in northern Laos.

With The Luang Say Lodge & Cruises, travellers can embark on a two-day discovery journey along the course of inaccessible jungle and mountains of the mighty Northern Mekong, the lifeblood of Laos, and spend the night in the Luang Say Lodge. The cruise departs from Luang Prabang or Houei Say.

With The Vat Phou Cruises, travellers can embark on a three-day/two-night expedition from Pakse onboard a luxurious ship and explore the splendour of the mighty Southern Mekong River and the mystical Vat Phou temple. Cruises depart from Pakse.

Booth No: E1



Crimson Hotels & Resorts, Philippines

Crimson Hotels & Resorts has three properties: Crimson Hotel Filinvest City, Manila; Crimson Resort and Spa Mactan; and Crimson Resort & Spa Boracay.

Crimson Hotel Filinvest City, Manila is an urban sanctuary located in the cosmopolitan city of Alabang, Muntinlupa, Southern Metro Manila. It offers savvy business and leisure travellers an elegant lifestyle of live-work-shop-play. All 345 guestrooms, including 20 suites and 34 executive rooms, are done in champagne and earth tones and are equipped with amenities adhering to international standards.

Crimson Resort and Spa Mactan is a sprawling six-hectare beach resort and spa with 40 luxurious private villas featuring individual plunge pools and 250 guestrooms that combine comfort and style. A deluxe beach resort on the island of Mactan, it is a 20-minute drive from the Mactan International Airport.

Crimson Resort & Spa Boracay, opening in December 2016, will combine elegant architecture, landscape and interiors with elements of traditional Filipino island culture.

Booth No: Q15

Kampoul Adventure Tour, Cambodia

In operation since 2003, Kampoul Adventure Tour renders quality tourism services to a range of domestic and international travellers, from sightseeing and shopping to eco-tourism and special interest programmes.

It is able to secure accommodation and provide quality tour guides to accompany travellers to popular and off-the-beaten-track attractions in Cambodia.

Kampoul Adventure Tour is also able to support arrangements for weddings, wedding receptions, conferences, cooking classes and soft adventures, and assist travellers in connecting with religious entities in Cambodia.

Booth No: B1



Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resort

Santika Indonesia Hotels & Resorts, under the management of PT Grahawita Santika, provides uniquely Indonesian hospitality in the country. It has a portfolio of two-, three- and four-star hotels as well as upscale ones that cater to business and leisure travellers.

Brands in its collection include the four-star Hotel Santika Premiere, the three-star Hotel Santika, the value-for-money Amaris Hotel by Hotel Santika, and The Royal Collection luxury boutique villas.

Booth No: D16



Chariot Travels, Singapore

Established in 1998, Chariot Travels is managed by a team of experienced professionals and is equipped with the latest IT systems in its reservations, accounting and communication functions.

It is the appointed ticketing agent of more than 20 reputable airlines. With its IATA-accreditation, the company is able to directly purchase tickets from a majority of the airlines in Singapore. Its air-ticketing function is handled by experienced and professional staff.

It provides inbound services in Singapore and South-east Asian destinations, as well as outbound services for group and individual travellers to South-east Asian countries and the Indian Sub-continent.

Chariot Travels caters to incentive travel requests too, for both inbound and outbound programmes.

Booth No: L1

Royal Brunei Airlines

Royal Brunei Airlines currently operates a fleet of 10 aircraft comprising four B787-800 Dreamliners, four A320 and two A319 units. It has one more B787-800 Dreamliner on order and had recently signed a contract with Airbus for up to ten A320neo aircraft, with deliveries from 2017.

In 2014, Royal Brunei Airlines was the first airline in South-east Asia to fly the Dreamliner and it now bears the distinction of operating the youngest longhaul fleet in the world.

Royal Brunei Airlines is also the first airline in the world to offer an exclusive Dreamliner return service from Melbourne to London via Brunei and Dubai. From its hub at Brunei International Airport, the airline serves a number of regional and international destinations in Australia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Middle East and the UK.

In 2013, Royal Brunei Airlines' customer service experience was recognised in the Travel Agents Choice Awards as Best

Airline to Australasia. It also won the Metro Time Shanghai Award for Reader's Airline of Choice and Best Airline Provider 2013 in The European Asia Awards. In 2014, it received a distinction in the 2014 REBRAND 100 Global Awards which honours the most successful brand transformations worldwide.

Booth No: A1



Sukosol Hotels, Thailand

Previously known as Siam City Hotels & Resorts, the Thai company underwent a name change to complement a group-wide rebrand under its parent company, Sukosol Group. In early 2012, it took on the new name, Sukosol Hotels.

Today Sukosol Hotels comprises five hotels, two in Thailand's capital city, Bangkok, and three in the Kingdom's premier seaside resort city, Pattaya.

The Siam is a luxury Art Deco-style urban retreat in Bangkok, which promises to transport guests to a bygone serenity suffused with priceless antiques, oriental allure and contemporary comforts amid the capital city's historical palaces, temples and museums. It offers 39 spacious suites and pool villas, five international restaurants, a meeting room for up to 900 pax, a private cooking school, and a free Airport Rail Link shuttle, among other facilities.

The Sukosol blends cosmopolitan style with Asian comfort and is perfectly situated downtown for easy travel to the best sightseeing and shopping in Bangkok. A range of guestrooms are available, from deluxe rooms to VIP club rooms, and the hotel's restaurants count Bangkok's elite among its fans.

The Siam Bayshore on the southern tip of Pattaya Bay features rooms with a balcony or terrace that overlooks the garden, pool or ocean. There are five international restaurants, two bars, four meeting rooms and other facilities.

Also in Pattaya, The Bayview offers guestrooms that bear multicultural design themes such as Moroccan, Andaman, Carnival, Safari and Thai Tribal. Guests can enjoy two pools with Jacuzzi, a private cooking school, among other facilities.

The Miami-style Wave Hotel boutique property have 21 spacious rooms, all with a world-class vista of Pattaya Bay. Guests can seek out gourmet delights at the hotel's BBQ lava stone restaurant and entertainment at the rooftop bar. It sits in the middle of Pattaya's thriving dining, shopping and entertainment scene on bustling Beach Road.

Booth No: W1



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Analysis



Changing fortunes

The days of inflated room rates in Yangon are over, as new hotels have opened up to ease the severe room crunch. **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena** sizes up the new situation

It was barely three years ago when soaring demand and a paucity of rooms in Yangon sent the hotel industry booming and rates skyrocketing. The doors to the country had just opened after decades of military rule, drawing a massive influx of foreign direct investment and dramatic upswell of interest from the global travel community.

The situation is now changing, as a large increase in hotel supply has applied downward pressure on highly-inflated room rates and turned the tables for players in Yangon's tourism field.

Supply up, rates down

Yangon's upper-scale room supply grew in 1H2015 with an addition of 489 rooms following the opening of Novotel Yangon Max and the soft launch of Rose Garden Hotel, according to Colliers International. This led to a 23 per cent HoH expansion of the citywide stock to 2,582 rooms – a record high. The supply is expected to dramatically increase in 2016 and potentially triple by 2018, the report added.

In October 2015, Sedona Hotel Yangon soft-opened its Inya Wing, adding 431 guestrooms and suites to its existing 366-room Garden Wing to bring its total inventory to 797 keys – the biggest in town.

More international-standard hotels are debuting in the next two years. In 2016 alone, hotels poised to open their doors include the 429-room Meliá Yangon, the 300-room Pullman Yangon Myat Min, the 238-room Jasmine Palace, the 300-room Grand Centre Point Hotel and the 155-room Grand Golden View Hotel. Global hospitality brands like Kempinski and Sheraton will also emerge on Yangon's hotel scene by 2017.

Despite the rise in visitor arrivals, the average occupancy rate has dwindled in the past three consecutive years. Based on figures from Colliers, the city-wide occupancy for upper-scale hotels dropped four

and 10 per cent in 1Q2015 from the same periods in 2014 and 2013 respectively.

Meanwhile, room prices in Yangon have dipped with boost in supply. RevPAR citywide in 1Q2015 also recorded a 11.6 per cent decline after rising 3.5 per cent year-on-year between 2013 and 2014.

"In the olden days, which were just three years ago, people were throwing money and couldn't get a room. Those were the really good days," said Mok Kok Meng, general manager at Sedona Hotel Yangon, who shared that average rates at the property have dipped from US\$250 to US\$165.

"It's much more balanced now, with three-star and economy hotels popping up across the board and providing some breathing space for the industry. We welcomed this because they helped in the overall sense by making it easier to get a room at a more affordable and logical rate."

New opportunities, new challenges

While it may be a bane for hoteliers, lower room rates in Yangon now tilt the situation in favour for inbound players and visitors alike.

Thomas Barrows, product manager, Myanmar, Exo Travel, said: "One of the main drawbacks to travelling in Myanmar in the past was the high cost of the hotels compared to neighbouring countries. As the supply of rooms starts to greatly increase, we are seeing hotel costs going down, making Myanmar a much more affordable destination."

With the expansion in Yangon's up-market hotel inventory, Tour Mandalay managing director and owner Khin Zaw sees strong potential in pursuing the high-end FIT markets from the UK, the US, Germany and France. Changes in car import regulations have also made transfers a more comfortable and plush affair with the availability of new luxury cars.

While room crunch is no longer an is-

sue, inbound agents stress that the bigger challenge lies in overcoming the perception that Yangon – or Myanmar as a whole – remains a pricey destination.

Highlighting the need to update and educate overseas agents on the price situation in Yangon, Edwin Briels, general manager of Khiri Travel Myanmar, commented: "When I compare how much a three- or four-star tourist spends for a trip to Myanmar with other ASEAN countries, I think that Myanmar is not that expensive...prices spent in a day in other ASEAN countries are pretty much on par."

Compounding the pricey perception is the traditional slump in tourism during the monsoon season in Myanmar, another issue inbound players are keen to overcome too. Said Khin Zaw: "Our tourist season is only six months, unlike Thailand which sees tourists year-round. We need to tell visitors that Myanmar can be visited the whole year round, so we need to target new markets like Russia, Canada, Latin America and Australia (to spread footfalls during the low season)."

At the same time that Yangon's room crunch is being alleviated, the city's streets, on the other hand, are now facing congestion as the vehicular growth has vastly outstripped the road infrastructure.

Barrows commented: "The number of cars flooding into the country over the last three years has overwhelmed the infrastructure, particularly in downtown Yangon. With no real viable public transport, the gridlock downtown is becoming quite a problem. A new vision to handle this growing traffic is needed to keep downtown a popular tourist attraction."

Briels agreed: "A traffic-free zone in the downtown area or better public transportation would be good for tourism as we see that the average number of days tourists are staying in Yangon is decreasing."

Myanmar Welcome Travels & Tours saw booming demand – an 80 per cent

growth – from Thailand in 2015, in part driven by visa-free regulation between Thailand and Myanmar introduced last August.

Said its director Nwe Nwe Khaing: "Back when we had room shortage, the Thai market used to buy three-star properties but with more reasonable prices in Yangon, they have become less budget-conscious and are increasingly turning into a high-end market," she added.

No longer a frontier destination?

Thailand is not the only market visiting Yangon in droves. The Ministry of Tourism has predicted 4.5 million tourist arrivals in 2015, up from 3.8 million in 2014 and 2.1 million in 2013. Nearly three-quarters of the international arrivals were from Asian countries, led by Thailand, followed by China, Japan and South Korea.

With rising confidence for Myanmar following the landslide victory of Aung San Suu Kyi during last November's elections, the trade expects visitor interest and business prospects for Yangon to stay rosy.

Briels remarked: "We can see that Myanmar has developed itself from a niche destination only for early innovators to a more mature destination. A few years ago, tourists visited Myanmar because it was 'new', nowadays tourists visit the country because it simply has a lot to offer them."

But as Myanmar heads towards its target of 7.5 million tourists by 2020, will mass tourism develop too quickly in Myanmar along the lines of neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam?

Laurent Kuenzle, CEO of Asian Trails, contends that Yangon is still a "far way from being a modern city and a mass tourism destination" as the city retains its traditional ways and charismatic allure.

Will it stay that way in the years to come? That remains to be seen.



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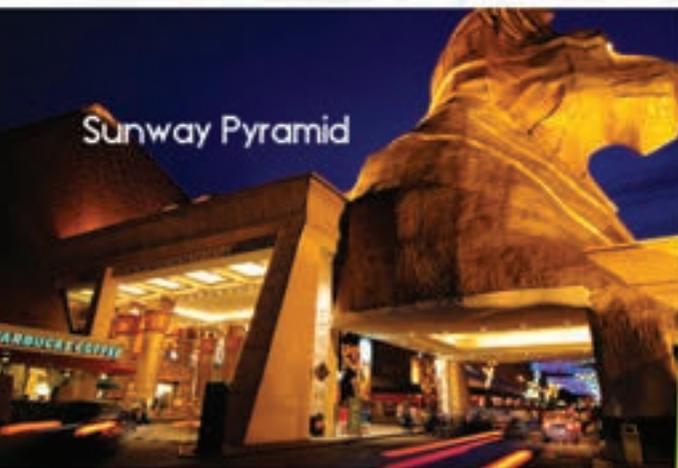
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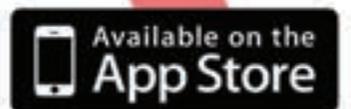
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Destination Brunei

Keeping packages fresh

Brunei is diversifying its offerings in an effort to boost slow-moving tourism numbers



The tiny nation on the island of Borneo is actively promoting packages that revolve around nature and Islamic culture to entice more travellers, reports **S Puvaneswary**

Leading inbound tour operator in Brunei, Freme Travel, recently spent about B\$400,000 (US\$283,728) to develop an adventure park, and refurbish and upgrade its lodge. Both are located just outside Temburong National Park, at Kampong Batang Duri.

Catering to those seeking adventure off the beaten track, the main highlight of the adventure park is the 130m-long Flying Fox (zipline) across the Temburong River. This, coupled with the 700m-long suspended bridge and Brunei's highest observation tower at 40m, makes it a place to visit. A new 12m-high abseiling wall and observation deck is expected to be completed in 2016.

Earlier in October 2014, the upgrading and refurbishment of Freme Rainforest Lodge was completed, and the lodge can now accommodate up to 46 people in wooden bunkers and a further 15 people in large tents. It also boasts a new terrace dining area and a new kitchen.

Freme Travel's managing director, Michael Lee, said: "Temburong is the undiscovered gateway to Borneo's rainforest treasures. Freme's observation tower is a valuable resource to any birdwatching enthusiast as many exotic bird species can be found in Temburong.

"Other activities we can provide are nature walks, cultural activities, abseiling and kayaking. This now gives more reasons for overseas visitors to stay longer in Brunei."

Air arrivals to Brunei for the first half of 2015 grew by 12 per cent to 113,685 visitors. This is slightly more than half of the arrivals for 2015 which is 207,019 visitors.

The largest growth by market segment is the Far East, namely China (41 per cent), Japan (33 per cent), South Korea (27 per cent) and Taiwan (27 per cent).

However, arrivals from Europe and the Middle East declined by 14 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. This is attributed to fewer marketing campaigns in those regions.

Lee said: "We've seen an increase in visitors from China, Hong Kong and Japan who stay at least one night in Temburong. About 95 per cent of them have given us positive feedback. We have also received good reviews on TripAdvisor."

At present, guests can make direct bookings via the website and as part of this continual improvement, a secure online payment system will be introduced in 2016.

Lee said his company saw a 40 per cent year-on-year growth from Japan in 2015, which he attributed to having Japanese-speaking full-time staff and a dedicated Japan department.

He said: "Japanese travellers are very comfortable with us and the main draw is Temburong. We work with some of the big outbound agents in Japan."

At press time, Freme Travel is developing sober retreat packages targeted at visitors from the UK, to entice those looking for a new kind of adventure without being tempted by alcohol. These bespoke tours will focus on well-being while showing off the best that Brunei has to offer.

The company also sees potential in tapping the US inbound who travel to Southeast Asia. In 2016, Lee said that he planned to work with outbound agents from the US, who sell the Far East and Borneo, to

offer packages that combine Brunei with the east Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak.

He explained: "US citizens don't need a visa to visit Brunei, which makes it easier to tap this market. We wish to show them what a moderate Muslim country is. We are a friendly and peaceful nation."

Khirul Zainie, managing director of MegaBorneo Tour Planner, said his company created a few new tours in 2015 to the Tutong and Belait districts. These tours are interactive and experiential, and are targeted at Asian yuppies who are keen to learn about the local culture.

He added: "We want to provide guests with intimate knowledge about the destination – its history, culture and heritage."

Khirul described this as the "information hungry market" and tours that sold well in 2015 were those related to nature, soft adventure, culture and heritage.

He said that his company has seen a year-on-year growth ranging from 30 to 40 per cent from shorthaul markets such as Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia. Tours that combined Brunei with Sabah or Sarawak also sold well.

According to Khirul, the international media publicity the Sultanate gained since it imposed Sharia law in 2014 generated more interest among the Muslim community in ASEAN, drawing visitors from Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia to visit Brunei. This in turn had helped the company to further promote Islamic experience tour packages which showcase the Sultanate's Malay Islamic monarchy and how Islam as a religion is practised.

VIEWPOINTS

What are your business prospects for 2016?

Khirul Zainie, managing director, MegaBorneo Tour Planner

In 2016, we will focus on regional markets as this is where we have the best connectivity.

Also, more Asians are looking for new destinations to travel within Asia itself. We will still do marketing in Europe and keep tabs there. For now, due to the political instability in the Middle East, we believe Europeans are holding back travel to Asia. We believe once things go back to normal, maybe in the second half of 2016, there will be desire to travel to these parts.

CP Foo, general manager, Century Travel Centre

We believe tourism will be given a greater emphasis next year, especially after the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism – following the cabinet reshuffle announcement in October 2015 – was set up. It shows the government is giving more weight to the tourism industry.

We also hope Brunei Tourism will participate in more travel fairs, which it had scaled down quite a bit in recent years. We believe intra-ASEAN travel will grow provided there are no acts of terrorism and natural disasters in this region.





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Destination Brunei

HOW TO SELL

Orchid Garden Hotel



DO visit **Ulu Temburong National Park**, which is the crown jewel of Brunei's prized green spaces. There are many experiences to savour. Watch gibbons forage along the

river at daybreak, or take on the Grade I and II rapids on the Temburong River. The park can be visited as a day trip but an overnight or multi-day stay allows you to make the most of the experience.

Ulu Temburong National Park



Brunei Museum

SEE exquisite illuminated copies of the Koran, antique ceramics, jewellery, weapons and coins at **Brunei Museum**, which is famed for its collection of Islamic art and artefacts. The museum's Islamic Art Gallery showcases a superb collection acquired by His Majesty The Sultan. The other galleries contribute to an interesting overview of the country with spotlights on on the region's history, culture, flora and fauna, and oil and gas.

showcases local handicraft such as Brunei brocade, silverware and *keris*, an ornamental dagger. It is a great place to get a feel of the country's food and culture, and provides a view of Kampong Ayer.

EAT **Tarindak D'Seni** serves traditional Brunei-Malay specialities and

STAY **Orchid Garden Hotel** is an independent four-star hotel that offers quality service and value for money. It is conveniently located within a 10-minute drive to most places in the city, and less than five minutes' drive from the airport. The hotel has complimentary Wi-Fi in its 144 rooms, a spa, 24-hour fitness centre, two meeting rooms and a ballroom which can fit up to 600 people in theatre seating.

Destination in numbers

213,229

The number of tourist arrivals for 2016, up from 207,019 tourists in 2015

45

The total number of hotels, resorts and apartments in Brunei. In all, there are a total of 3648 rooms

3.5 days

The average length of stay of foreign tourists who visit Brunei

WHAT'S NEW



Clockwise from above: Sumbiling Eco Village; Freme Travel's Rainforest Lodge; Brunei Maritime Museum

1 Mangrove Paradise Resort

Mangrove Paradise Resort added 10 villas in September 2015. Each villa includes three bedrooms, a spacious living room, a kitchen, a dining area and a jacuzzi.

The resort is located less than 10 minutes' drive from the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan. Besides the new villas, it also offers 15 one-bedroom chalets.

2 Sumbiling Eco Village

Sumbiling Eco Village in Temburong District offers a comfortable stay surrounded by shady trees and new growth forests. The village is located right on the banks of an upstream stretch of the Temburong River. The eco-lodge features fully-functioning toilets, three rooms, while there are five tents for those who wish to experience camping amid nature.

3 Freme Travel's Rainforest Lodge

In early 2015, Freme Travel Services introduced its new Adventure Course and

refurbished Rainforest Lodge.

The lodge can accommodate more than 40 people in wooden bunker beds and a further 15 in large tents. It also boasts a new terrace dining area and kitchen.

4 Brunei Darussalam Maritime Museum

Located at Kota Batu, Brunei Darussalam Maritime Museum opened in March 2015. It showcases the sultanate's history as a maritime trade empire and is a repository of the country's maritime history.

The museum is made up of three viewing galleries – The Brunei Ship Wreck Gallery, The Brunei Water Vessels Gallery and Temporary Gallery. The museum is open from Saturday to Thursday from 09.00 to 17.00.

5 Bintudoh Greenspring Resort

Bintudoh Greenspring Resort opened in March this year in Tutong District, 45km from Bandar Seri Begawan.



The resort comprises six chalets and a 14-pax dormitory, accommodating a maximum of 26 people. Facilities include

a multipurpose hall and a café.

Guests can enjoy fishing at the fish pond or stroll in the garden.

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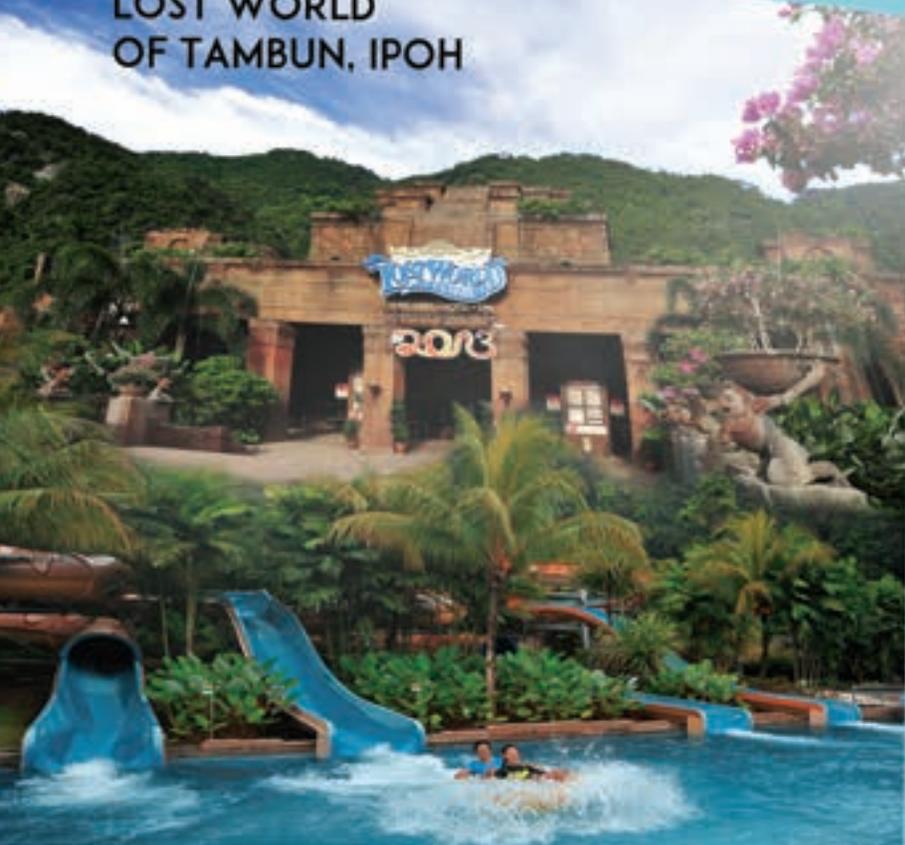
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Investing in fresh ideas

Arrival growth has slowed for Cambodia in the past year but trade players remain upbeat, expecting new tourism products to sustain interest, writes [Michael Mackey](#)

Angkor Wat Temple Complex continues to be a main draw



Tourism in Cambodia continued to grow steadily over the past year, albeit at a slower rate than the record 24.4 per cent in 2012.

The country welcomed 4.5 million tourists in 2014, and 3.3 million visitors at the end of September 2015 – a distance from the tourism bureau's arrival target of five million for 2015. While industry sentiments are mixed about the country's ability to achieve this goal, some hoteliers the *Daily* spoke to expressed confidence of another good year in 2016.

"2015 has been the best year yet in terms of occupancy, room rate and Rev-

Par for both Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra and Sofitel Angkor Phokeethra Golf and Spa Resort," said Charles-Henri Chévet, area general manager of the two Accor properties.

Dean White, director of sales & marketing with Anantara Angkor Resort & Spa, who had reported a year-on-year double-digit RevPAR growth in 2015, expects to see growth in business from the US, South America and China, catalysed by targeted sales and marketing initiatives in these key feeder markets.

However, strong competition among hotels would limit growth opportunities in room rates, he noted.

A slew of new tourism experiences is expected to help grow – or at least sustain – travellers' interest in Cambodia. These fresh draws include trekking in the hills of Monduliri province, wildlife experiences in Koh Kong, rock climbing in Siem Reap and Kampot, new eco-tourism programmes that span from Pailin province to Kirirom National Park, and new and "amazing" golf courses at Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Koh Kong, according to Carrol Sahaidak-Beaver, executive director of the Cambodia Hotels Association.

Diethelm Travel Cambodia has added a new river dolphin watching programme at Kratie and Steung Treng.

Accessibility into and within Cambodia is being improved too. A number of new roads are being built, notably National Highway Route 6 which will cut travel time from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap to about six hours, while airports at Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville are being expanded to take on greater passenger volumes in 2016. – **Additional reporting by Greg Lowe**

Destination in numbers

US\$2.7 billion

Tourist receipts made by Cambodia in 2014, up from US\$100 million in 1995

42.4 per cent

Visitors from ASEAN member nations to Cambodia formed the bulk of total arrivals in the first nine months of 2015. Under a third were from North-east Asian countries and only 15 per cent from Europe

VIEWPOINTS "What are your business prospects for 2016?"

Pierre Jungo, managing director, Diethelm Travel Cambodia



We expect a slight increase over 2015, coming from existing clients but mainly from new ones. We expect the established South American market to continue growing and we hope (to see more from) developing new markets in Canada and the US.

Laurent Kuenzle, CEO, Asian Trails



We will grow our leisure and incentive business in Cambodia in 2016 by acquiring new clients, entering new source markets, and enhancing technology and connectivity. There is an increase in incentive demand for Siem Reap and we will capitalise on these opportunities.

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HOW TO SELL

DO **Cambodia Cycling** offers a 13-day/12-night Tour de Cambodia which covers all Cambodian sites for US\$1,457 plus US\$300 for bike hire.

Easier on the knees and wallet are the one-day trekking tours, some as cheap as US\$38, that run near the iconic Angkor Wat Temple Complex.

WHAT'S NEW

1 Anantara Angkor Resort & Spa's photography tours

Anantara Angkor Resort & Spa, Siem Reap is offering exclusive photography tours of the iconic Angkor Wat Temple Complex led by John McDermott, long considered the complex's best photographer.

The tours are tailored to the personal interests of each guest, with half-day programmes priced at US\$350 per couple and full-day at US\$600 per couple.

2 Cuisine Wat Damnak

Cuisine Wat Damnak in Siem Reap was placed on the list of the Top 50 Restaurants in Asia in March 2015, joining its other recognition as San Pellegrino's Best Restaurant in Cambodia.

Run by chef Joannès Rivièrè, the restaurant takes pride in using local ingredients such as ambarella, feroniella and kuy fruits, as well as seafood harvested only from the Mekong and Lake Tonlé Sap.

Dishes are served in an elegant converted colonial villa which offers guests a unique experience.

3 Dara Sakor Seashore Resort

Dara Sakor Seashore Resort on the island of Koh Kong has an 18-hole Ocean Course golf course that is designed to fit the Koh Kong coastline. With the forest on one side and the Gulf of Thailand on the other, golfers are treated to spectacular views in addition to a good play. The resort will open two more courses soon.

4 Heritage Adventure's Luxury Camp

The Luxury Camp at Banteay Ampeul Temple by Heritage Adventures puts travellers for a night under the stars in private and spacious tents furnished with modern comforts. Verandas overlooking the jungle canopy are lit by oil lamps and candles, adding a charming touch to the experience.

5 Made in Cambodia Market

The Made in Cambodia market springs up in front of the Shinta Mani Resort in Siem Reap every Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday, bringing together the best examples of local craftsmanship from internationally recognised artisans and designers such as Angkor Artwork, Cambolac, Eric Stocker Laque & Textures, Saomao and Grace Gecko Creations.

SEE Nobody leaves Cambodia without first visiting the **Angkor Wat Temple Complex**, a huge architectural wonder built in the 12th century and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site that receives two million visitors a year.

The temple complex is spread over 162 hectares and while it can be explored in a day, a two-day programme is a more sensible option as it allows the sheer

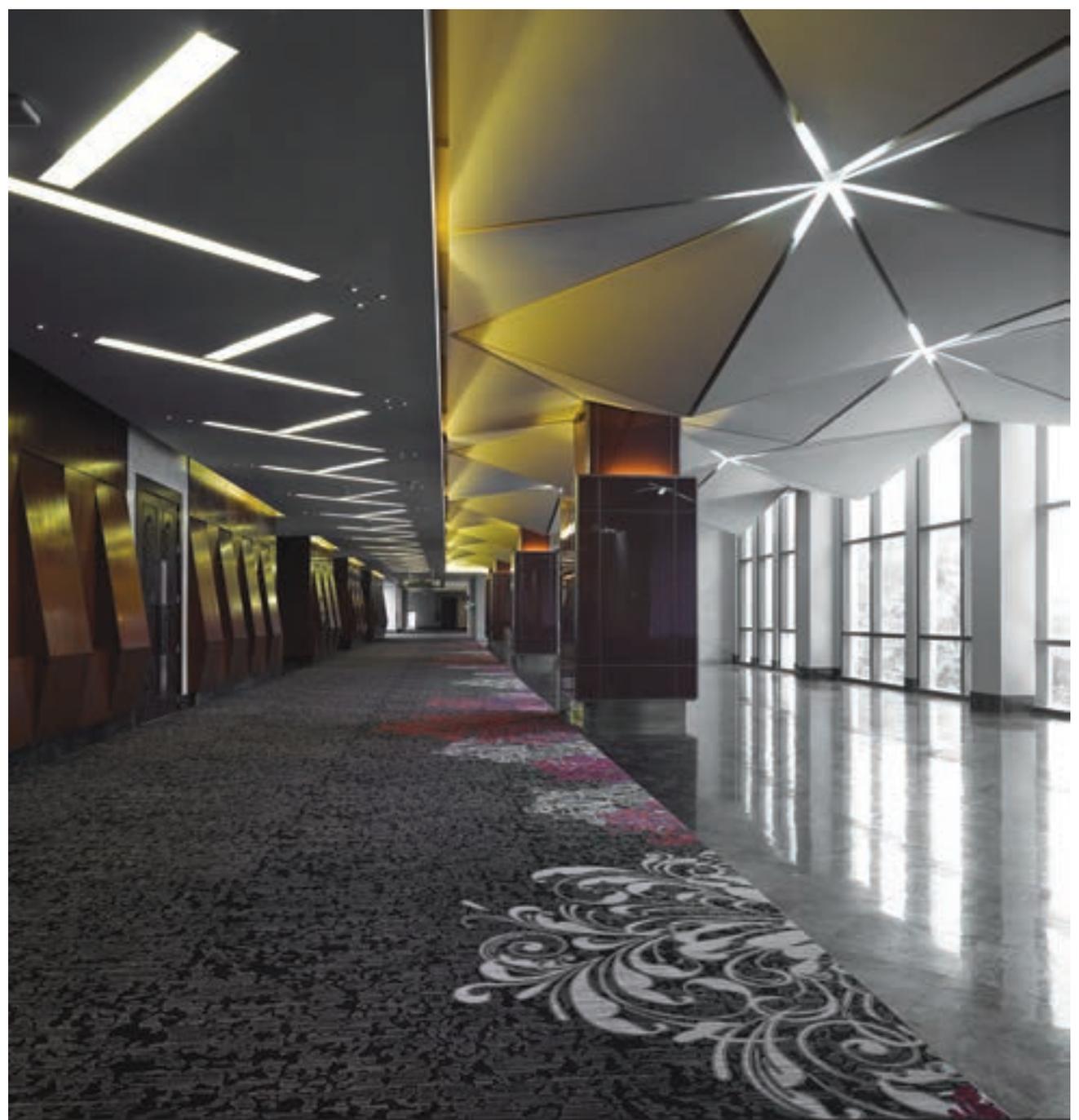
majesty of the place to sink in.

EAT **Mahob Khmer Cuisine Restaurant** in Siem Reap is a culinary hotspot that takes traditional Khmer cuisine seriously.

It uses only fresh and local ingredients to produce a range of local favourites served in a house beautifully decorated in traditional Khmer style and features an attractive leaf roof sourced from the Kulen Mountain.

STAY The 523-room **Sokha Phnom Penh** is built on the Chroy Changvar peninsula and is one of the larger hotels in the capital, making it a quiet property to escape from the hustle and bustle of the city.

It offer great views of the Royal Palace, the confluence of the Mekong, Bassac, and Tonle Sap rivers, and the nearby countryside.



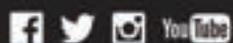
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Destination Laos

Visitors without borders

Growing interest in this backwater destination has helped to increase the number of gateways for travellers who seek to visit the land-linked nation, writes **S Puvaneswary**



Infrastructure in Laos has improved over the years

Laos' determination to move from being a land-locked destination to a land-linked one has bode well for its tourism industry.

Continued development of essential infrastructure for road and air connectivity is making it easier for neighbouring travellers to enter Laos through a number of gateways beyond its four international airports.

As such, the country has seen its international arrival figures grow by close to 13 per cent in 1H2015, which translates to an incremental inbound volume increase of more than 260,000 additional international arrivals.

The result is less than 10 per cent behind PATA's forecast for 1Q2015 and it will come close to PATA's full year prediction that the country will receive in excess of five million international visitors for the first time ever.

Furthermore, Laos has substantially

improved its relative position within the ASEAN bloc over successive first-half year periods, rising from a relative share of 4.2 per cent of all international arrivals into South-east Asia during 1H2010 to around 5.2 per cent after for 1H2015.

Of the top growth markets into Laos in 1H2015, four are from Asia. It is led by Thailand, which has contributed more than 96,000 additional arrivals individually between 1H2014 and 1H2015. This is followed by China, Vietnam, South Korea and France. Collectively, these five source markets have added close to 270,000 additional foreign arrivals in 1H2015 as compared to 1H2014.

The outlook is strong as well with PATA predicting that Laos will receive well around 9.4 million foreign arrivals annually by 2020, and that the projected volume of foreigners will generate US\$1.3 billion in tourism receipts.

WHAT'S NEW

1 Lao Experiences

Food lovers can gather at Lao Experiences in Vientiane, a place where visitors can enjoy a variety of food and learn how to prepare it. It offers a programme that takes visitors to a local market where they pick up fresh ingredients, before returning to the facility to learn how to whip up a Laotian meal.

Taking up an activity with Lao Experiences allows visitors to support the local community, as the operator seeks to empower the local people as they share knowledge and skills with visitors. This initiative also supports local producers by buying ingredients directly from growers.

2 Tree Top Explorer

The Tree Top Explorer allows visitors to enjoy new jungle experiences and a number of environmentally friendly activities.

The zipline will fly daredevils into the jungle while passing a huge waterfall. Visitors can also abseil down the 100m water-wall, while those desiring something slower can trek through the forest and enjoy food made from organic produce straight from nature's backyard.

3 Laos Pandaw

The Irrawaddy Flotilla Company debuted a 10-night Laos itinerary in 2015 that is operated on the Laos Pandaw, a new luxury ship with 10 staterooms.

The itinerary includes two nights in



Laos Pandaw

Destination in numbers

5

The number of years needed for the completion of a new airport located 35km from Vientiane

1,911

The number of guesthouses to date. In total, they boast 24,667 rooms and 30,017 beds

26 million

The number of airline seats in 2015, just 0.75 per cent of the total arrivals into South-east Asia

In addition, seats on scheduled international airlines have increased by 22 per cent between 2012 and 2015.

John Koldowski, member of the Tourism Action Group, a specialist unit within the College of Innovation at Thailand's Thammasat University, said: "Positioning Laos as being land-linked as opposed to land-locked is uncovering new potential."

"The rise in tourism has improved the focus on attractions and natural sites. As more of these are restored and/or protected, a greater wealth of assets becomes available to the benefit of the tourists and the country alike."

Koldowski added: "The perception of being land-linked also opens up opportunities for Laos as it recognises the potential of being the only Greater Mekong Subregion country bordering Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and China's Yunnan."

UNESCO World Heritage-listed Luang Prabang, and expeditions to tribal villages in the Laotian jungle, crossing rapids, gorges and jungle pools. Expeditions began on November 1, 2015, with more departures in January and February 2016.

VIEWPOINTS

What are Laos' tourism prospects in the years to come?

John Koldowski, professor, College of Innovation, Thammasat University



Laos is on a strong growth track and by 2020, it will have close to four times more foreign arrivals annually than it did in 2010.

Inbound arrivals by 2020 will be dominated by Asian visitors, with Thailand and Vietnam supplying over 80 per cent of traffic.

Laos will become an even more significant player in the Greater Mekong Subregion, with its share among the South-east Asian players rising from 7.7 per cent in 2010 to over 11 per cent in 2020.

HOW TO SELL

DO **Diethelm Travel Laos - Ock Pop Tok excursions.** Diethelm Travel Laos has partnered Ock Pop Tok – a socially-responsible fair trade textile institution – to launch excursions showing traditional Lao textile production.

Visitors can see the creation of silk, the weaving process, learn the meaning behind the motifs and try their hand at dyeing their own scarf. Proceeds from the tours help to pay out fair wages, ensure safe working conditions and cultivate markets that provide a sustainable source of income for artisans and their communities.



SEE the **Tat Somphamit Waterfalls.** One of the country's hidden gems, the cascading falls is one thing adventure and nature lovers should not miss.

Visitors can rent a bicycle from Don Det and to enjoy an easy ride to the stunning water feature. There is also a great little beach where visitors can rest and cool down.

EAT at **Tamnak Lao Restaurant.** The restaurant on Sakkarine Road in the town of Luang Prabang serves up Laotian dishes including *laap*, a spicy minced beef salad that comes flavoured with fragrant herbs and seasonings. It is the country's national dish.

STAY at the **Best Western Vientiane Hotel.** Formerly the Tai-Pan Hotel, this 44-room property is located in the heart of old Vientiane, a short distance away from the Mekong River and close to shopping areas, restaurants and tourist attractions. Facilities include a restaurant, an outdoor pool with poolside services, a business centre, a fitness centre and a meeting room.

WELCOME TO THE THEME PARK CAPITAL OF SOUTH EAST ASIA!

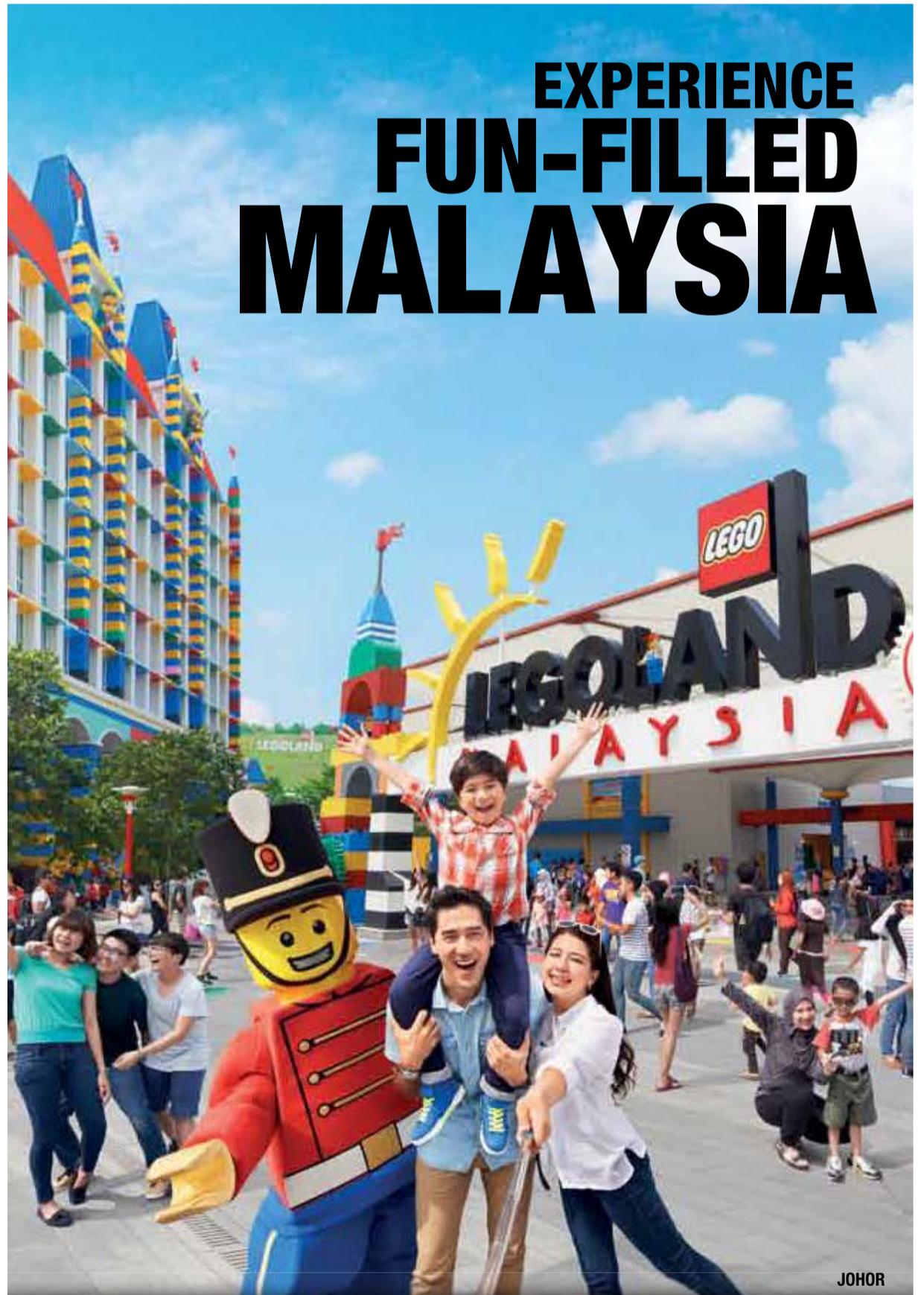
Malaysia is known for its many landmark attractions such as the Petronas Twin Towers, the serene and beautiful Sipadan Island off the coast of Borneo and UNESCO World Heritage sites like George Town, Penang. Now, Malaysia is all set to become a choice family destination for theme parks! Currently, the tropical paradise is home to 16 theme and water parks, with 10 more being reported to be opening in the next few years.

To the south, one can already find Legoland Malaysia in Johor – the first Legoland in all of Asia. It houses more than 40 rides, shows and attractions and has since expanded to include a water park and hotel. Besides Legoland, Johor also features other smaller-scaled theme parks such as Sanrio Hello Kitty Park and the Angry Birds Activity Park.

In Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, vacationers can head over to Sunway Lagoon - a multipark attraction, with over 80 attractions for both adults and children. Visitors can have a jolly good time at five different park categories such as Wildlife, Scream, Water, Amusement, and Extreme Park, featuring a petting zoo, the world's largest man-made surf beach, and the world's largest water ride – the Vuvuzela. It will soon open the Nickelodeon Lost Lagoon theme park, the first in Asia.

In the next few years, other big-name theme parks will be making Malaysia their home such as Movie Animation Park Studios, Twentieth Century Fox World, as well as Ubisoft, the acclaimed game studio which produced mega award-winning titles such as Assassin's Creed and Far Cry.

Movie Animation Park Studios is set to open with more than 40 rides in Ipoh next year, while Twentieth Century Fox Studios will be opening in Resorts World Genting, with about 25 rides and attractions based on Fox films such as 'Aliens vs. Predator', 'Ice Age' and 'Planet of the Apes'. Once opened, families will be hard-pressed to find a more exciting destination for their annual getaway! For more information, please visit Tourism Malaysia's new website, www.malaysia.travel.



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Meet the buyers



"We need new contacts to DMCs in Asia and the Pacific. We also need to find direct contacts to luxury hotels and resorts in Asia as well as bus companies and national tourist organisations to help form agreements with us to cater to our groups. Additionally, we are helping our customers look for new destinations to visit, relax and to prepare for conferences."

Andrew Babjew
Owner, Almbus Business Travel, Poland



"Destinations we are eyeing will be Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia for their river cruises, heritage sites and cultural interests, as well as the Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand. We are also always looking for new products, tours, venues and attractions. What a lot of inbound operators fail to understand is that many customers will come back every year if there is something new on offer, or else they will drift off to other destinations. My role is to seek out the leaders in the field and ATF is the perfect place to do that."

Chad Chadwick
Travel guru and founder, Leisure Travel & Cruises and Seniors@Leisure, Australia



"Destinations we are looking out for will be countries in Asia like the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos. We are also interested in MICE products, luxury tours, golf tours, hotel and transportation services, DMCs, golf courses and operators."

Liu Hui
CEO, Chengdu Great-Expectations MICE Company, China

"We are interested in Laos, Philippines and Myanmar."

Goh Hock Gin
Managing director, Bel Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd, Malaysia

"At ATF 2016 in Manila, I will focus on the Philippines – the wonderful nation organising the event this year. The economy has improved a lot lately and I will look for new resorts, partners and synergies there in the very contrasted provinces of this South-Pacific country. The Philippines has high-ranking resorts in unique locations. It is the only place in ASEAN where you can feel the flavour and lively traditions of the Spanish heritage. I am interested as well to take a better look at its wellness services as well as high-ranking boutique hotels."

Guillaume de Vaudrey
General manager, Cosmopolis, France

"I will like to find new, interesting things for my business and offer new products, events, hotels and destinations."

Roman Moroz
General manager, Fifth Ocean, Russia



"I am interested in establishing strong business relationships with Philippines DMCs, luxury hotels and resorts."

Azad Aliyev
Managing director, Eurotourism Company, Azerbaijan



"As regional events manager, I am responsible for planning and executing conferences and seminars throughout Asia, predominately Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. With an extensive calendar of

events throughout the region, I am continually seeking to find new hotels, convention centers, AV suppliers, transportation providers, unique venues, entertainment companies, speaker bureaus and more. With cutting edge technology and market leaders in the world, our conferences and seminars are not only aimed at increasing clients' knowledge of our products and services but to also have memorable experiences."

Josie Sinni
Regional events manager, Esri Australia & Esri South Asia Groups, Australia



"I see ATF as a platform for fresh opportunities and business connections. I will be looking for interesting new products in Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam and especially the Philippines as it tends to have potential for the Thai market."

Chotechuang Soorangura
Associate managing director, NS Travel & Tours, Thailand

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The event offers fresh perspectives on topical issues through PTM Forums and PTM Talks

Meet the buyers

"I am interested in products for the Philippines, Cambodia and Laos specifically because I am not very aware of these destinations."

Rave Gosain
Managing director, Mast Holiday, India



"I am very interested in building ties with the Philippines as we used to do a lot of group bookings to Cebu, but the market seems to have quietened down. We will love to revive that. We are also eager to promote Singapore, Japan, Brunei and other key, stable countries in Asia. I will also want to meet key Asian hotels, technology suppliers, DMCs and eco-friendly, green purveyors in tourism, as well as various travel related services."

Christopher John D'souza,
Global MICE consultant and site selector, Liberty Travel, USA

"I am on the lookout for city hotels, resorts, tourism boards, convention centres, airlines, cruise companies as well as DMCs in countries like the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar."

Mireille Berstein
General manager, MHB Congress International, France

"For ATF 2016, I am interested in Myanmar, Cambodia and South-east Asia. The products and services I need are boutique hotels, DMCs and tourism offices."

Dominique Fourre
Events manager, Events-Press, France

"We are interested in meetings, events, leisure and incentive products as well as DMC services in destinations like Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore."

Thazin Aung
Director, Nature Dream Travels & Tours Co. Ltd, Myanmar



"I am looking for accommodations – resorts, adventure and spa properties in the Philippines and Myanmar."

Arkadiusz Nowak
Chairman, Nowak Adventure Travel SP. Z P.P., Poland



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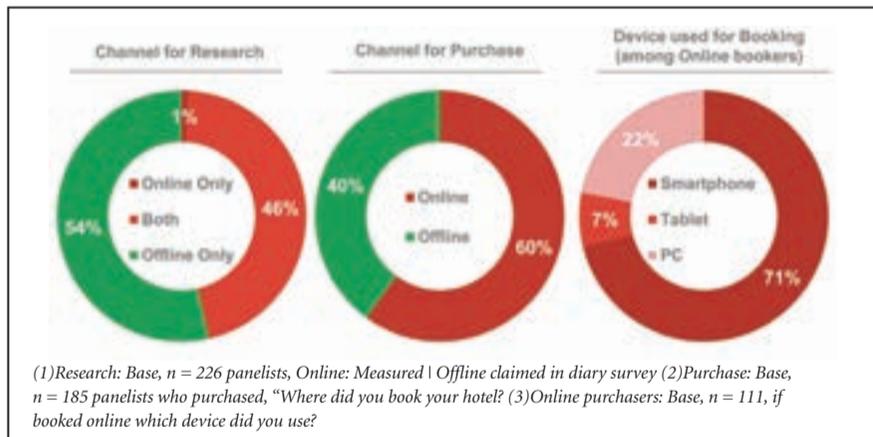
Buying into online shopping

Indonesians are savvy online researchers when it comes to shopping for hotel accommodation, with travel aggregator sites and search engines most commonly used, discovers a recent survey conducted by GfK and Google



In Indonesia where 41.2% of the population uses the Internet, it is hardly a surprise that online channels are found to be commonly used by consumers in researching (1% online only; 46% both online and offline) and booking (60%) their travel. Smartphones (71%) are the favoured device among online travel bookers, followed by PCs (22%) and tablets (7%). See Chart A.

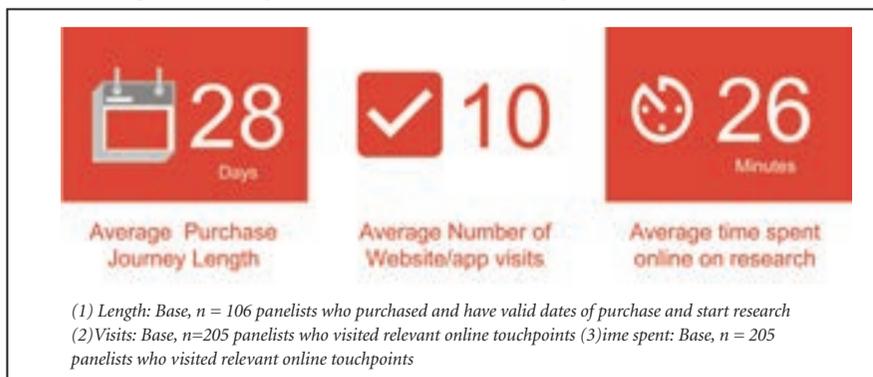
Chart A: Channels used for travel research and purchase



The findings came from a 2015 study conducted by GfK and Google to understand the hotel booking path taken by Indonesian consumers.

Indonesians spend an average of 28 days in researching hotel options (Chart B) before making the purchase, going through an average of different 10 websites and/or travel apps. While the hotel booking journey is long and purposive, the individual research sessions are short with an average duration of 26 minutes.

Chart B: Length of time spend on travel research and purchase

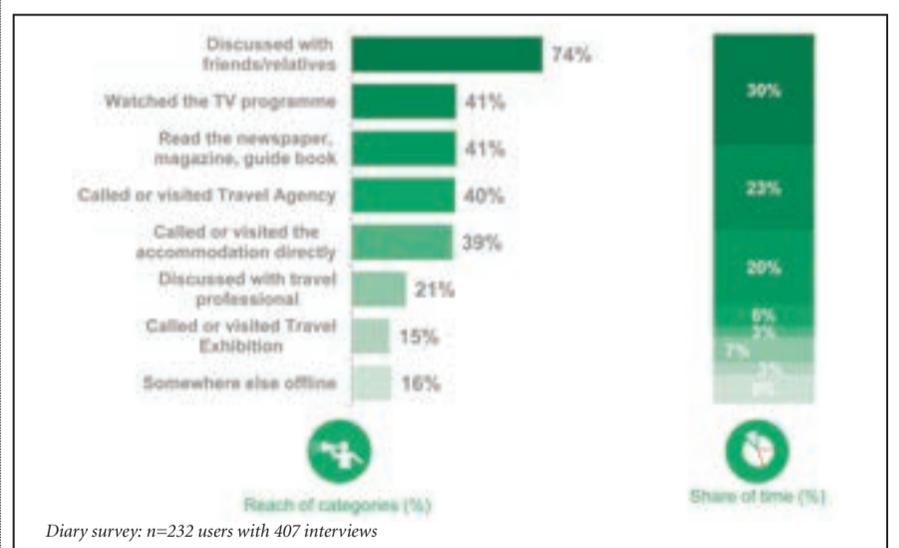


Travel online aggregators, search engines, maps and travel information – defined as one-way sources of information such as the website of a tourism bureau or travel blog – get the lion's share of online visits (44%), followed by transportation and airline companies (26%).

Traditional travel booking sources and social media are least used by Indonesian consumers – a 4% share of visits – in their purchase journey.

Among offline touchpoints (Chart C), word of mouth is the most dominant (74%). Indonesian consumers are also influenced by TV shows (41%) and print media (41%). Recommendations by travel consultants can impact hotel booking decisions too, with 40% of respondents indicating that calls and visits to travel agencies are an offline

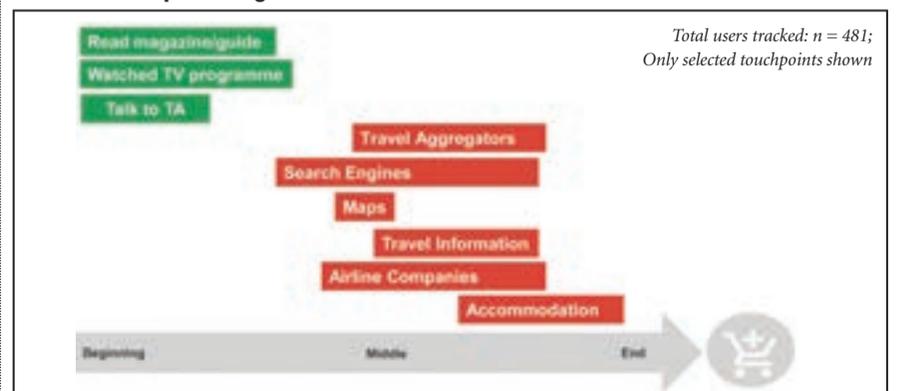
Chart C: Offline touchpoints in the purchase journey



touchpoint option in their purchase journey.

In fact, the study found that offline touchpoints are the initial influencers in the purchase journey (Chart D), with print media, TV programmes and conversations with travel consultants being common options. Searches through travel online aggregators, search engines, maps, travel information, airline companies and accommodation pro-

Chart D: Touchpoint stages and roles





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viders come in towards the middle and the end of the decision-making process.

While Indonesian consumers tend to make a complicated and fragmented on-line purchase journey (Chart E), moving back and forth between search engines, travel aggregators, maps, travel information sources, airline and transport companies, social media and traditional travel agencies, the search for hotel accommodation always begins with a search engine.

The thickness of the line connecting touchpoints shows the usage intensity of transitions and the importance of the interactions. The study found that respondents went most frequently between search engines and travel aggregators.

Explaining the growing importance of travel aggregators, Anthony Tan, associate director, APAC, Travel of GfK, said: "These days consumers are able to buy flight tickets and book hotel stays directly from travel aggregator sites, making these platforms a very convenient touchpoint in the search for hotel products."

"In fact, travel aggregators and online travel websites like Agoda, Booking.com and Traveloka are so commonly used by Indonesian consumers in their purchase process that hotel websites pale in comparison," Tan added.

"We found that respondents rarely consulted websites of hotel properties and chain in deciding which hotel to book."

Tan's observation is captured by Chart F, which shows thick interaction lines connecting Google Search with travel aggregators and online travel websites. Respondents are, however, less reliant on hotel websites, as indicated by the weak lines that connect Google Search to accommodation websites.

"This mapping tells us that accommodation sites aren't doing enough to attract the attention of consumers. They need to do more to entice consumers to visit, and we think large hotel chains have the economies of scale (due to a varied portfolio of brands and properties) to achieve greater visibility during the online purchase journey," commented Tan.

In considering hotel options (Chart G), price continues to be a key driver of choice among Indonesian travellers – 35% regarded this as the most important factor, while 64% felt it had overall importance. Facilities ranked second, with 64% regarding it as having a critical bearing on decision and 13% thinking it is the most important factor.

While an increasing number of hotels are setting themselves up as non-smoking properties to cater to a growing number of health-conscious, non-smoker travellers, the option of having smoking and non-smoking rooms was deemed of "overall importance" by only 2% of respondents.

Chart E: Online purchase journey map for hotel booking, category level

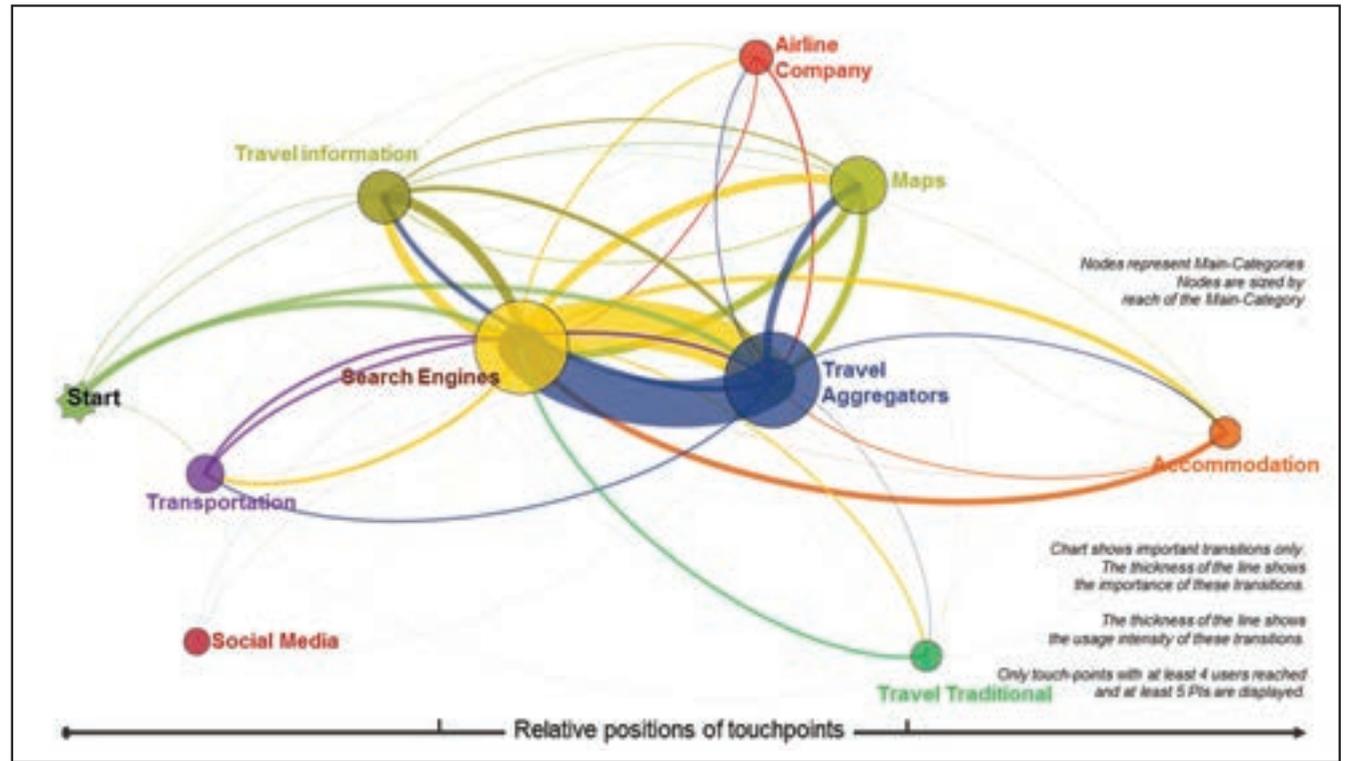


Chart F: Online journey map for Hotel booking: App/Domain level

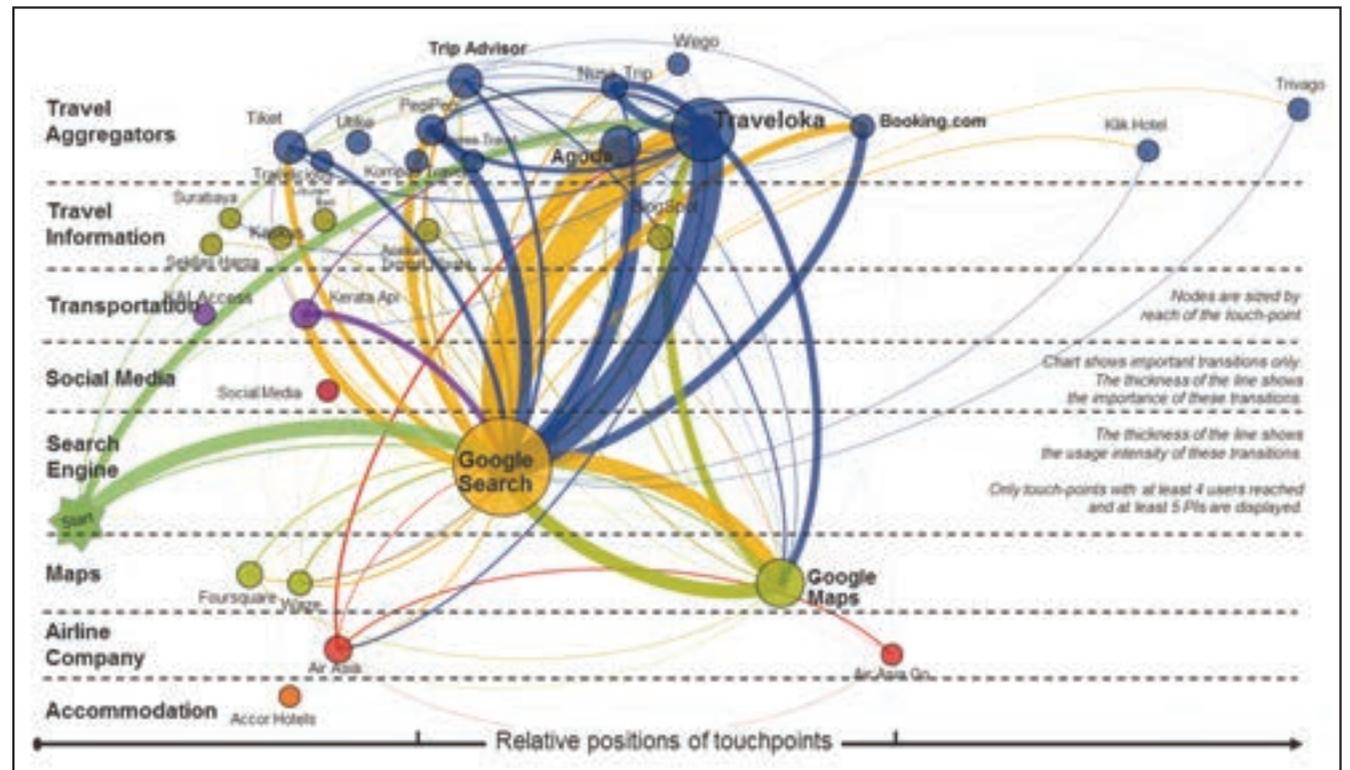
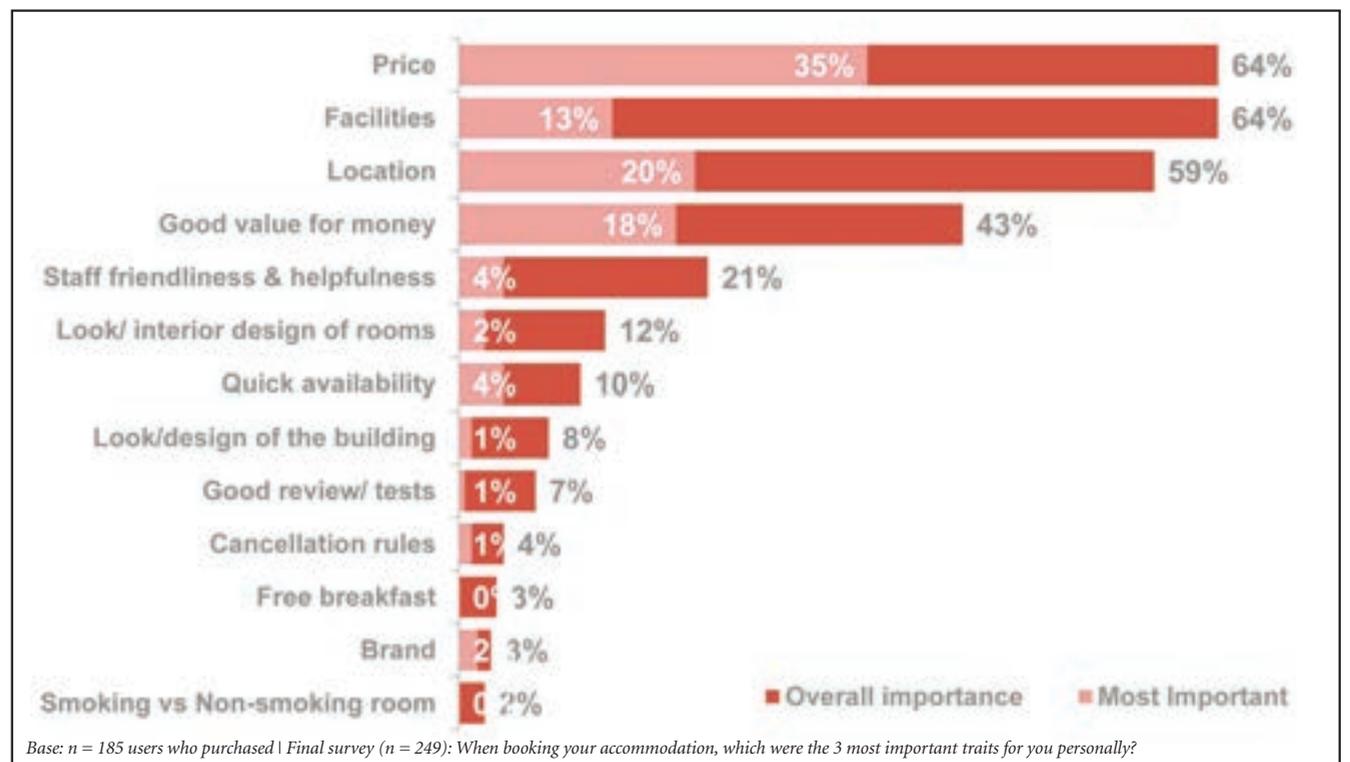


Chart G: Key factors in choosing hotel accommodation



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News/Snapshots

Travel bug strikes people of Myanmar

Outbound traffic climbs, with most visiting neighbouring destinations

By Sid Dhartha and Paige Lee Pei Qi

WHILE Myanmar has attracted considerable interest as a tourism destination since the country opened its doors in 2011, it is now emerging as the region's last frontier outbound market as more Myanmar travellers head out to explore destinations in South-east Asia.

Myanmar's Ministry of Hotels & Tourism in December implemented a compulsory license for travel companies seeking to sell overseas trips to Myanmar nationals. The outbound licenses have since been issued to 10 new tour companies and more are expected to apply for approval this year.

Industry players are seeing encouraging signs of growth from the Myanmar outbound sector, with Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore being the most preferred destinations.

Sai Khan Hlaing, managing director of Air Tour Myanmar,

said outbound numbers rose 30 per cent in 2015 over numbers from years ago, owing to positive changes in the country's media landscape as well as economic growth which made consumers more inclined to travel overseas.

"Outbound was up 30 to 40 per cent in 2015 when compared to 2014 or 2013," said Lynn Zaw Wai Mang, executive director of Unique Asia Travel and Tours, who is expecting the same growth in 2016.

He added that 60 per cent of Myanmar travellers choose to visit Thailand due to shorter flight hours compared to other ASEAN routes, availability of low-cost to premium flights to choose from, and reasonable hotel rates.

Hein Thant, managing director of Myanmar Aviation Centre, said demand for the top four South-east Asian destinations – Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia – is grow-

ing up to 35 per cent every year, "especially among middle-class families".

Travel specialists in the region expect the new outbound license will bring better business prospects.

"I believe business will be done more properly and new travel consultants (coming into the market) will boost outbound traffic from Myanmar," Samson Tan, GTMC Travel's CEO told the *Daily*. "Tourists from Myanmar to Singapore have been increasing since Myanmar opened up a few years back. They are mostly group travellers visiting families and friends in Singapore."

Luxury Tours & Travel Singapore's director, Michael Lee, said: "Although Singapore is expensive, high-end travellers from Myanmar can afford it so we can foresee an even bigger growth with the implementation of the outbound license. There will be more travel agencies (in Myanmar) and (they will build) greater awareness of different destinations."



Tan: greater professionalism in travel



Singapore gets ready to host ATF next year

By Paige Lee Pei Qi

SINGAPORE will be leveraging on her identity as a smart and cultural city as the destination gets ready to host ATF 2017.

Speaking to the *Daily* on the sidelines of the 43rd meeting of the ASEAN NTOs, John Conceicao, executive director, International Group Planning & Oceania, Singapore Tourism Board (STB), said: "We can look forward to the use of good technology to enhance meetings (in the next ATF) because that is one of our strengths in terms of being a smart city."

Conceicao also added that ATF next year will coincide with the Singapore Art Week.

He said: "We are trying to marry the two events together to showcase Singapore's strength in

the area of arts and lifestyle."

While there is no venue confirmation yet, Conceicao said the opening gala dinner and closing ceremony are opportunities for Singapore to utilise unconventional spaces, such as museums, for an "extra special" experience.

Moreover, Conceicao highlighted that it will be ASEAN's 50th anniversary next year, hence it is even more compelling to let the delegates bring home a memorable experience.

For ATF 2017, STB has brought in the National Association of Travel Agents Singapore and the Singapore Hotel Association as co-organisers of TRAVEX, the travel trade event held in conjunction with the forum.

Sublime socials at Pangaea Manila

By Eugene Tang



Philippine Dept of Tourism's Benito Bengzon, TTG Asia Media's Darren Ng, Ministry of Tourism & Culture Malaysia's Ong Hong Peng, Singapore Tourism Board's Leong Yue Kheong, Tourism Promotion Board Philippines' Domingo Ramon Enerio, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism Myanmar's Tint Thwin, ASEAN Secretariat's Tran Don Phuong, Ministry of Tourism Cambodia's Neb Samouth, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism Lao PDR's Souh Manivong and Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism Vietnam National Administration of Tourism's Ha Van Sieu



Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand's Nanan Sinthusiri, Sukunlaya Singhaphan, Jaruwan Rajitpan, Wiparat Tharateerapab, Mingkwan Chitapong, Janjirapon Piboonthiti and Pongsakorn Rudravanija



Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand's Urairatana Naothaworn, Singapore Tourism Board's John Conceicao, Jaz Loo Zhao Mian, Nurul Fahimah Iskandar and Christina Chan



ASEAN Secretariat's Eddy Krismeidi Soemawilaga, IJM Corporation Malaysia's Ajit Singh, Taylor's University Malaysia's Victor Wee, Grand Andaman Myanmar's Myo Win Than and Khine Kyaw



Ministry of Hotels & Tourism Myanmar's Tint Thwin, Ministry of Tourism Indonesia's I Gde Pitana, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism Lao PDR's Souh Manivong, ASEAN Secretariat's Tran Don Phuong and Philippine Tourism's Maria Rica Bueno



Ministry of Tourism Indonesia's Aulia Chloridiana and Rinto Simbalon

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Amazing Philippines

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For 75 years, Philippine Airlines has been taking you to your life's journeys - your exciting travels, your festive celebrations, and your happy homecomings. We make each travel moment more special with the warmth of our smile, our unique hospitality, and with the Heart that is truly Filipino.



Host city

Beneath the Manila sky



Regardless of what type of traveller you are, the capital of the Philippines has something that will interest you. Five travel industry veterans give suggestions on what to do in and around the city

What's great about Manila for foodies?

Adventurous bellies will find a home in the quaint neighbourhood of Kapitolyo, a short drive away from the Ortigas CBD.

Manila's local foodies pay homage to the quirky homegrown restaurants which line its colourful streets. A fun food crawl usually begins at the eclectic Café Juanita, which serves Filipino ratatouille and pasta aligüe (crab fat); Silantro for a fiery fusion of Filipino and Mexican favourites; Gostoso Piri Piri Chicken for a Portuguese twist; and Uncle Moe's tried-and-tested shawarma.

Odette A Huang

Group director of sales and marketing
The Discovery Leisure Company, Inc.



What's great about Manila for night owls?

Manila is a city that fully transforms from the busy offices in the daytime to colourful city streets at night. One should catch the sunset at Manila Bay. The serene view is calming, as it marks the end of another work day.

After a productive day, it's great to catch up with family or friends over dinner or cocktails. To avoid the rush hour traffic and have a good time, a good choice for a stopover is the lobby lounge of the New World Manila Bay Hotel. Guests can order their favourite cocktails while being entertained by a nightly live musical performance.

Mark Heywood

General manager
New World Manila Bay Hotel



What's great about Manila for nature lovers?

There are a couple of spaces for nature lovers within the metro that not many people know. One is the Las Pinas-Paranaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area along the Coastal Road, it is where birdwatchers converge.

Another is the Rainforest Adventure Experience Pasig City which boasts a botanical garden, a labyrinth called aMAZE Garden, lagoon, camping area, flower garden, and an adventure park for extreme sports.

An hour or two from the metro is Antipolo city and various towns in Rizal. These are sparsely populated and unspoilt, and come complete with rolling hills, mountains, farmlands and plantations.

Paul So

Managing director
Great Sights Travel & Tours



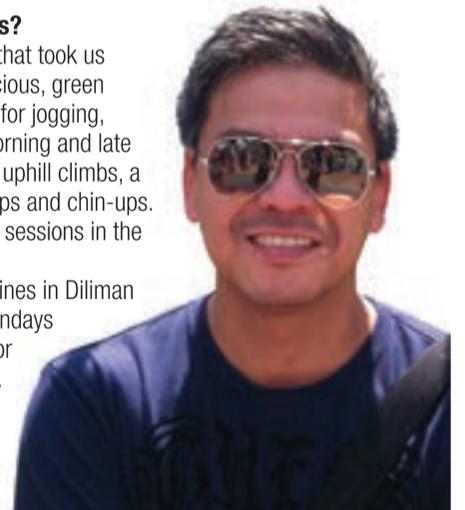
What's great about Manila for active folks?

My son and I recently bought mountain bikes that took us to Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City. Quiet, spacious, green and framed by tall trees, the area is the place for jogging, walking, cycling and exercising in the early morning and late afternoon. It has trails for jogging and cycling, uphill climbs, a track and field course and equipment for sit-ups and chin-ups. Feel free to join the occasional group exercise sessions in the Grandstand.

The grounds of the University of the Philippines in Diliman is also cool for the active folk especially on Sundays where cars are not allowed. There are areas for cycling, skateboarding, flying kites and soccer.

JP Cabalza

Managing director
Cencorp Travel and Tours



What's great about Manila for fans of the arts?

Manila has a long thriving art scene, having produced a number of world-renowned Filipino artists and where museums, art galleries and art exhibitions abound.

Raffles Makati's An Affair of the Art package takes guests to the National Museum of the Philippines, Ayala Museum and a contemporary art gallery, among other interesting itineraries. The hotel also has an Art Concierge Tour enabling guests to view thousands of original artwork depicting various scenes around the Philippines which the hotel commissioned when it was built a few years ago.

Eugene Tamesis

Director of sales and marketing
Fairmont Makati and Raffles Makati



TOP REASONS 10 WHY SMX CONVENTION CENTER MANILA IS YOUR VENUE OF CHOICE



1 Amazing Accessibility

There's no place more convenient than being in the Mall of Asia complex where everything you will possibly ask for is right around you – from the Mall of Asia, the Arena, Shrine of Jesus Church, SM by the Bay to the Conrad Hotel Manila!

2

Brisk Walking on Bridges

Wondering what else to do after your events at SMX? Easy! With elevated foot bridges connecting SMX to the Conrad Hotel Manila and to the Mall of Asia where a walkway is also linked to the Arena, wandering around the complex is as easy as abc, making the most of your stay in the metro!

3

Trouble-free Transportation



If you are about to go to SMX Manila, here's what you need to know – within the complex are two key public transport terminals with a number of means for you to choose from in getting in, out and around the complex! To top it all off – SMX is less than three kilometers away from the central stations of the Metro Rail Transit (MRT) and the Light Rail Transit (LRT) and a mere 6 kilometers from the domestic and international airports via the new skyway!

4

Prestigious Partners

Whether you are organizing an exhibit, corporate or social function, SMX has partnered with only the best contractors, audio visual and sound and light providers, top tier caterers and hotels and other support services that will help you make your event a big success!

5

Huge Halls

Imagine a 9,130 square meters of space - so big you can fit 10,000 people in it! Yes, that's how expansive our halls are that you can stage the best crowds for concerts, conventions, even a circus! Not to mention industry expositions showcasing large machinery and equipment or huge automobiles, boats and trailer trucks!

6

Flexible Function Rooms

Turn your creative and wild ideas into reality with our fully-carpeted function rooms that can be transformed to any themed event imaginable! To name a few - weddings, debuts, corporate parties, product launches, scientific seminars, workshops and the like!

7

Modern Meeting Rooms

If you wish you had more privacy with your events, SMX offers modern meeting rooms where you can hold intimate gatherings with select friends, clients or audiences. With 15 cozy spaces to choose from, we are sure to provide you not just the best of our facility but the paramount experience of our service with the privacy you need!

8

Seamless Single-Stop Service

Experience SMX however small or big your event is with unparalleled levels of service from our highly-trained event managers dedicated to help you with your events.

9

Purposeful Packages

For any event you wish to hold, SMX carefully customizes packages to fit your venue requirements, from the most complex of requests to the minutest of details.



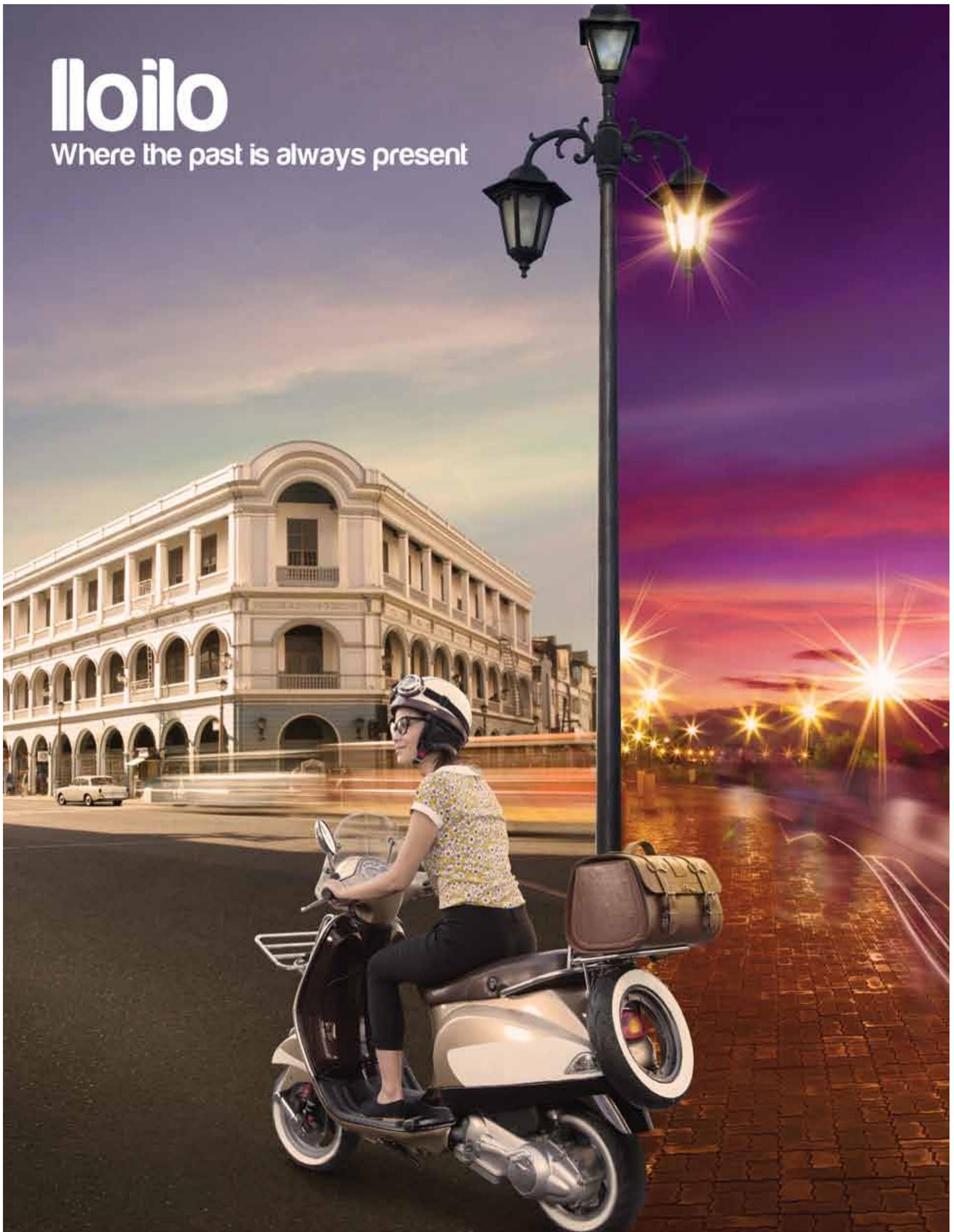
Promising Properties

Whether you are in the Metro, or have gone to the southern part of the country, SMX Convention Center properties and tradehalls are present across key locations - Megatrade Hall, SMX Aura, SMX Davao, SMX Bacolod and Cebu Trade Hall - to offer the same distinctive values you have come to expect: X-cellent locations, X-traordinary facilities and X-ceptional service.



Iloilo

Where the past is always present



Time travel through Philippine history on your next holiday. Visit Iloilo's sprawling mansions from bygone eras, Spanish colonial churches and art-deco plazas. Then dine alfresco while enjoying the view at the Iloilo River Esplanade.



Getting There: Accessible via air from Manila, Cebu, Davao, Hong Kong and Singapore



More Things to Do:

- Walk through Nelly's Garden, one of Iloilo's most famous heritage houses.
- Have a night out with friends in lively Smallville Complex along Diversion Road.
- Savor a steaming bowl of La Paz Batchoy at the public market.
- Stroll down Calle Real, known as the city's living museum.
- Party like a local at the colorful Dinagyang Festival, held every fourth Sunday of January.

It's more fun in the Philippines

