



Accor Hotels Supplement

AccorHotels #1 in Singapore



Sofitel Singapore Sentosa Resort and Spa, Singapore

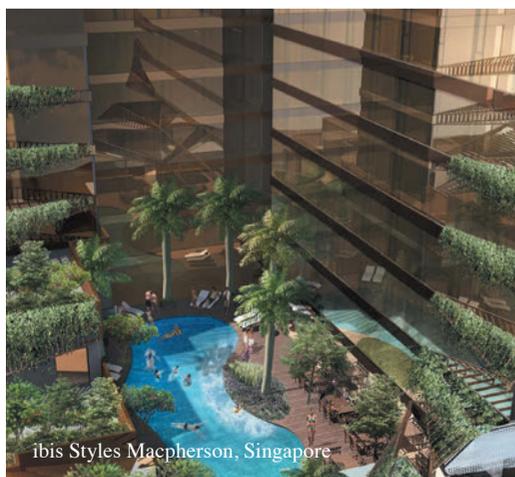
Following the announcement of several new-build hotels in the city, AccorHotels is the fastest-growing international operator in Singapore.

This year the group will launch the new Sofitel Singapore City Centre, a 222-room hotel that will be part of the multi-billion dollar Tanjong Pagar Centre, located between Chinatown and the CBD. The hotel will feature

the finest luxury accommodations complete with outdoor pool, plus executive lounge with stunning city views, a 620sqm ballroom and world-class restaurants and bars, as well as access for guests to a state-of-the-art Virgin Active Gym.

Also opening this year will be the ibis Styles Singapore Macpherson, built around a shopping mall and offering the

city's first lifestyle boutique hotel with custom furnishings, an outdoor pool and an all-inclusive offer of bed, breakfast and wi-fi for every guest. Nearby the Mercure Middle Road will open right in the centre of town opposite Bugis Junction Shopping Centre and will offer an infinity pool, rooftop entertainment deck and an executive lounge.



ibis Styles Macpherson, Singapore



Sofitel So Singapore, Singapore

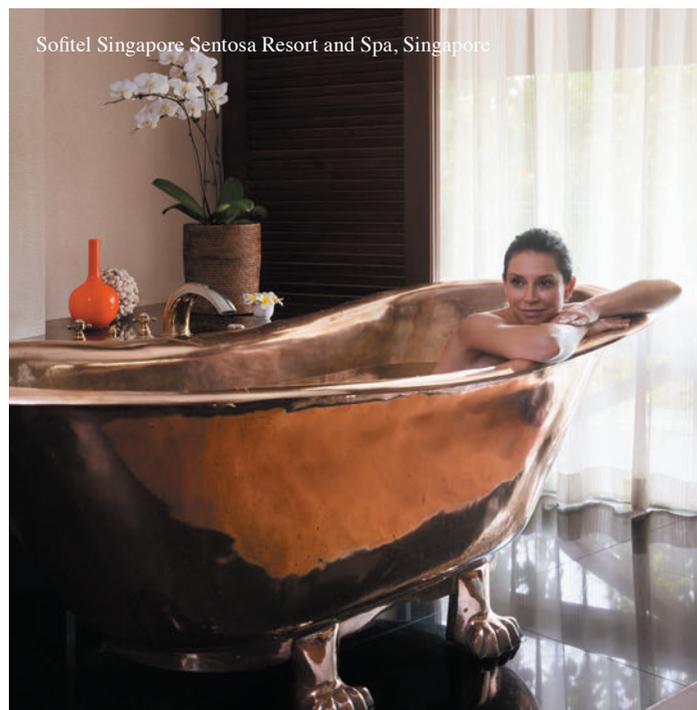


VIP guests join the Les Miserable cast on stage

ITB's Finest Event Takes Centre Stage

Last year guests at AccorHotels Asia Pacific ITB VIP Dinner enjoyed a spectacular performance from Les Misérables featuring 18 former cast members drawn from around the world. The intimate rendition of the show's most beloved musical numbers was a highlight of the ITB calendar for those who attended. Graham Wilson, Chief Marketing and Distribution Officer, AccorHotels Asia Pacific promises another magical evening tonight for all those attending but has refused to reveal who the star act will be.

SOFITEL UNVEILS LATEST LUXURY ADDRESSES



Sofitel Singapore Sentosa Resort and Spa, Singapore



Sofitel So Singapore, Singapore

The luxury Sofitel brand has enjoyed a record year of expansion in Asia Pacific, unveiling several landmark addresses.

Set on 27 acres of lush tropical woodlands and landscaped water gardens, Sofitel Singapore Sentosa Resort & Spa offers 215 spacious rooms with direct access to beautiful Tanjong Beach. Leisure facilities include two swimming pools, tennis, volleyball and badminton courts. There are several dining options including Kwee Zeen, and Il Lido at The Cliff, both boasting South China Sea views.

A key feature of the resort is the world's largest So SPA by Sofitel, offering 20 treatment rooms, six outdoor spa pavilions and a gorgeous spa garden complete with float pool and Singapore's only mudpool, where guests can purify and renew their skin with mineral-rich New Zealand volcanic mud.

In nearby Thailand, So Sofitel Hua Hin just opened its doors with 77 design-led rooms in a picturesque setting on Cha-am Beach, just over two hours' drive from Bangkok. Long favoured by the Thai aristocracy for its beautiful beaches and air of refinement, Hua Hin now has its first vibrant lifestyle luxury hotel which will appeal to trendsetters looking for something truly different. Renowned Thai designer Polpat

Asavaprapha has given his fashionable touches throughout the hotel including in the uniforms and artworks.

Themed around the Grand Gallerie de 'Evolution natural history museum in Paris, the resort features a bold design with playful animal statues interwoven through the gardens, rooms that are either 'So Arty' or 'So Nature' and captivating public spaces including the Hi So roof bar, White Oven Thai restaurant and Beach Society, a playful party venue with stunning sea views. There is also a So SPA and So Fit lounge as well as two pools – one for families and one for adults only.

Continuing the Adults Only theme, the Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa last year launched the Waitui Beach Club, an exclusive adults-only area with its own pool, Champagne Bar, poolside cabanas and restaurant. One of the first adults-only beach clubs in Fiji, the club provides a range of health and wellness options including well-balanced menus, fitness classes and boot camps.

AccorHotels also just signed two new-build Sofitels and will open the Sofitel Kuala Lumpur Damansara and Sofitel Singapore City Centre in 2016, adding a combined 534 rooms to the group's luxury brand portfolio.



Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua Beach Resort, Indonesia



Sofitel So Bangkok, Thailand

Europe Drives Strong Growth for Asia



Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua Beach Resort, Indonesia

The World Travel Monitor is predicting European outbound travel to increase by 2.8% this year, with Asia remaining high on the list of destinations for European travelers. Germans have once again cemented their place as the world's 'travel champions' having been named the number one outbound market by trips for 2015, followed by the USA, UK and China and number three in terms of spending, beaten only by the USA and China. Thailand and Indonesia are firm favourites with Europeans thanks to their value-for-money beach destinations, rich culture and natural attractions. Europeans have always loved

Bali and AccorHotels has continued to see strong growth at its resort properties including the Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua Resort & Spa. The resort features 415 rooms including private pool villas, three restaurants and bars, and a lagoon-style pool overlooking the beach. There is also a private beachfront wedding chapel, Nikki Beach lifestyle club, kids club, executive lounge with its own private pool, a So Spa for traditional treatments, plus the Vietura medi-spa for more intensive anti-ageing treatments, all located on stunning beachfront in Bali's most exclusive resort enclave. AccorHotels has almost 20 hotels

in Bali, from the luxurious Sofitel to the MGallery Royal Beach Seminyak, Pullman Bali Legian, Novotel Bali Benoa and several playful ibis Styles hotels that offer fun, modern accommodations at the best value on the island. This year they will open a new Novotel at Ngurah Rai Airport, as well as an Ibis on Legian Street and an ibis Styles in the popular Petitenget area. The group is seeing growth of more than 2% into Asia, with top destinations being Bali and Bangkok, while interest in emerging destinations like Myanmar and Laos is strengthening.



Sofitel Queenstown Hotel and Spa, New Zealand



Hotel St Moritz Queenstown – MGallery, New Zealand

NEW ZEALAND EXPANSION

Sofitel Wellington is set to open late this year in the New Zealand capital. Located on Bolton Street, in the centre of the city, the Sofitel will be within walking distance of Parliament House, Te Papa Museum and a great selection of boutique shops, restaurants and bars.

The interior design will feature a sophisticated monochromatic colour scheme that will be accented with yellows to create a

very striking décor with French touches. With Sofitel's strong association with the arts and gastronomy the hotel is set to play an important part in the social life of the capital. It will also feature a fitness centre, indoor pool and function and meeting rooms.

Meanwhile Sofitel Auckland Viaduct has just completed a \$2 million refurbishment under the command of local design-

ers Space Studio, to introduce stylish Parisian accents, while reflecting the hotel's stunning waterfront location. With relaxing shades of silver, pastel blue and taupe hues, complemented by soft lighting and exquisite furnishings, the new renovations reflect the cool-calm marina setting. The lobby has also been revamped including a new intimate French-inspired wine venue, The Cellar.

Sofitel Queenstown has also undergone a make-over with the addition of the luxurious new So SPA, with beauty treatments under the prestigious THÉMAÉ, Sothy and Pure Fiji brands. All five treatment rooms boast individual showers and steam rooms, with a couples' suite complete with cedarwood jacuzzi. Notably, the So SPA features an infra-red room as well as serene relaxation rooms in ad-

dition to a discovery bar, where guests can unwind over a freshly brewed tea and healthy snack. Meticulously crafted by talented Kiwi sculptors, local artworks with influences of traditional Maori greenstone have been incorporated into the spa décor to reflect the hotel's unique location near the pristine shores of Lake Wakatipu.

Pullman Becomes Asia's Most Dynamic Upscale Brand

Since its launch in 2008, Pullman has become one of the most dynamic upscale hotel brands in the world, with a network that reached 100 at the end of 2015 with the opening of Pullman New Delhi Aerocity in India. Pullman hotels are aimed at today's busy and demanding global nomad, and promise contemporary architecture and design, a warm welcome and excellent connectivity.

With 270 rooms set around a central garden and heated outdoor pool, Pullman New Delhi Aerocity offers easy access to Indira Gandhi International Airport and the business hubs of Gurgaon and New Delhi. The Pullman's guestrooms are stylish with floor-to-ceiling windows and the uniquely comfortable Pullman bed, which promises a blissful slumber.

Pullman has celebrated several other flagship openings across Asia Pacific recently including The Park Lane Hong Kong, a Pullman Hotel; Pullman Bangkok Grande Sukhumvit; and Pullman Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

The Park Lane has been a landmark hotel in Hong Kong for 40 years and has undergone a \$200m HKD refurbishment including a new lobby, new rooftop terrace, business centre and new executive rooms. In a prime Causeway Bay location, just opposite Victoria Park, the hotel boasts several restaurants and bars including rooftop dining with stunning harbour and city views. Ebb & Flow on the lobby level boasts Hong Kong's first Steampunk craft-brewing coffee machine and changing menus through-

out the day. The hotel's lobby also breaks away from the traditional hotel norms, with a seamless space designed as a spontaneous social hub. With contrasting textures from stone, marble, copper and timber and soaring ceilings, artworks and digital installations, the lobby has an energy that captures the essence of vibrant Hong Kong.

Pullman Bangkok Grande Sukhumvit is the third Pullman in the 'City of Angels' and adds 325 beautifully designed rooms to the network. The hotel features a highly visible sail-shaped glass façade, a range of room styles and two restaurants, a deli lounge, cocktail bar, outdoor pool, well-equipped gym and extensive spa. There are great facilities for functions or celebrations, with ten meeting rooms including a pillarless grand ballroom for up to 500 guests.

In neighbouring Malaysia, the group also opened the Pullman Kuala Lumpur City Centre Hotel & Residences, further consolidating the Pullman brand as the fastest-growing upscale brand in Asia Pacific. Perfectly located in the heart of the trendy Bukit Bintang district, the hotel offers 445 spacious hotel rooms and 157 serviced apartments, boasting spectacular views of the city skyline.

The Pullman Kuala Lumpur City Centre Hotel & Residences is a perfect fit for the brand, thanks to its superb location and excellent facilities, modern rooms, panoramic views, fitness centre, kids club and outdoor pool. With Pullman having a strong focus on balanced food and beverage offerings, the ho-



Pullman Phuket Arcadia Naithon Beach, Thailand



Park Lane Hong Kong – a Pullman Hotel, Hong Kong



Pullman Sanya Yalong Bay, China

tel has six dining outlets from a casual coffee lounge and poolside terrace grill to Japanese and Chinese fine dining and boasts world-class meeting facilities including a 580 sqm metre grand ballroom and 11 meeting rooms.

AccorHotels also launched its fourth Pullman in Vietnam with an opening in Vung Tau, a

popular seaside resort just 1.5 hours' drive from Ho Chi Minh. Featuring the largest meeting facilities in Southern Vietnam and beautiful beach views, the Pullman Vung Tau has 356 rooms and suites, an executive lounge, several restaurants and bars, a 24/7 Fit Lounge and outdoor pool.

In Asia Pacific alone, Pullman has a strong pipeline of over 40 hotels in the next few years and will continue to expand aggressively. Pullman is now the largest upscale hotel brand in Australia and the fastest-growing AccorHotels brand in China, reflecting its popularity in the region.

The spectacular new Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour is the impressive tower next to the Novotel in this artist impression



ACCORHOTELS CELEBRATES SILVER ANNIVERSARY IN AUSTRALIA

This year marks a significant milestone for AccorHotels in Australia, with the group celebrating its 25th year in the country. With more than 200 hotels across every state and territory, the group is the clear leader in hospitality and continues to expand its network.

Recent openings include Elements of Byron under the MGallery by Sofitel brand, a \$100 million dollar eco-resort designed along two kilometres of beach frontage in Byron Bay, one of Australia's most beautiful seaside destinations. Set around endangered rainforest and natural lakes, the resort features several bars and restaurants, a fire pit, convention centre for up to 450 delegates, a private beach club, large lagoon style pool and day spa, all designed in sympathy with the natural surroundings. The villas are scattered throughout the landscape, with water and fire elements included throughout and organic materi-

als and forms used to invoke a strong connection to the earth.

Further north, the 368-room ibis Styles Brisbane Elizabeth Street is set to open by the end of the year. Located in the heart of the CBD, adjoining Queen St Mall, the hotel is perfect for the millennial traveler seeking design-led, affordable quality accommodation with fun, colourful interiors and sociable public spaces.

In Sydney what will become the landmark Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour continues to take shape as part of the \$2.5 billion redevelopment of the International Convention Centre and Darling Harbour precinct. The new Sofitel will be 35 storeys high and will boast 600 luxuriously appointed rooms, a rooftop infinity pool and helipad, and several food and beverage outlets with spectacular city skyline and harbour views. The hotel will play a major role in one of the world's most exciting urban

renaissance projects and will help to make Darling Harbour a first-choice destination for business, convention and leisure travellers.

Also in Sydney, the group's first hotel in Australia, the Novotel Sydney on Darling Harbour has just celebrated the 1st anniversary of its new Ternary restaurant with a win as Best F&B outlet in NSW from AccorHotels. The nearby Harbour Rocks Hotel MGallery in the centre of the historic Rocks district of Sydney was also recognised for its superb Scarlett Restaurant. Boasting Harbour Bridge and Sydney Opera House views from many rooms, the Harbour Rocks is set in a heritage-listed building made of convict sandstone.

Another landmark opening for the group will be the Pullman Sydney Airport, set to launch in 2016. Pullman Sydney Airport will include 229 accommodation rooms and suites, a restaurant and bar, conference facilities and

gym. The hotel will offer an Executive Lounge - a hallmark of every Pullman hotel - adding a quiet and convenient space for guests to do business or relax.

This year AccorHotels' Ayers Rock Resort will host the monumental art installation Field of Light, by renowned artist Bruce Munro, bringing the red centre of Australia to life. Opening on 1 April and running until 31 March 2017, Field of Light will illuminate a remote desert area within sight of majestic Uluru. Munro has previously installed artworks at London's Victoria & Albert Museum and in the USA and Mexico. For the Australian desert he will install more than 50,000 coloured spheres which will bloom as darkness falls to create a magic setting for visitors. This once-in-a-lifetime event will be complemented by a range of activities including special Field of Light dinners under the stars with the option to arrive by camel or helicopter.



Ayers Rock Resort, Australia



Pullman Quay Grand Sydney Harbour, Australia

Briefs

AccorHotels Opens Two New Resorts in Phu Quoc Vietnam

AccorHotels has opened two new hotels in Phu Quoc, one of the hottest beachside destinations in Vietnam. The Novotel Phu Quoc Resort has 366 spacious rooms including private pool villas, two restaurants and three bars, a state-of-the-art fitness centre, two tennis courts, spa, an outdoor pool, separate kids pool and kids club and a beautiful stretch of private beach. The Mercure Phu Quoc Resort & Villas features 72 villas with private terraces set on Truong Beach, some with their own private pools. The Mercure features three bars and restaurants, an outdoor pool with Jacuzzi, 24-hour fitness centre, Pure Spa and complimentary activities as well as function facilities for up to 80.

Two New Hotels in Laos

Luang Prabang is a UNESCO World Heritage listed town that is the cultural and spiritual heart of Laos and is a rare chance for travellers to experience the Indochine of old. AccorHotels has launched two boutique hotels in the town: the 25-room Sofitel Luang Prabang where each suite has its own garden with private pool or oversized bathtub and the 15-room 3 Nagas MGallery hotel, which provides the perfect setting to relax and immerse yourself in the Lao culture.

Rapid Expansion in China for 2016

While China's economy may be slowing, the country's sheer size means that hotel growth continues to rise, with AccorHotels' pipeline for China at around 100 hotels. Recent openings include the Sofitel Kunming at the gateway to Yunnan province's most picturesque destinations including Lijiang, Dali and Shangri-La. Located within walking distance of Nanping Walking Street, East and West Pagodas, Green Lake and the shopping district, the Sofitel features rooms inspired by a peacock which symbolises the local Dai minority, with leather wall coverings that conjure a chic Parisian apartment. Leisure facilities include three restaurants and two bars, So Spa, So Fit and an indoor heated pool beneath a glass ceiling panel.

Sofitel Sanya Leeman Resort has also just opened, with 477 rooms in what is described as the 'Hawaii of China'. The luxury resort, featuring 477 rooms, suites and villas, brings to Sanya an oasis of sophistication and glamour reminiscent of the French Riviera, infused with timeless French hospitality and authentic Hainanese culture. The Sofitel Sanya Leeman Resort has three restaurants and bars including a poolside bar, a So Spa, So Fit studio, two outdoor pools, a kids club and outstanding meeting facilities.



ITB Berlin, Germany
March 9, 2016



Hopes amid sad summer

Asian sellers maintain Germany is strong despite fall in bookings at travel agencies

By Raini Hamdi

ASIAN players are hopeful of a strong German market this year despite summer bookings at travel agencies in Germany in January – traditionally the strongest month for summer bookings – showing a sea of red.

GfK, which analyses some 340,000 bookings made at 1,200 travel agencies, shows a 12 per cent YOY fall in sales in January, wiping out 260 million euros of revenue for tour operators and travel agents. The drop followed an eight per cent fall in December. Summer 2016 sales are around 8.6 per cent behind last year's cumulative total.

Asian sellers interviewed however suggest that the region is holding up as a destination. For some, GfK's data also points to a shift – or the start of one – by German travellers to book online than using the traditional

tour operating booking system.

Centara Hotels & Resorts' COO, Chris Bailey, said: "Germany is a mature market to a destination like Thailand, so it is quite feasible that with the right communications and inducements, customers are booking online, thus the decline.

"As I view various data, all suggest that German outbound is actually set to grow, although small, from 1.5 to four per cent. The point here is it's growing, so the question is: does the traditional travel sector in Germany still deliver what the customer wants to buy, in terms of product, flexibility, price and speed to market?"

"Many European markets have changed, just look at Scan-

dinavia, where the majority of customers are now booking online through one channel or another."

Centara is seeing a five per cent rise in German bookings YTD. Tourism Authority of Thailand also shows of a 7.14 per cent rise in German arrivals in January, over January 2015, to 86,428.



Bailey: shift to online?

"That communicates that business is still out there but certainly the market has become much more late-booking as customers are prepared to wait for the best deal.

The introduction of low-cost longhaul Eurowings and aggressive online air deals, also fuel a different booking mechanism," added Bailey.

AccorHotels Asia Pacific's chief marketing & distribution

officer Graham Wilson said terror attacks in Bangkok and Paris last year might have dampened bookings during December and January.

"Our key German market hotels in Thailand, Australia and Bali actually saw some increase in December and January," said Wilson. "This is backed by figures from the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism showing German arrivals into Bali were up 14.11 per cent last year, including a stronger December, and Tourism Australia figures showing German arrivals into Australia were up 1.7 per cent in 2015.

"Last year was an extraordinary year for travel to Thailand because most of the main operators had hedged a good rate on

the baht to the euro, which gave them a competitive edge when the baht dropped. While the slump in the euro has dampened market sentiment, Asia still represents great value for German and European travellers."

"There is a lot of change in Germany at the moment which may be impacting travel sentiment but we believe confidence will return through the year."

Judy Lum, senior vice president sales & marketing of Tour East Group, did see a slowdown in Germany/Swiss markets by 3Q and 4Q2015 after a slight improvement at the start of last year, which for Tour East was offset by a spike in UK arrivals.

"While Germans are known to value their holidays, issues of an unstable euro, several unstable European economies still, the threat of terror attacks and then the Zika pandemic are just too much to ignore. Nevertheless, we are optimistic of the European market overall and are confident of a slight improvement at the close of the 2015/16 season."



Wilson: confidence will return

Khiri group rebrands as Yaana

By Raini Hamdi

THAILAND-based Khiri Group is rebranding itself as Yaana Ventures as it moves to expand its other businesses while Khiri Travel retains its name and remains a vital DMC division.

Having roped in former Diethelm Travel CEO Richard Brouwer as CEO of Khiri Travel, founder of Khiri Group, Willem Neimeijer, has stepped up as chairman of Yaana Ventures and will be focusing on growing travel products that develop communities and the environment.

While the company is synonymous with the DMC-side of the business since Neimeijer founded it 22 years ago, less is known that it also operates GROUND, which arranges educational trips that develop communities, and the Anurak Community Lodge in Khao Sok, Thailand, the Banteay Chhmar Tented Camp in Cambodia. As demand for authentic and meaningful travel products continue to rise, Neimeijer believes it's time to

expand GROUND and develop more lodges and tents.

Said Neimeijer: "At the core we are passionate about delivering authentic travel experiences. As DMC, Khiri Travel has specialised in delivering this to tour operators but increasingly we find that we need to go further in the pursuit of this passion.

"For example, we co-founded and manage the Anurak Community Lodge simply because there was no property in the region that respects nature, the local community and delivers a good product at a reasonable price that we could use.

"We look for synergies in all our ventures, but are aware that each needs a separate, dedicated focus. In short, as entrepreneurs in the travel and hospitality sector, we have ambitions that required a new brand."

On why the rebranding, which is done by QUO, is necessary, Neimeijer said: "First, it clarifies our aspirations in the travel and hospitality industry in Asia above and beyond the Khiri brand. Sec-



ond, it frees Khiri Travel, with 22 years of experience, to focus on destination management. Third, Yaana gives space for each of its brands to take the lead and grow."

Yaana in Sangsrit embodies 'journey of discovery' and 'entrepreneurial explorers and experienced partners'.

"There is a pattern among our ventures: they are all in the tourism and hospitality sphere, all focused on Asia and all with a distinctive company culture," said Neimeijer.

Meanwhile, new CEO of Khiri Travel Brouwer aims for quality growth in light of a changed

marketplace that demands experiential travel. "We prefer to commit the next five years to strengthening the foundation that has made Khiri Travel what it stands for today.

"Enabling growth for the tour operator today means that the ground partner must ensure that travellers who are leaving their holiday destination have experienced that destination to the fullest. Those experiences are different for each client, therefore a rich variety in product is absolutely essential.

"In plain economic terms, that should bring us a 100 per cent gain over the next five years."

ASEAN@50 pre-launches tomorrow

ASEAN tourism ministers and leaders will pre-launch Visit ASEAN@50: Golden Celebration



tomorrow at the Malaysian pavilion number 121 in Hall 26A.

Next year marks the 50th anniversary of ASEAN's formation and tour operators can expect both the public and private sector of ASEAN to step up marketing.

Visit ASEAN@50: Golden Celebration itself will highlight ASEAN's best 50 festivals and 50 most unforgettable travel experiences. Targeting major regional and longhaul source markets including China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, the UK, Germany, Russia, the UAE, the US and Canada, it aims to achieve 121 million international arrivals to the region by the end of 2017; increase tourism receipts to US\$83 billion; and extend the average length of stay to six to seven days, and to more than two ASEAN countries.



Neimeijer: "We have ambitions..."

Special report **Asian outbound**

Nouveau appeal

Driven by a penchant for discovery, more Asian travellers are choosing to experience Europe beyond the postcard-perfect classics. *The Daily* reporters suss out the trend in the first of a three-part series

Turkey is expected to do well with Hongkongers this year; Duden Waterfalls pictured here



HONG KONG

As travel becomes part of peoples' daily lives, outbound traffic from Hong Kong has been on an upward trend. In 2014, there were 9.2 million Hongkong residents departing from Hong Kong International Airport and the figure for January-November 2015 has already hit 9.4 million. Contributing to this upward trend is a growing demand for lesser-known European destinations, especially among more affluent travellers.

Premium Holidays specialises in tailor-made tour experiences to Europe. According to general manager, Simon Wo, Northern Europe stole the limelight in 2015 due to the appeal of the Northern Lights. Wo said: "We had a very busy winter from November till March. The demand is there because sophisticated Hongkongers opt for new places with novelty. As a rising star, the region has room to grow and our company will continue to woo clients in 2016."

For upmarket player, The Experience Company, which focuses on tailor-

made travel ideas like wine, gastronomy and lifestyle, last year was their best year for Europe.

Founder and CEO, Julien Yung Mameaux said: "The favourable exchange rates for the Euro currency have helped in the decision-making process of corporate and MICE clients in choosing Europe over other continents, and some countries with special investment schemes have grown their appeal to high net worth individuals."

Mameaux added that clients are opting for more unique experiences in lesser-known European destinations.

He said: "Hongkongers have been avid about discovering new destinations within Europe or having a special type of holiday, at least until the sad events (that hit Paris) in November which (Paris) will recover from. Many of our VIP clients came to us to enjoy a different 'European Experience', more personalised and off-the-beaten-track."

Mameaux said that France, Italy and Spain could be the leading trio among European destinations in 2015. Remarkably, the real winners were not the capitals or the usual landmarks but less famous

places like Bordeaux and its chateaux. He added: "I should also mention that London, the Black Forest in Germany, as well as Switzerland have been popular this year, and that we have seen increasing demand for Portugal, the Czech Republic and Eastern Europe (in general)."

Highlighting other destinations likely to attract more travellers, he said that Scotland, Croatia and Turkey might be the draw cards in 2016.

"For instance, a number of Hongkongers and Asians have been to the UK, but the charm of Scottish castles, the fame of golf and the taste of whisky will draw a more important group of tourists to Scotland. In addition, I can also see increasing interest in other Eastern European countries such as Hungary or Slovenia, and Southern Europe like Portugal, Spain and the lesser-known islands of Greece."

Outside of individual tastes and preferences, industry observers believe that macroeconomic and supply-side factors like international security, currency fluctuation and even destination competition are also likely to affect the appetite of Hong Kong outbound. – **Prudence Lui**



INDONESIA

Europe has for a long time been a favourite longhaul destination for Indonesian travellers, with its best-selling product being the multi-country tour of five or more countries like France, the UK, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Belgium and Italy, according to Indonesian outbound travel consultants.

Edhi Sutadharma, general manager of Golden Rama Tours & Travel, pointed out the popularity of Paris as an almost mandatory stop in this multi-country tour, saying: "Travellers always want the package that includes Paris."

He said that even after the Paris attacks in November last year, groups were still opting for the French capital.

"There was no diversion of destination then, even when the Eiffel Tower was closed."

"Travellers could still visit the area and see the tower from the outside. Going up the tower is optional in the packages," he said.

While many are sticking to long-time

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Rambler Garden Hotel
Rambler Oasis Hotel



GRAND LUCAYAN
BAHAMAS



Best Local Hotel Chain

Special report Asian outbound

favourites, there appears to be growing interest in new destinations like Croatia, Czech Republic and Switzerland, according to Smiling Tours and Travel Service.

Lucky Albertinus, Group COO for leisure, Smiling Tours and Travel Service, told the Daily: "Travellers who have visited Europe several times are looking for new destinations."

He also noted the growth of families and FITs that are looking for more experiential holidays.

"They want to take their time enjoying cultural and culinary experiences without having to rush," he said, adding that this year Smiling Tour will have a dedicated team to develop experiential travel programmes for such travellers.

Meanwhile, Rudiana, director of sales of WITA Tour, has seen the growing demand for Switzerland as a mono-destina-

tion, thanks to aggressive promotions by Switzerland Tourism, the country's NTO.

"We have seen other European NTOs promoting their destinations here in Indonesia, but Switzerland Tourism is the most serious in developing the market," he commented.

On top of Switzerland Tourism's efforts to provide promotional support to agents, suppliers have also been coming up with creative packages and are flexible about the minimum number of travellers allowed in a single tour group. The travel companies could send as small a group as two or four on a mono Switzerland trip, according to Rudiana.

"This way, they have managed to increase the interest of more Indonesians to visit (Switzerland)," he said.

He expressed expectations for other European countries to follow suit and to entice travellers. – *Mimi Hudoyo*



Despite terror scares, Paris remains a firm favourite; Eiffel Tower at sunset



INDIA

Travel consultants in India observed a surge in demand for European holidays in 2015, noting the demand for lesser-known European destinations, competitively-priced travel packages and currency movements over the year.

According to Guldeep Singh Sahni, managing director, Weldon Tours & Trav-

els, "In 2015 the demand for European Holidays was very high. Travel packages to the region have become cheaper as many travel agents who handle large volumes offered competitive tour packages. The depreciation of the euro against the Indian rupee also made the European tour packages about 15 per cent cheaper."

Hotels.com likewise noted the impact of currency movements on Indian outbound travels to Europe. In 1Q2015, Hotels.com saw a double-digit growth on

searches for various European destinations by Indian travellers.

While traditional popular destinations remain favourites among Indian travellers, newer and less-travelled European destinations are gaining popularity.

"Europe has always been a favourite for Indian travellers and while the UK, Switzerland, France, Italy and Germany continue to top the list, Spain, Scandinavia, Turkey, Czech Republic, Hungary, Vienna are fast emerging as strong contenders," said Rajeev D. Kale, president & COO - MICE, domestic & sports tourism, Thomas Cook India.

Amit Agarwal, senior marketing manager, Hotels.com, added to the list of emerging choice-destinations: Croatia, Portugal, Budapest, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Lisbon, Bratislava, Ljubljana, and Dubrovnik and Poland.

The preference for lesser-known European destinations is gaining among two segments of travellers: the affluent and the value-for-money hunters.

Affluent Indian travellers, for one, are inspired to explore new destinations like the medieval champagne cellars of Pannier to satisfy their sophisticated travel palates, according Thomas Cook India's Kale.

Weldon Tours & Travels' Sahni shared that the demand for Eastern European countries like Czech Republic went up in the last year because a number of Indian travellers were looking for cheaper options within Europe.

Other noteworthy aspects of Indian outbound to Europe include demand during the slow winter season and prefer-

ence for single-destination holidays.

Travel agents like Thomas Cook India witnessed a good movement of Indian tourists to Europe in winter. "What is far more noteworthy is that this trend is being witnessed in our volume group tour segment with an impressive surge of over 35 per cent in our sales for winter holidays to Europe for experiences like alpine trekking, snow mobiling, skiing, tobogganing and sleigh riding in Switzerland," said Kale.

According to Karan Anand, head, relationships, Cox & Kings, Indian travellers today tend to opt for single-destination European holidays. He said: "There is a tendency for Indian travellers to visit just one country within Europe such as the vineyards of France or the castles in Ireland or Scotland."

On whether demand for European holidays will continue growing in the coming year, opinion is split.

"Our booking trends indicate that there is a huge demand for outbound travel to Europe and this year will not be any different from previous years. With fuel prices coming down we feel that airfares will also remain stable," said Anand.

Others believe that this year may see a number of Indian longhaul leisure tourists opting for nearby destinations due to economic considerations. "This year I have my doubts about the demand for travel to Europe as I feel that Indian travellers this year will look for holidays in shorthaul destinations because the economy in India is not looking very buoyant. Disposable income will be reduced," concluded Sahni. – *Rohit Kaul*



Czech Republic is emerging as a choice-destination; Old Town Square with the Church of Our Lady before Tyn in Prague

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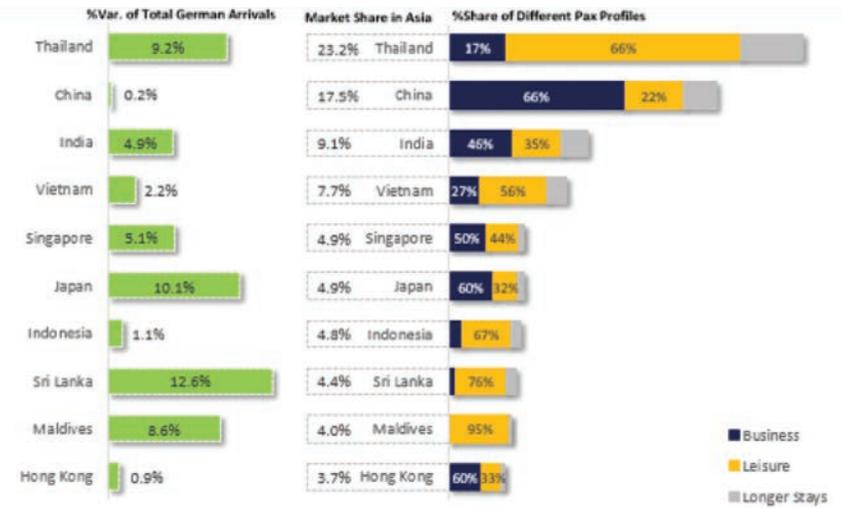
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Intelligence

Out of Germany and into Asia

The Asian region retains its allure for German leisure travellers, outperforming other continents in this report by *ForwardKeys*, a traveller data intelligence company

Top 10 Destinations in Asia for German Longhaul Outbound 2015
(%Var. of Total German Arrivals in 2015 vs 2014; %Share of Total German Arrivals in Asia in 2015; %Share of Pax Profile in 2015)



With a strong demand for leisure travel, German arrivals into Asia-Pacific grew by 3.8% in 2015, outperforming that in Africa and the Middle East, which went up by 2.2%, while German arrivals in the Americas declined slightly at -0.2%.

Together, Thailand, China and India were the top three Asian destinations in 2015, and this accounted for 49% of the total German arrivals in Asia. This is followed by Vietnam, Singapore, Japan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Hong Kong.

Taking 23.2% of the total share of German arrivals into Asia, Thailand has shown recovery from 2014's political unrest. German arrivals into Thailand were up 9.2% in 2015, of which two-thirds were leisure travellers.

China also had obtained a large share of the German market. However, two-thirds of German arrivals into China were for business purposes. In fact, China and Hong Kong are both facing challenges when it comes to attracting leisure travellers from Germany.

As for Japan, it emerged as a new leisure destination for the German market, where leisure arrivals increased by nearly 20% as compared to 2014.

Meanwhile, traditional sun, sand, and sea destinations still maintained their appeal, with Sri Lanka and Maldives attracting 12.6% and 8.6% more German arrivals in 2015 respectively.



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Special report **Business outlook**

Travel business outlook for 2016



Travel companies in Asia-Pacific are generally optimistic about their business prospects in 2016, with the outbound market expected to remain a bright spot

SINGAPORE
 By Paige Lee Pei Qi
Inbound

Jaclyn Yeoh
 Managing director,
 Siam Express

I have recently engaged a new Europe and China representative, hence I am looking forward to having more sales from these two regions. I will be happy if we can maintain the sales revenue as in 2015. We also need to bundle Singapore with our regional countries to sell them as one package in order to improve market share and hopefully this new marketing strategy will improve the sales performance in 2016.



year-on-year increase in travel demand for 2016. While (evergreen) destinations such as China, Europe, Japan, Taiwan and regional cruises will remain popular, we also see a growing appetite for more exotic vacations to the Arctic Circle and South America.

We are implementing strategies to leverage technology to improve service, increase efficiency, broaden market reach and change our business model. Besides mainstream offerings, we are positioning the company as one reputed for alternative and exotic travels, a growing segment in the travel market. On the web, we are moving towards increasing our online presence to see growth regionally and worldwide.

INDONESIA
 By Mimi Hudoyo
Inbound

Umberto Cadamuro
 COO inbound,
 PACTO

Having successfully weathered the



multiple challenges in 2015 and posted another excellent year in terms of profit, 2016 presents exciting and rich opportunities. With the strong demand for groups that not only cover 2016 but extends all the way to 2017, we feel we stand on solid ground.

Various challenges are afflicting our industry, yet we are able to keep expanding in new markets to maintain both profitability and a balanced market share. Our next step is South America!

Outbound

Willy Sihombing
 Managing director, Sedona Holidays Tour and Travel Medan

My outbound business prospect for 2016 is positive. While the early part of 2015 saw slower business than in 2014, demand for incentives and FITs started to pick up towards the end of 2015. I am expecting this to continue into 2016.

The aggressive promotions by NTOs like Japan, Thailand and Malaysia have helped enticed (Indonesians) to travel. Overseas tour operators have come up with new ideas and programmes to at-

tract travellers by allowing agents like us to send two or three pax to join a sit-in-coach tour together with guests from other travel companies, etc. (The diverse tour options) make it easier for us to sell packages.

THAILAND
 By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena
Inbound

Pornthip Hirunkate
 Deputy CEO
 and managing
 director, Thailand,
 Destination Asia

2016 will be a challenging year for Destination Asia due to various factors including economics and political matters that compound on our business.

We still continue to see positive signs from our clients from the UK, Northern Europe, the US and Latin America markets. To stay on top we have to be more creative with our products and activities.

A positive sign is that there are also more cruise lines calling at Phuket, Laem

**Outbound**

Anthony Chan
 Managing director,
 Chan Brothers
 Group

We are projecting five to 10 per cent





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9 -13 March 2016, Messe Berlin
HALL 26A, Stand 122, 123
HALL 26C, Stand 303

Special report Business outlook

Chabang and Koh Samui in 2016, and we have seen positive growth within MICE groups from the US since last year which shows confidence is returning to the destination.

Outbound
Vorapong Muchaothai
Director of sales and marketing, Standard Tour

We are seeing growth for the outbound market due to more direct flights coming in and out of Chiang Mai, where we are based. According to Thai immigration figures, the number of Thai outbound travellers from Chiang Mai is around 80,000 in 2015, and is likely to exceed 100,000 in 2016, and we are also recording a stronger interest from northern Thais to travel overseas as Chiang Mai grows in flight connectivity.

We are promoting destinations farther afield such as Japan as well as Bali, Australia and New Zealand by partnering SilkAir on chartered services via Singapore.

MALAYSIA
By S Puvaneswary

Inbound
Francis Cheong
Managing director, Apxara Travel & Events

2016 is an extremely promising year for us. As of end-November 2015, our forward quotations are already up to December 2016. With Malaysia being the most affordable ASEAN destination due to a weak ringgit, Malaysian destinations are of great value for many incoming markets.

Outbound
Adam Kamal
CEO, Olympik Holidays

Outbound business will be slow unless the ringgit strengthens. We are placing emphasis on outbound packages to Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines as there are many LCCs flying to these destinations with affordable airfares, which is good for us.

PHILIPPINES
By Rosa Ocampo

Inbound
Bernadette De Leon
General manager, Amiable Intertours

I used to have lots of inbound groups and families but they are hurt by (the bullet-planting scam at Ninoy Aquino International Airport) and peace and order concerns. And with a lot of ASEAN destinations offering cheaper fares, accommodations and tours, plus guaranteed security, (travellers) would rather visit Vietnam, Bali, Thailand and Malaysia and fly direct to those (destinations).

Outbound
Rowena Baltazar
Sales manager, Adam's Express Travel Group
Outbound business will continue to boom in 2016 as

travel becomes even more affordable, with good rates for airfares, accommodations and tours abroad.

Japan will be the top draw as it has eased its visa requirements and its government is more active in promoting the destination.

Filipinos will troop around Asia especially to the emerging destinations of Bali, Borobudur and Vietnam, apart from old favourites of Hong Kong, Bangkok and Singapore.

(Demand for) France will ease a bit due to recent terrorist attack but Italy will pull religious trips as the Pope opened the Holy Door of the Vatican for the Year of the Poor.

HONG KONG
By Prudence Lui

Inbound
Hazen Tang
Executive director, HS Travel

Given the current global economy and falling arrivals, I am worried about business (this year). Provided that there are no major disasters or accidents this year, the city may experience around 10 per cent drop of arrivals. It's vital for Hong Kong to develop more new products for tourism.

Outbound
Simon Wo
General manager, Premium Holidays

Foreseeable economic downturn may dampen the middle class's appetite to travel but not high-spending professionals who will continue to seek novel destinations. Indeed, we remain cautiously optimistic because travel has become a lifestyle for Hong Kongers and airlines may come up with discounts to drive traffic.

We will channel more resources to high-end products with emphasis on South America, the North Pole and South Pole in 2016.

MACAU
By Prudence Lui

Inbound
Cooper Zhang
Manager, international department, CITS Macau

I hope it will be better than 2015 with the opening of new hotels and integrated resorts in 2016. These new offers may attract more tourists to Macau, especially from China. If the Chinese Central Government relaxes the travel permits for Chinese passport holders visiting Macau, it would definitely help.

Outbound
Sabrina long
General manager, EGL Tour (Macau)

The outbound traffic will be more or less the same as 2015 but this depends on the business environment and local gaming performance which affect the desire of travel. Moreover, Macanese are concerned about security when choosing a destination, so areas with terrorist attacks would be avoided. Overall speaking, we would be happy if we can maintain the same level of business achieved in 2015.

CHINA
By Caroline Boey

Inbound
Sarah Keenlyside
Founder and CEO of The Bespoke Travel Company

China is poised to become the world's largest business travel destination in 2016, an increase we already saw last year. Many of our business travel clients are either adding sightseeing or integrating some form of cultural immersion/partner programme into their trip. We hope this uptick will continue, especially given the drop in inbound leisure and FIT travellers in 2015.

Continued improvement in the number and quality of hotels on offer in China's less-visited cities such as Kunming and Chengdu is also likely to encourage travellers to be a little braver with their trip planning.

Outbound
Lu Hao Shuo
Deputy general manager, inbound travel division, Kunming CITS

According to my outbound colleagues, demand from Yunnan will continue to increase in 2016. Travellers are still confident of China's economy and there is interest in visiting other parts of the world after having enjoyed domestic tours. Compared to the rising cost of domestic travel, outbound tour prices are also more stable.

South-east Asia, the Middle East and Europe are popular destinations during the peak holiday periods, and beach holidays are very attractive. But unrest and terrorist attacks are raising security concerns and have resulted in cancellations to the Middle East and Europe. Meanwhile, South Asia started picking up in 2014 at a rapid pace.

JAPAN
By Julian Ryall

Inbound
Megumi Ueda
General manager, Ayabex

We have seen a tremendous increase in foreign tourists visiting Japan in 2015 and we expect that trend to continue into 2016 as well. We are anticipating more repeat customers – including FITs, groups and MICE clients – returning to Japan. That means that we need to identify new sightseeing spots and activities for them; it is up to us to provide them with interesting and exciting new destinations that meet their needs.

Outbound
Daisuke Watanabe
Senior manager, Micronesia division, JTB World Vacations

We think (business) this year will be about the same level as 2015 for outbound tourists from Japan to our destinations. That is in part because the number of flights to Guam from Japan, except for Tokyo, will be reduced from April 2. Like other agents focused on the islands of the Pacific, we plan to draw up package tours that utilise charter flights to boost our numbers.

AUSTRALIA
By Rebecca Elliott

Inbound
Sujata Raman
Managing director, Abercrombie & Kent

In a word, excellent. The low Australian dollar undoubtedly had an impact, but so has the perceived safety of the destination as well as its clean and green image. Forward bookings are double the value that we had at the same time last year. All markets are strong into Australia including Asia, and in particular China.

Outbound
Tom Walley
Head of leisure travel, Flight Centre

Asia continues to be a big focus for us in 2016. We are gearing up for the return of our big Asia campaign that spotlights the diversity of experiences on offer with some of the hottest market deals, while travel packages to popular destinations will feature throughout the year. River cruising in Asia has emerged as a trend in 2015 and we expect this to continue, alongside the rise of youth specific tours, small group journeys and family-friendly packages.

INDIA
By Rohit Kaul

Inbound
Arun Anand
Managing director, Midtown Travels

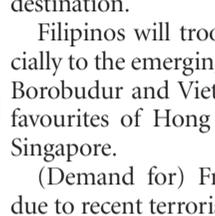
I expect 2016 will be a positive year for the Indian inbound industry. The e-visa scheme has now been extended to 113 countries, simplifying travel to India for majority of markets. The new year will see the e-visa facility gaining momentum and playing an instrumental role in the growth of inbound markets like the UK and the US.

The Indian prime minister travelled to many countries in 2015 and created a positive image of the country globally. This, coupled with the efforts of the Ministry of Tourism and private players, will help the inbound industry to make inroads in many traditional and new markets.

Outbound
Anil Kalsi
Joint managing director, Ambe World Travels

2016 looks very promising for the travel industry. I feel that many more countries will reciprocate the visa-on-arrival facility for Indian nationals, making impulsive outbound travel a reality.

We are a nation on the move and with today's work pressure, everyone needs more breaks to unwind. I see a huge upsurge in the honeymoon segment for which we now have a dedicated website. The luxury segment has also matured and Indians now want to experience the exclusivities of the world, so this segment too will see good demand.





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“RETURN TO NATURE WONDERS”

ROYAL BELUM. Perak, Malaysia

Preserved and conserved as a State Park, this Belum-Temengor forest complex is estimated to be 130 million years of age. Thus, making it older than the Amazon or Congo. Wildlife surveys also show that Royal Belum is an important habitat and home to large mammals. Like the Bos Gaurus, Asian Elephant and Malayan Tiger. It is also known as the Hornbill Capital as it most 10 species of hornbills including the large flocks of plain pauched hornbill.

Destination Cambodia

Clamour for undivided attention

To entice travellers to stay longer, destination development beyond the three main hubs is essential. By **Michael Mackey**

The German-speaking market into Cambodia saw significant growth in 2015.

German arrivals rose 6.2 per cent from 63,555 in 2014 to 67,471 in just the January to October 2015 period. Moreover, the smaller markets of Austria and Switzerland also rose by 14.3 per cent to 7,732 and 10 per cent to 16,444 respectively, according to statistics from Cambodia's Ministry of Tourism.

For the first ten months of 2015, statistics from the ministry showed tourists from German-speaking countries – Germany, Austria and Switzerland – were 1.8 per cent of total arrivals, which stands at 3.75 million.

It is overwhelmingly a tourist market, as the ministry's statistics record only 1,800 business travellers and "others".

"There has been a notable increase in German travellers," Carrol Sahaidak-Beaver, executive director of the Cambodia Hotel Association told the *Daily*.

Hoteliers also report that most German travellers are FITs or micro groups who make up about 60 per cent to 80 per cent of the German-speaking market. But nearly all are going to more places than just Cambodia.

"Though the information varies from hotel to hotel and location, generally most German, Swiss and Austrian travellers are



There are other interesting locations in the country worth visiting; Skull Pagoda at The Killing Fields pictured above

part of a group on a South-east Asia itinerary. This can include Thailand, Vietnam and Laos and Myanmar. Standalone visits tend to be older tourists," Sahaidak-Beaver added.

The length of stay of these tourists are usually five to six days, and is limited to three centres – Siem Reap, Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville.

Sahaidak-Beaver lamented: "Sadly, there are so many other destination opportunities in Cambodia that are outside of these main locations." However, changing this mindset will take time.

Jef Moons, CEO of Knai Bang Chatt, a barefoot luxury property at Kep on the Cambodian coast, said: "Most people still travel (within one trip) to multiple countries such as Vietnam, Laos and Cambo-

dia. However, we hope to keep travellers longer in Cambodia and let them experience our coastal areas."

As for the luxury market, Pierre Caron, general manager of Angkor Village Resort, feels that it will not be affected too much by the euro depreciation against the US dollar.

He explained: "In 2015, Germans continued to travel a lot, but this is not the case for other European countries (such as) the French market which suffered a lot more."

On top of this, there is also the additional tourist numbers provided by Switzerland to consider.

"The Swiss are less price sensitive," Daniel de Gruiter, managing director of Lolei Travel, a Swiss-founded company, told the *Daily*. "They are still willing to pay a certain amount for nice holidays."

There are some concerns about long-term development of the Cambodian travel sector, and moreover, its economy is US dollars which makes it harder to market to EU countries.

"Cambodia is still not as popular as Thailand and Vietnam. But it is getting more popular every year. We do see a huge potential in the German-speaking market. Cambodia is still one of the few authentic Asian countries, where value for money is relatively high," said de Gruiter.

Destination in numbers

US\$2.73 billion

Tourism receipts were US\$100 million in 1995 but this amount has risen exponentially to US\$2.73 billion in 2014

14.8%

The percentage of growth in arrivals

at Cambodia's three international airports – Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville for 1H2015

8 days

The average length of stay for travellers to Cambodia in 1995 but this slipped to 6.5 in 2014

VIEWPOINTS How do you plan to grow business from German-speaking markets this year?



Veronique Ducassy, managing director, Asian Trails

We are offering tours that include more remote areas such as Kratie along the Mekong banks, the mountain Temple of Preah Vihear at the border of Thailand and of course, the beaches in Kep, Sihanoukville or Koh Rong island. The beaches are developing fast in terms of new hotels and are always successful with the market looking for sunny days.



Nataly Wanhoff, key account director, Diethelm Travel Group

For the German-speaking market, we aim to attract travellers interested to visit Cambodia for the second (or even third) time by developing new programmes and routes which lead into the rather unknown and relatively undeveloped corners of Cambodia. We will also organise tours with a bit more rustic touch to experience more of the "real" Cambodia, as the country has many more fascinating places in addition to Angkor.

WHAT'S NEW

1 Anantara Angkor Resort's photography tours

Anantara Angkor Resort in Siem Reap is offering exclusive photography tours of the iconic Angkor Wat temple complex led by the renowned photographer, John McDermott, priced at US\$350 per couple for half-day programmes and full-day at US\$600 per couple.

2 Cuisine Wat Damnak

Named one of the Top 50 Restaurants in Asia in March 2015, Cuisine Wat Damnak in Siem Reap is run by chef Joannès Rivière. The restaurant uses local ingredients such as amarella, feroniella and kuy fruits, as well as seafood harvested from the Mekong and Tonlé Sap lake. Dishes are served in an elegant converted colonial villa ensuring 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



Made in Cambodia market

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 up for a night under the stars in private and spacious tents. Verandas overlooking the jungle canopy are lit by oil lamps and candles.

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.

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 low as US\$38, that run near the iconic Angkor Wat temple complex.

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. The house 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 the larger hotels in the capital, making it a quiet property to escape from the hustle and bustle of the city.

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



Sokha Phnom Penh Club Suite



MANDARIN
ORCHARD
SINGAPORE
BY MERITUS



Mandarin Orchard Singapore has been a landmark of Asian hospitality on Orchard Road for over 40 years, preferred by discerning international travellers for its service excellence and prime location in the heart of Singapore's most prominent shopping district.

Easily accessible via public transport and within walking proximity of Singapore's top medical facilities, the hotel boasts some 1,077 spacious guestrooms and suites, each a harmonious blend of space, comfort and functionality. All rooms are equipped with complimentary WiFi, comprehensive amenities, and advance in-room technology that connects to a host of conveniences at the touch of a button.

For travellers seeking bespoke amenities, Mandarin Orchard Singapore offers the unique and exclusive *Meritus Club Lounge at Top of the M*, perched on levels 38 and 39 of the hotel's Orchard Wing for unparalleled views of the city skyline. The hotel also features over 25,000 square feet of versatile meeting and function spaces, backed by the dedicated assistance of Meeting and Event Specialists.

Starring in the hotel's vibrant lineup of restaurants is the all-time favourite *Chatterbox*, home of the legendary *Mandarin Chicken Rice*. The latest addition is *Shisen Hanten* by *Chen Kentaro*, the Singapore debut of Japan's highly acclaimed chain of Szechwan restaurants helmed by celebrity Iron Chef Chen Kenichi and son, Chef Chen Kentaro.

For some well-deserved retail therapy, right on the doorstep of Mandarin Orchard Singapore is *Mandarin Gallery*, an intimate shopping destination comprising four storeys of high-end international fashion brands and boutique eateries.

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MERITUS
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Destination Hong Kong

A questionable market outlook

New direct routes from Europe are not boosting arrivals as hoped due to the sluggish global economy. By Prudence Lui

Inbound traffic into Hong Kong slowed further in 2015 with the German-speaking market remaining lethargic.

Out of 54 million total arrivals from January to November 2015, there were only 195,773 from Germany. According to the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), the number of visitors from German-speaking markets – Switzerland, Austria and Germany – dipped slightly to around 260,000 from January to October 2015.

HKTB's central Europe manager, Anette Wendel-Menke, said: "The impact of global economic factors, exchange rates and social issues have imposed constraints on Hong Kong tourism. Looking forward, we expect the situation to continue."

But in order to stay competitive amid challenges and to cater for the changing needs of travellers, she said: "HKTB will focus on its brand presence in overseas markets to maintain Hong Kong as a top-of-mind destination. We will strengthen awareness by building and maintaining Hong Kong's presence through PR efforts, digital marketing and social media

platforms. We will also cooperate with key travel agents and airlines to drive multi-destination travel to Hong Kong and the Pan Pearl River Delta."

In light of Cathay Pacific Airways' European network expansion, it was hoped that this would strengthen the connectivity between Hong Kong and German-speaking markets. The airline resumed a daily direct flight to Zurich in March 2015 and launched a new route to Dusseldorf in September 2015.

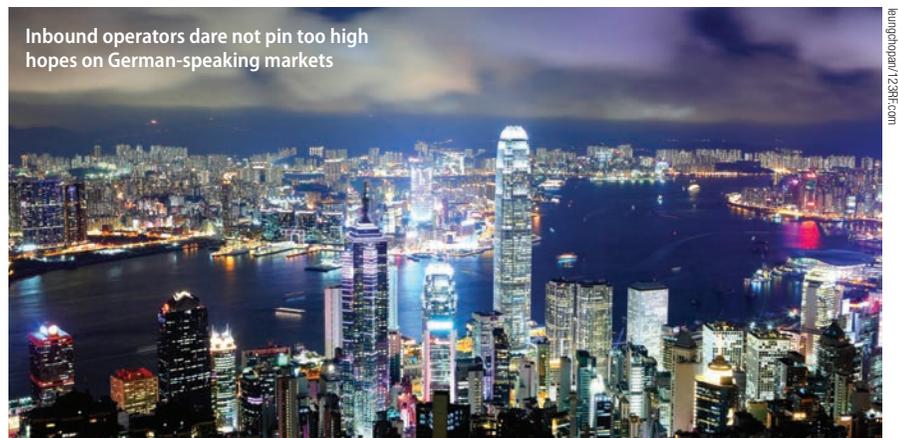
Cathay Pacific's business in Germany was strong throughout 2015. Its manager for Germany and Eastern Europe, Tony Sham, said: "Our new Dusseldorf service has been well received, providing a much-needed capacity boost for both business and leisure travellers. We are forecasting another good year for our German business in 2016, with high load factors that will be mainly driven by an increase in business travel."

Sham added: "The German economy remains strong and we expect to see the demand for travel to Asia continuing to grow. The additional capacity provided by our four weekly flights out of Dusseldorf will enable us to offer more seats to leisure travellers heading to Asia, Australia and New Zealand. As the only airline in Germany operating a non-stop service from Dusseldorf to Hong Kong, Cathay Pacific will continue to offer optimal onward connections through its Hong Kong hub."

However, inbound operators like PC Tours and Travel's general manager Cary Chiu is cautious as the industry is worried about the depreciation of the euro, which may dampen the desire to travel.

Chiu said: "We will stay proactive by repackaging our offers such as combining walking tours with a local transfer. This is not a brand-new product but we hope to present it in a more interesting way."

"We handle FITs from Germany and it was very quiet last year. Frankly, I don't see any upsurge in business even after Cathay Pacific's new services were added. With



the Internet playing a key role in bookings, our bigger challenge is the rise in direct online bookings by consumers who choose to bypass agents."

InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong, general manager, Alexander O. Wassermann, said: "In 2015, Germany represented approximately 0.6 per cent of total overnight visitors in Hong Kong. The number of visitors from Germany last year declined by 4.3 per cent compared to 2014. The overall global economic situa-

tion, weak currencies, new and upcoming destinations, and the social and political tension with China have put a damper on the city's outlook.

"Only five per cent of our total room nights come from German corporate and leisure guests, but it declined by one per cent in 2015. With the recent focus and efforts of Hong Kong to increase cruise ship calls at the country, we expect to see an increase in German leisure travellers stopping over in Hong Kong and at our hotel."

Destination in numbers

146,659

The total number of arrivals from Germany from January to September, down 5.5 per cent

HK\$5,582

A German tourist's average spending in 2014, equivalent to US\$716, down 6.1 per cent

3.6 days

A German tourist's length of stay in 2014. Number remains unchanged

WHAT'S NEW

1 Peninsula Boutique

Peninsula Boutique recently opened a flagship store at Hong Kong International Airport. The store stocks chocolates by Maitre Chocolatier, Marijn Coertjens; assorted Peninsula Blend Western and Chinese teas; Hong Kong snacks like egg rolls; and the iconic Peninsula Bear.

2 Mercedes-Benz me Store

Mercedes-Benz opened its first Mercedes me Store in Central last September. With a gross area of 408m², this unique venue offers visitors a combination of vehicle presentations, culinary experiences, events as well as digital interaction.

3 The Starry Gallery and The Garden of Stars

The Avenue of Stars in Tsim Sha Tsui is currently closed for improvement works until late 2018. Some of the exhibits however, are displayed at The Starry Gallery and The Garden of Stars.



Almas Caviar Bar

4 Hong Kong International Airport Midfield Concourse

Hong Kong International Airport officially opened its HK\$10-billion Midfield Concourse in December 2015. This 105,000m² five-storey new concourse provides 20 parking stands and space for restaurants and retail outlets.

5 Almas Caviar Bar

The Almas Caviar Bar opened at The Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong last September and only has seating for seven guests. Perched on Level 102, it takes its name from its premium caviar Almas Persicus.

HOW TO SELL

DO The four-hour **Tai Po Market Foodie tour** takes tourists to the New Territories to explore lesser-known facets of the local dining scene. The itinerary covers local eateries such as streetside *dai pai dong*s and traditional dishes like snake soup. Additionally, participants have a chance to visit local historical sites like the Tai Po Railway Station.

SEE The 60m-high **Hong Kong Observation Wheel** erected in Central waterfront has become a new landmark for the city. It features 42 luxury gondolas and each ride lasts about 15-20 minutes. Visitors can admire the city's hustle and bustle from a height. The government has extended the wheel's tenancy for another year until June 2017.

EAT The newly-open **Artisan Room** is the only café in town serving Costadoro coffee, an Italian brand. Located in rejuvenated South

Lane of Shek Tong Tsui in Western District, the choice of beans changes every week to ensure freshness. Each cup of java is made with a Dutch-style slow-drip cold brewer, Gothicism, the only one in Hong Kong.

STAY Bed down at the **Kowloon Harbourfront Hotel** situated in Hung Hom Bay of Harbourfront opened its door last July 2015. Guests can take in a magnificent 180-degree view of the city skyline from the all-suite hotel with 480 two-bedroom units.



Hong Kong Observation Wheel

VIEWPOINTS

How do you plan to grow business from German-speaking markets this year?



Michael Ziemer, general manager, The Excelsior, Hong Kong

In 2016, we foresee that the strong currency will continue to impact Hong Kong negatively as a destination. We will continue to drive business from Germany by strengthening our close relationship with local inbound operators by providing special ad hoc rates and packages tailor-made for German travellers.

Richard Woss, managing director, ATI Travel (Hong Kong)

The recent reduced demand of Chinese tourists, combined with the completion and continued opening of many new four-star hotels throughout Hong Kong, resulted in more realistic hotel rates. By taking advantage of the greatly reduced hotel rates, we can attract new market segments for which Hong Kong was initially "out of reach" due to the expensive pricing.



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High expectations, good outlook

Most major European markets into Indonesia registered a healthy growth; Mount Bromo pictured



Destination in numbers

230,000

The target arrivals from Germany to Indonesia in 2016

180,865

The number of arrivals from Germany to Indonesia between January and November 2015. This is 7.2 per cent higher than that of the same period in 2014

157 billion rupiah

The Ministry of Tourism's budget for "selling" activities (trade shows, sales missions, etc.) this year, equivalent to US\$11.3 million

Despite a turbulent European economy, outbound traffic from the continent looks to be stable, writes **Mimi Hudoyo**

Indonesia is expecting to see growth in European markets this year, following increases in footfalls from major European sources like Germany, the UK and the Netherlands in 2015. The travel trade has indicated that forward bookings for the summer period is up, as compared to last year.

German arrivals to Indonesia between January and November 2015 was up by 7.2 per cent to 180,865, the third biggest market out of Europe after the UK which grew by 15.3 per cent to 244,764. The Netherlands also grew 0.5 per cent to 154,241. Only arrivals from France dropped by two per cent – between January and November 2015 when compared to the same period in 2014.

The Ministry of Tourism is targeting arrivals from Europe to reach 1,090,000 this year, of which Germany is expected to contribute 230,000 arrivals.

To achieve this, the Ministry of Tourism will be dedicating around 300 million rupiah (US\$21,583) to destination pro-

motions across Europe, which it sees as a single market.

I Gde Pitana, deputy minister for international marketing development, Ministry of Tourism, explained: "We consider Europe as one market because when we go to a trade show in Berlin or London, for example, we are not only targeting (travellers from) these countries."

Ida Bagus Ngurah Wijaya, chairman of Bali Tourism Board, agrees that Europe be considered as a single market since travellers from the region "share similar characteristics".

He elaborated: "They spend their time visiting many places instead of staying

put in one destination. They like culture, which Indonesia has a lot to offer, and their spending is high."

Noviendi Makalam, director of marketing and communications, Ministry of Tourism, told the *Daily* that the ministry will be investing in advertising, production of promotional catalogues and websites, and participation in promotional activities in Europe.

He noted: "European travellers are still dependent on travel consultants in deciding on their holiday destinations."

Indonesian tour operators handling Europe, including German-speaking source markets, also express confidence in 2016.

Adjie Wahjono, operations manager of Aneka Kartika Tours and Travel Services, said forward bookings for the months from April onwards had started surfacing in October 2015.

"This is a significant difference compared to last year when we did not get any bookings until after ITB in Berlin. Business was slow in 2015, down 30 per cent from 2014," he revealed.

WHAT'S NEW

1 Padma Resort Ubud

Padma Hotels' second property in Bali has opened in Payangan, Ubud. The 149-room Padma Resort Ubud features



Seminyak Village

contemporary Balinese architecture and artworks. Facilities include an infinity swimming pool, a spa, fitness centres, a 3.4km jogging track, a restaurant and lounge, a library and a children's playground.

2 Seminyak Village

The new Seminyak Village shopping mall opened last October. The two-storey mall houses 48 shops and restaurants, and offers shoppers a landscaped rooftop terrace for a moment's rest.

3 Le Bon Vivant

Bali's Sanur welcomed the new Le Bon Vivant restaurant in November, a dining destination that takes pride in using fresh ingredients sourced from local fishermen and farmers and artisan producers. They also import speciality food from Europe, the US and Australia.



From left: The Ritz-Carlton Spa, Bali; Padma Resort Ubud



4 Alila Seminyak

Alila Seminyak opened last October on Bali's south-western coast, and the property boasts 240 contemporary rooms and suites. Facilities include an all-day dining restaurant, a beach bar, a 24-hour coffee bar, Alila Spa, five swimming pools, a gym, an events centre and a kids' club.

5 The Ritz-Carlton Spa

The Ritz-Carlton, Bali now welcomes guests to its new spa, The Ritz-Carlton Spa. There are 14 treatment rooms and patrons are invited to utilise the spa's Wet Lounge which comes with a warm whirlpool, cold plunge pool, sauna, steam room and shower prior to their treatment.

VIEWPOINTS

How do you plan to grow business from German-speaking markets this year?



Herdy Sayoga, board member of Bandung Tourism Promotion Board, Bali

German is a resilient market. It still has big potential to grow, especially now that Indonesia has given German passport holders visa-free travel.

As the country is a mature market, the most effective way to promote our destination is through an interactive table top. Therefore, Bandung Tourism Promotion Board will organise a meeting in Frankfurt and Koln prior to ITB Berlin, on March 3 and 7 respectively, inviting 200 medium and boutique (agencies). This will be the first time the board is doing it. Twelve suppliers from Bali will participate.



Leonardus Nyoman, owner of Flores Exotic Tours

We will be targeting niche markets like photography and cycling enthusiasts. We will be introducing a cycling tour of Komodo, Flores, Timor and Alor and wildlife photography

tour of Tanjung Puting with its orangutans and komodo dragons.

This is in response to the recent growth in demand for special interest tours.

HOW TO SELL

DO The **Mekarsari Taman Buah** claims to be the largest indigenous tropical fruit conservation centre in the world. It is located in Cileungsi, about an hour's drive from Jakarta.

Here, visitors will find the best fruits from around Indonesia as well as a laboratory for agronomic research, breeding and cultivating of top quality fruit plants.

EAT **Macaroni Panggang Bogor** on Jalan Salak is popular

with Jakarta folks who escape to Bogor on weekends. It is a one-stop restaurant and bakery that reminisces the Dutch colonial era. The building itself is an old house with gardens and diners can sit indoors or on the patio and veranda. The menu features Western dishes, local Bogor delights and favourites from West Java.

SEE Drive east to Bogor, about 60km away from Jakarta city centre and visit **Kebun Raya Bogor**. The botanic gardens have more than 400 species of palm trees, 5,000 tropical trees and 3,000 varieties of orchids.

Kebun Raya Bogor is said to have been initiated by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, when he was governor general of the East Indies between 1811 and 1816.

STAY The **101 Bogor Suryakencana** is good for leisure and business travellers. The 156-room hotel is located in the China Town of Bogor Heritage area, on the famous Jalan Suryakencana food street. It is also close to Kebun Raya Bogor and Bogor Presidential Palace. For meeting groups, the hotel can host events for up to 300 people.



Karnaval Mekarsari



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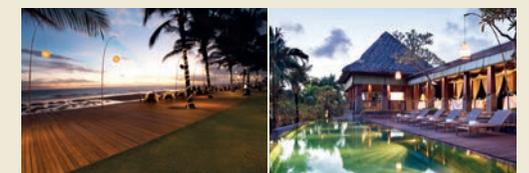
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Destination Macau

Perks of neighbourly ties

Macau is hoping to draw European visitors through neighbouring destinations. By Prudence Lui

The number of German and Swiss visitors to Macau had fallen in 2015, registering 25,149 and 6,696 footfalls as of November 2015 respectively.

According to official data, German arrivals are fairly stable, ranging between 28,100 and 29,700 from 2008 to 2014. Swiss arrivals, on the other hand, had shot up from 6,200 in 2008 to an all-time high of 7,700 in 2013.

Patrick Lo, lecturer and member of the IFT Tourism Research Centre in the Institute for Tourism Studies, brushed off the dip in numbers last year, saying: "Macau is a consistent attraction for Europeans who are drawn to the destination's milder and warmer climate. Macau's story of prosperity, how it is today a mega gaming city, has a magnetic effect on people who like to explore places that they don't usually have a chance to visit."

Lo is confident that the full-year arrivals from the two markets will stand at around 27,700 and 7,400 footfalls respectively.

Meanwhile, the Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO) is continuing its courtship of the German market.

Director, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, told the *Daily* that initial results of MGTO's "strong consumer campaigns" were good.

"Our campaigns included a partnership with the Festival of Lights in Berlin and promotions at high-traffic locations such as train stations in the Greater Dusseldorf area, which highlighted the new daily Cathay Pacific flight from Dusseldorf to Hong Kong. The TV premiere of *ZDF Traumschiff Macao*, which aired at the end of 2015, is expected to create another great publicity momentum," said de Senna Fernandes.

This year, MGTO will engage in online marketing and social media as well as offer attractive travel packages to capture the German market.



Macau as a standalone destination is not a strong enough lure for longhaul travellers

"(With these efforts) we believe visitor arrivals from Germany will be positive," she remarked.

Recognising how German travellers liked to "get to know the destination and its people", a German audio guide service is now made available for tours around the Historic Centre of Macau.

"This will give German-speaking travellers a richer and more meaningful experience in (Macau)," she said.

MGTO is not letting the lack of direct flights between Germany and Macau dampen its spirits, and remains confident that local tourism stakeholders will explore ways to draw German travellers. One solution is to encourage inbound traffic via other destinations, such as long-time partners Hong Kong and China's Guangdong province.

Sam Chiu, sales manager of Hotel Royal Macau, noted that this was a good time for longhaul markets to visit, as hotel room rates had fallen some 20 to 30 per cent along with the tumbling Chi-

nese arrivals – Macau's biggest tourism source market. This had allowed Hotel Royal Macau to create some attractive hotel deals.

Chiu added that Macau has "more than just gaming" to lure European visitors.

Top Holidays-P&E International Travel, director and deputy general manager, Eliza Ng, begged to differ and gave the *Daily* a more conservative projection

Destination in numbers

2.6

The average number of days spent by German travellers in Macau

16.8

The year-on-year percentage decline in German visitors who arrive in Macau on package tours, amounting to 1,570 pax in the first 11 months of 2015. German package travellers account for 6.2 per cent of total German arrivals

58.6

The percentage of German visitors that take day trips in Macau

of the German-speaking market performance for 2016.

Ng said: "Given the uncertain global economy, we don't think (arrivals) will be good in 1H2016 and we remain cautious (in our business outlook) for the second half of this year. The new integrated resorts and tourism facilities in Macau will not be enough to attract these travellers, as they don't just come for Macau. They usually take multi-destination itineraries. Therefore, it is the infrastructure of surrounding areas like the Pearl River Delta that is more influential."

VIEWPOINTS

How do you plan to grow business from German-speaking markets this year?



Alcuin Li, director - commercial division, Shun Tak, China Travel Ship Management

We will offer direct ferry services and Turbojet's Premier Plus point-to-point services for a seamless land and sea connection between Hong Kong and Macau. Effective from January 28 this year, this new service between Hong Kong and Macau via Tuen Mun Ferry Terminal shortens the sea voyage by 20 minutes.

Noella Tsui, general manager, Estoril Tours

The German-speaking market is still a small market for us. (To attract these travellers) we will provide tailor-made tours that come with a twist.

WHAT'S NEW

1 Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central

The property has unveiled 80 new luxurious and oversized suites on the top floors. The mix comprises one Terrace Suite and 79 Executive Deluxe Suites. The Terrace Suite sits on the Sky Tower's 41st floor, offering more than 242m² of stylish indoor space and 110m² of outdoor terrace. The Executive Deluxe Suites boast over 121m² of living space.

2 Studio City

Officially inaugurated on October 27 last year, the Hollywood-theme Studio City is packed with entertainment options including the House of Magic, the Batman Dark Flight 4D flight simulation ride, and Golden Reel, said to be Asia's tallest figure-eight Ferris wheel. The latter attraction straddles the resort's two towers and stands some 130m tall.

3 Four Seasons Hotel Macao, Cotai Strip

The hotel spa has in January launched a refreshed menu which features a series of



The St. Regis Macao, Cotai Central

therapies by Biologique Recherche, Intracellentials and The Organic Pharmacy. New signature treatments are A-Ma Amour, Portuguese Journey/Safe Journey, Yin Meets Yang, and Thai Balancing which is available in 90- and 120-minute sessions.

4 The St. Regis Macao, Cotai Central

The 400-key luxury hotel made its debut in mid-December 2015, boasting guestrooms that are from 53m² to 477m² in size. Guests can expect the brand's signature butler service, a multi-experience dining venue, and The St. Regis Bar where the legendary Bloody Mary cocktail will be served, among other facilities.

HOW TO SELL

DO Asia's highest outdoor climbing wall can be found on the exterior of the **Macau Tower**. Challenge your physical limit by climbing 32m up the tower's shaft. Sounds tough, but it is a fun activity for individuals and groups of all ages. Participants will get guidance from experienced staff. Private or group sessions are available on weekdays.

SEE Join the **Step Out, Experience Macau's Communities** bus tour to explore Macau's neighbourhood and heritage sites. Two optimised routes are offered, and the bus-stops connect points across eight walking tour routes.

EAT The **1/2 Otto e Mezzo** in Galaxy Macau promises an authentic Italian gourmet experience. Helmed by Michelin star chef Bombana, the restaurant boasts an 'ageing' cellar which houses prized hams such as Pata Negra and

Cinta Senese along with other delicacies like caviar, truffles and Italian cheeses. The dining area can seat 60 diners, while two private dining rooms can seat eight and 10 people respectively.

STAY The 208-key **Crowne Plaza Macau** in the city centre makes a convenient base from which to explore Macau. Facilities include restaurants and gym.



1/2 Otto e Mezzo



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Wider access on the horizon

How will Indonesia's lifting of cabotage restrictions shape the future development of South-east Asia's cruise industry? **Mimi Hudoyo, S Puvaneswary** and **Paige Lee Pei Qi** speak to cruise lines and agents

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In a bid to boost arrivals, the Indonesian government has relaxed its cabotage principles imposed on cruise ships by allowing foreign vessels to anchor at selected ports in the country.

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

Cruise companies interviewed by the *Daily* are salivating at the prospects of a larger domestic cruise market and more interesting itineraries.

Welcoming the development, Michael Goh, senior vice president – sales, Star Cruises, said: “Star Cruises had completed its 46-night Southern Hemisphere cruise onboard *SuperStar Virgo*, calling at several ports in Indonesia including Jakarta and Bali (in late-2014). The new ruling will enable Star Cruises to explore new itineraries and most importantly, expand our reach in Indonesia, as the country has the making and potential to be one of the leading cruise hubs in the region.”

Buhy Bok, Costa Group’s Asia president, is equally positive: “As a key market for Costa, Indonesia’s latest move provides a huge opportunity to develop the cruise market both domestically and around the region. We are always keen to explore new itineraries in the region, and are excited to see the development of more itineraries with the increase in port calls in Indonesia, enriching our cruise holiday offerings for guests in the Asia region.”

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

Hence it is not surprising that Indonesia’s outbound operators are viewing the cabotage lift in positive light, especially as Indonesians, who still need to fly out of the country to embark on a cruise ship, will be able to sail from domestic ports in the future.

Nurdin Supena, manager, Bayu Buana Travel, said: “It would be more attractive for Indonesians because it means reduced cost in terms of air tickets to Singapore, and it is also time-effective to be able to hop onto a cruise from Jakarta as the major outbound market comes from here.

“The cruise package prices need to be attractive though,” she added. “The most important thing, however, is the readiness of the ports to berth the big ships which are operating in the region nowadays.”

Furthermore, the ability to cruise from homeground will likely appeal to Indonesians seeking to enjoy the facilities on board a ship, rather than the destination, opined Rama Tirtawisata, group managing director of Panorama Leisure Group.

“For these people, short (South-east Asian) cruise programmes such as Singapore-Port Klang-Phuket are popular,” Rama said, adding that it would be more

convenient for them to start their trips from Indonesia.

“(The other group of cruise travellers), those who would travel to places like the Mediterranean or Alaska, the new policy does not bring any change,” he said.

At the same time, Rama also sees ample opportunities for international cruise lines to roll out domestic programmes for Indonesians across the sprawling archipelago. “Indonesia has so many interesting destinations such as Togean and Raja Ampat which are not easily accessible by air, and cruising can be a good alternative for adventurous Indonesians,” he said.

Likewise, Lim Chee Tong, managing director of Malaysia’s Jebsen Travel & Tours Services, foresees cruise lines will offer itineraries to more exotic destinations in Indonesia beyond current ports of calls like Komodo Island and Bali. “This will benefit agents as they will have more products to sell,” he said.

On the other hand, Richard Vuilleumier, managing director, Panorama Tours Malaysia, foresees a lukewarm reception for all-Indonesian itineraries, as many Malaysians have already been to Indonesia for shopping, sightseeing, golfing and cultural experiences, and therefore would rather take cruises to novel destinations farther afield.

John Chan, business consultant at Malaysia’s Kris International Traveltours, views the cabotage lift as the nascent development of the Indonesian cruise industry and as it matures, there will be more opportunities for corporate companies to hold their incentive events on-board a cruise ship, with embarkation and disembarkation in Indonesia.

He commented: “For the Malaysian market, Indonesia will be a new destination for cruise holidays as compared to Southern Thailand and Hong Kong. Malaysia will also benefit as passengers could transit at the international airports here before boarding an onward flight to Indonesia.”

The biggest loser may be Singapore, which has established itself as the cruise hub of South-east Asia.

Alicia Seah, director of marketing communications at Dynasty Travel, deems the cabotage lift a threat as it will “definitely affect and reduce the numbers” boarding from Singapore.

She said: “With Indonesia’s big population base numbers, secondary cities will benefit to depart from their homeport country rather than via Singapore where accommodation and transfers will definitely cost more.”

Echoing similar sentiments, Chan Brothers Travel Singapore’s spokesperson,



Indonesia’s cabotage lift may threaten Singapore’s cruise hub position in the future

Rebecca Chia, commented: “With the lifting of cabotage of the sea, we foresee that passengers from Jakarta may choose to embark and disembark from their homeports instead of Singapore for domestic and regional cruising.

“We have seen bookings from the Indonesia market gaining traction only in the last two years, with majority of travellers originating from Batam, Jakarta and Yogyakarta. (Nevertheless), they may still find it more convenient to embark and disembark from Singapore than through their own seaports due to our strategic location within South-east Asia,” Chia said.

However, the trade is not expecting

Indonesia to compete with Singapore’s cruise hub position yet.

Seah added: “We reckon that there will be challenges in (the Indonesia cruise industry) for at least the next two to three years in terms of infrastructure building as well as pricing strategies as they may be pegged against the US dollar.”

Star Cruises’ Goh urged: “We hope Indonesia will continue to implement cruise-friendly measures and develop the overall cruise tourism network, economy and infrastructure for the selected seaports, which are equally important in order to attract more cruises and tourists to the country in the near future.”

South-east Asian cruise market makes bigger waves

Cruise tourism’s economic contribution

The fast-growing cruise industry has made a significant economic contribution of nearly US\$1.7 billion to South-east Asia in 2014, according to a Cruise Line International Association’s (CLIA) study which covered the five countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam.

There were a total of 1,672 cruise ship calls at the destination ports of the five countries. A quarter of them were turnaround port calls and the remaining 75 per cent transit and overnight port calls. Malaysia had the highest number of transit and total calls (35 per cent of transit port calls and 30 per cent of total cruise ship calls in the region) while Singapore had the highest volume of turnaround calls (63 per cent).

The calls generated just over three million passenger visit days and just over 422,000 crew visit days. Cruise ports in Malaysia and Singapore each generated more than one million passenger and cruise visit days.

Cruise passengers were the bigger spenders, spending a total of US\$1.5 billion while crew spent US\$22.9 million. Turnaround passengers spent an estimated US\$1.3 billion (an average of US\$842 per visit day), with transit and overnight passengers spending US\$198 million (US\$132 per visit day).

Rapid increase in port calls

The number of port calls in South-east Asia has grown 28 per cent from 2013 to reach a record 1,973 in 2015, according to the latest CLIA figures.

Malaysia welcomed 580 port calls in 2015, the second largest number in Asia after Japan. Singapore with 374 calls is also among the top ports with over 200 total calls in 2015.

“These are very encouraging results and a positive sign for future success. Such dynamic growth confirms that South-east Asia’s great potential as a major international cruise market is being realised,” said Ann Sherry, chairperson for CLIA South-east Asia and CEO of Carnival Australia.

Cruising boom in Asia

Cruise tourism in Asia is growing at double-digit rates – both in cruise liner capacity deployed in the region and as a passenger source market. The absolute number of cruise travellers from Asia has almost doubled since 2012, growing from

775,000 to nearly 1.4 million passengers, a 34 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR).

China is a main driver of passenger growth in Asia, adding 480,000 more cruise travellers since 2012 – an almost 80 per cent CAGR. Other markets with leading double-digit growth include Hong Kong (74 per cent), India (36 per cent), Japan (20 per cent) and Taiwan (14 per cent).

China accounted for nearly half of Asia’s passenger volume in 2014. An estimated 679,000 passengers were from mainland China, compared with 700,000 from the rest of Asia.

Other leading source markets include Singapore (163,000 passengers), Taiwan (137,000) and Japan (119,000).

In response to the increasing demand, the cruise industry is bringing more cruise visits to Asian destinations. In fact, Asia had the greatest gain in share of global capacity deployment (2.4 percentage points) among all regions.

There were 980 more port calls in 2015, up 34 per cent in absolute volume from 2013. Destinations with the greatest growth in total port calls are Japan and Malaysia, with 238 and 197 additional calls respectively. Other destinations with total port call growth include Hong Kong (101), Singapore (84) and South Korea (68).

The CLIA study findings show that Asian cruisers sailed mostly within the region in 2014. Almost half (48 per cent) of them took short cruises of four to six nights, followed by two to three nights (38 per cent).

The momentum of cruise tourism in Asia continued in 2015. Twenty-six brands are serving the market in 2014, with 52 ships deployed and more than 1,000 cruises scheduled.

As in the previous year, cruises within Asia and short sailings of two to three nights and four to six nights dominate itineraries in 2015.

Cruise ship calls and expenditures in South-east Asia in 2014

	Region total	Indonesia	Malaysia	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
Cruise calls						
Transit	1,066	139	368	28	237	294
Turnaround	423	12	132	267	11	1
Overnight	183	25	5	40	45	68
Total	1,672	176	505	335	293	363
Passenger and crew visit days						
Turnaround passengers	1,512,934	11,763	434,630	1,031,553	34,394	594
Transit/Overnight passengers	1,498,138	139,685	503,841	84,157	379,735	390,720
Crew	422,598	28,668	138,649	100,883	75,918	78,480
Total	3,433,670	180,116	1,077,120	1,216,593	490,047	469,794
Direct expenditures (US\$ million)						
Turnaround passengers	1,273.77	8.54	315.14	924.72	24.94	0.43
Transit/Overnight passengers	198.11	20.48	35.53	12.62	71.52	57.96
Crew	22.90	1.89	8.47	5.64	4.00	2.90
Cruise lines	166.32	5.94	5.05	148.69	3.39	3.25
Total	1,661.10	36.85	364.19	1,091.67	103.85	64.54

Special report **Longhaul**

Franc-ly speaking

The rising popularity of Switzerland may be put to test this year as Asian currencies weaken, reports [Rosa Ocampo](#). Meanwhile, [Raini Hamdi](#) explores new options in Italy to satisfy Asian FITs seeking something new

Two major developments – Asian currency depreciation, which continues to slow travel from South-east Asia, and recent terrorist attacks and threats to Europe – will determine how Switzerland inbound will fare this year.

In the aftermath of the November attacks in Paris which were followed by terrorist threats to Belgium and England, travel consultants are looking out for alternative destinations in Europe – Switzerland and lesser-known cities included – as they expect the general demand for the continent to drop this year.

Ian Evasco, retail team leader-travel products of Adventure International Tour, Philippines concurred that tourists could divert to Switzerland as “it is in the heart of Europe and has always been a very safe and secure destination, which is very important”.

Indeed, safety and security have always been Switzerland’s selling point, apart from its natural charm as an “all-time, all-season destination” with clean air, water and environment and efficient transport system.

But its expensive image – dearer than Paris and other more popular European countries – is a challenge, according to South-east Asia travel consultants who attended the 18th Switzerland Travel Mart in Zermatt last September.

They noted that the depreciation of a basket of Asian currencies made Switzerland even more expensive, while the economic and political situation in specific countries kept people hesitant to travel. So much so that towards the end of 2015, business from Singapore and Malaysia to Switzerland were reported as “bad”, and from Indonesia “very bad”.



Kempinski Grand Hotel
des Bains, St Moritz

While Switzerland is not about to cheapen its prices, it is luring Asian FITs, families, repeats and mini groups with value-added products. Foremost of these is the Swiss Travel Pass for unlimited travel by rail, road or waterways across the country.

Cynthia Tan, operations director of Roystar Travel & Tours, Malaysia, said considering the expensive public transport in Europe, the Swiss Travel Pass made Switzerland affordable, enabling travellers to stay longer and see more.

There is good demand for the pass, agreed Yen Thing, tours consultant of Boustead Travel Services, Malaysia as the pass

also features attractive discounts for youths and adults and is free for kids below 16 years old, among perks.

Feliz Gracielle Axalan, marketing executive, Tradewings Tours & Travel, Philippines, foresees ample potential for Switzerland from the new and small Philippine market which still “lacks awareness” of the destination.

She said that Switzerland’s continued marketing and promotions would unlock opportunities in groups, corporates, students travelling on semester breaks and young employees going on summer vacations.

Another new market, Vietnam, is still small but there is potential including for luxury travel, said Dang Tran Thuc Doan, director of strategic planning for Tourist Service & Trading Corp.

In Asia, Switzerland Tourism works largely with the travel trade and its director of South-east Asia, Ivan Breiter, said it “can help with pricing” by advising agents to step up sales during the low and shoulder seasons, and during weekdays, when rates are lower.

Breiter said 40 per cent of tourists from South-east Asia were generated during the shoulder season.

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Special report Longhaul

Starchitects bring glamour to remote valley

By Raini Hamdi

A quiet village in Switzerland that prides itself on having just “1,000 inhabitants, 1,000 sheep, 1,000 guest beds” has been hurled into the limelight as starchitects descend upon it to build projects that capture the imagination.

Vals, 1,250m above sea level in the canton of Graubunden, is famous for a hotel and thermal spa designed by award-winning Swiss architect Peter Zumthor; also for the bottled mineral water, Valser, and its beautiful Valsian quartzite.

There isn't much else.

However, a new owning company of the hotel has given the hotel the kind of attention reserved for celebrities, thanks to its bold expansion plan to build an iPhone-slim tower extension designed by American architect Thom Mayne of Morphosis. Another starchitect, Tadao Ando, is designing a meditation park, Valser Path, within the complex.

Formerly known as Therme Hotel & Spa, the resort has been renamed 7132 Hotel (7132 being the postal code of Vals). The new owning company, 7132 Ltd, is led by Remo Stoffel, an entrepreneur who was born in Vals and who bought the property from the local community three years ago.

The new tower is a startlingly slender 381m tall building with 107 rooms – virtually one room per floor – with a transparent exterior sheen that will mirror the mountains. If all goes well, it will open in 2019. But first, the company must win the votes of the community for the tower. To this end, it has set up a gallery with large-scale models of the extension, so that the locals could view the plan and have their concerns addressed.



But even without a brick being laid for the new tower, a metamorphosis has already occurred at the existing hotel, which aims to attract international jet-setters, including well-heeled Asians, to Vals.

Renovations at the hotel, which comprises the main wing and another wing called Selva House, have been completed. The latter, renamed House of Architects, now fields 13 new rooms designed by yet another starchitect, Kengo Kuma, and 18 new rooms by Ando. Both are highly-skilled at deflecting a 20m² space with their eye-popping minimalist design and unique effects. Kuma for instance uses warm, curved wooden panels to create a

soft cocoon of a room, while Ando sliced off a rectangular space to create a bathroom that is triangle in shape.

Morphosis' Mayne is also designing another 20 rooms which will be ready by summer this year, revealed the hotel's managing director, Sonia Dietrich.

These new rooms join 20 retro-chic rooms designed by Peter Zumthor, completing the concept to offer designer rooms in the House of Architects.

In the main building, three new 90m² suites designed by Kuma have also opened. Each suite booking comes with a helicopter or a limousine at guest disposal in case he spontaneously wants to lunch in Ge-

neva, shop in Zurich, whatever takes his fancy, included in the rate of CHF2,480 (US\$2,515) per night. The 35 Zumthor rooms in the main building – larger at 24-30m² compared with those in the House of Architects (18-20m²) and more luxuriously furnished – have also been spruced up, with new bathrooms designed by Kuma.

The new meditation park, Valser Path, meanwhile, is scheduled for completion in 2017. Both the park and the new tower are within the hotel complex, which sits above the town centre and blends quietly into the natural surroundings. The Valser Path is open to the whole community, not just hotel guests.

Dietrich said the main difference since the new ownership came onboard was that, “for the first time since 30 years, we have the vision, plans and money to invest”.

“It is now difficult for Switzerland to get good guests because the Swiss franc is strong. You can't build a three-star hotel, you need something unique to compete. We have to go this way,” she said.

She believed the changes at 7132 Hotel would draw more top-paying guests who love architecture and design, thermal springs, a destination that does not attract mass tourism, top-notch service and F&B (one of the hotel's restaurants is helmed by Sven Wassmer who previously worked for three-Michelin-star Andreas Caminada).

Prospects from Asia are good, she said. “Even though there aren't a lot of Asian guests at the moment, it might improve in time with the Japanese architects' involvement. Most of the Asian guests we have are FITs from South Korea, Japan and China and their main reason for coming here is the therme, the architecture and a desire to enjoy unspoiled areas of Switzerland,” Dietrich said.

Prices have increased following the renovations and rates have been simplified: CHF390 for rooms in the House of Architects, CHF590 for rooms in the main building and CHF2,480 for the suites.

An Italian yin and yang

By Raini Hamdi

As the segment of sophisticated and free independent travellers from Asia grows larger, destinations that were once aspirational have become banal for this lot, putting pressure on outbound travel agents to come up with new ideas to please clients.

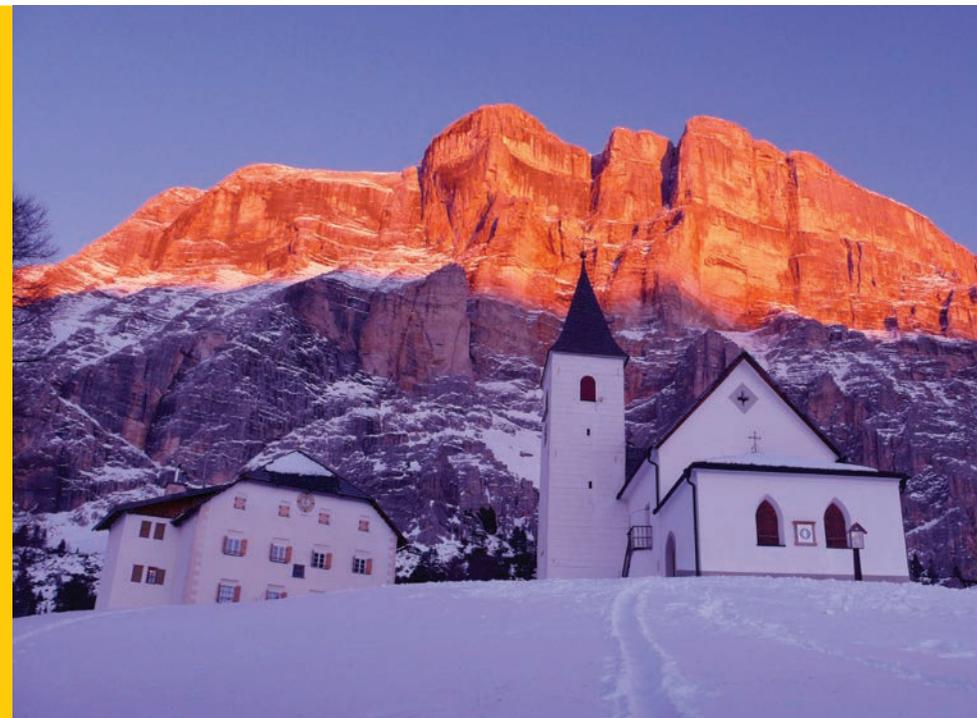
Combine Venice and its lagoons with the Dolomites and agents will in effect be offering their clients two UNESCO World Heritage Sites at one go.

Venice and the Dolomites are only a 2.5 hours drive away. While the former is known to every well-clad Asian tourist, the same cannot be said of the Dolomites. Currently, it is fair to say only the discerning Asians would have the Dolomites on their radar, like the couple from Singapore and Hong Kong who recently booked out the entire Queen of the Alps hotel, Rosa Alpina Hotel & Spa for their wedding. They could have chosen Florence or Rome, but they chose the village of San Cassiano, 1,537m above sea level in the tourist district of

Alta Badia. The village has only 750 inhabitants. The Dolomites: A name befittingly close to ‘dynamite’ and ‘dynamic’ – every bit of this unique mountain range in the northern Italian Alps it is. Venice has feminine, wily charms, while the Dolomites exudes masculine, single-focus power. A contrast that is so perfect and compelling – think ‘His’ & ‘Hers’, Ying & Yang, Snow & Ice.

Unlike triangle mounds most mountains are, the Dolomites are exquisite pinnacles, spires, towers, dramatic vertical limestone walls and various sculptural forms in a great diversity of colours. Comprising 18 peaks rising to above 3,000m and covering 141,903ha, the Dolomites is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Italy had done well last year. According to results from the European Cities Marketing-MKG report, the city of Milan experienced the strongest RevPAR in Europe in the first three quarters of 2015, over the same period last year, thanks to Expo Milan which was held from May 1 to October 31. The city of romance, Ven-



ice, too, was ahead of 2014, experiencing an average daily rate rise of over 19 per cent, leading to a RevPAR increase of 17.3 per cent.

Overall, 2015 was the Year of Europe, which was the world's most visited region

with a five per cent increase in arrivals compared with four per cent for Asia-Pacific, the Americas and the Middle East, while Africa looks set to decline five per cent, going by UNWTO's preliminary figures.



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