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IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific
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Japan heats up for incentives

By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena and S Puvaneswary

JAPAN'S recent visa waiver for Thai and Malaysian nationals has raised the country's allure as an incentive destination, according to planners in Thailand and Malaysia.

Japan has risen to become the "best-selling incentive destination" this year at Go Holiday Tour Thailand, said sales executive, Adtapornt Theppreechachakul.

"We have seen a considerable rise in incentive and corporate demand for Japan. Bookings from January to October have reached 1,600 pax, compared with 1,000 pax for the same period last year," he said.

Likewise, another Thai outbound operator, Bonus Travel, has recorded a "doubling" of incentive tours to Japan so far this year. The agency's sales manager, Arthit Kiatbenchaphong, said: "Japan used to be associated among Thai corporates as a luxury destination, so the country's branding is there and not much selling is needed for companies to dangle Japan as an incentive."

"Sapporo is rising as an

incentive destination, especially since Thai Airways International launched direct flights to Hokkaido, which has helped to lower prices. Thai incentive footprints are spreading beyond Tokyo and Nagoya, with Okinawa and Fukuoka becoming more popular."

Over in Malaysia, the depreciation of the yen against the ringgit has also helped to boost outbound incentives to Japan.

Desmond Lee, group managing director of Malaysia's Apple Vacations & Conventions, said the company has been seeing larger incentive bookings for Japan.



Lee: bigger budgets for Japan incentives

He said: "We used to get group sizes under 100 pax. These days, 100 pax are the minimum. For instance, we have a group of 400 top sales personnel going to Tokyo for a seven-day/ five-night incentive trip (this week)."

"Incentives to Japan also have a bigger budget for land components (hotels, transport,

sightseeing, meals, etc) ranging from US\$180-\$200 per day, compared with those to South Korea where budgets range from US\$120-\$150, while those to China range from US\$50-\$80."

BMC Travel Malaysia's managing director, Billy Leong, expects Japan-bound incentives to grow 50 per cent year-on-year for 2H2013, mainly to Tokyo and Osaka.

Many corporate clients are also shifting destinations from Europe to Japan for this last quarter as the Euro had strengthened against the ringgit by 12 per cent over a four-month period from May, according to Leong.

Prior to the visa waiver, the average size of incentive travel seldom reached 300, but now it ranges from 400 to 500, he observed.

Cooper Huang, chief executive director of Malaysian Harmony Tours & Travel, said his company has been receiving enquiries for incentive movements for 2H2014 and requests are mainly for Tokyo and Osaka, although Hokkaido is gaining popularity.

"Visa was the main hurdle. Companies were reluctant to

reveal sensitive information such as their bank statements to the Japanese embassy or the middleman handling the visa application," said Huang.

However, Huang declined projecting bookings for Japan next year, saying that business would be reliant on the currency exchange of the Euro and yen against the ringgit.

Meanwhile, the visa waiver has also created some challenges for Thai outbound operators, especially as the strong travel demand from Thailand to Japan continues to outpace air capacity between the two countries.

"The most obvious challenge now is insufficient air capacity and the resulting hike of ticket prices," shared Always Vacation Thailand's senior sales and marketing, Jiraporn Jearsilanuwat, who urges carriers to raise flight frequencies and launch new destinations in Japan to spread Thai footfalls – both leisure and incentive – beyond the main cities of Tokyo and Osaka.

Arthit concurred: "We are advising our MICE clients to travel during non-peak periods (to avoid competing with FIT

and group tours)."

Japan's growing popularity is also impacting regional destinations, such as South Korea.

Arthit said: "South Korea has been greatest hit as it's in a similar price range as Japan. Many of our incentive clients are now comparing South Korea and Japan, and are often opting for the latter by topping up another 10-20 per cent more. Furthermore, the appeal of South Korea has started declining even before Japan's visa waiver. The country's more of a single-visit destination, with only Seoul and Busan as its highlights.

"Japan, however, does well in attracting repeat incentives with its diverse landscapes, seasons, technology and cuisine."

Similarly, Adtapornt said: "Since July when Japan's visa-free policy was rolled out, we have only sent around 100 incentive delegates to South Korea, versus close to 400 pax for Japan within these four months (July to October). Last year we had around 2,000 incentive delegates to South Korea, but this year we're just aiming for 1,500. However, till now (October), we have barely reached 1,100 for South Korea."

TALKING NUMBERS

387 The number of buyers attending IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific this year. They hail from 48 countries/territories, with half of them from Asia-Pacific.

60 The percentage of new buyers at the show. They come from Brunei and Ireland.

155 The number of corporate travel managers from 17 countries/territories at the show this year, 47 per cent of which are newbies.

887 The number of exhibitors from 285 companies and organisations showcasing their wares at IT&CMA.



Harnessing the power to change

Fast Future Research's Rohit Talwar (fifth from right) presented the results from The Power of 10 study, commissioned by IMEX, to members of Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau and Thailand Incentive and Convention Association yesterday. The objective of the global survey, which drew responses from 765 people from 68 countries in six continents, is to help MICE industry players prepare for the future by understanding the changes that will take place so they can respond strategically to changing trends. Among the various findings, the study underlined respondents' call for convention centres to stay up-to-date with new and emerging technologies. The results of the study was first released last year to commemorate the 10th anniversary of IMEX Frankfurt. - S Puvaneswary

Mobile power

DELEGATES can easily reach one another with the handy IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2013 SmartPhone App.

With the new messaging function, which displays the list of exhibitors and buyers, users can conveniently start chatting with one another prior to and during the double-bill event.

The app also details the event programme while the alert function will keep users on track with their schedules. A floor plan containing interactive maps to show the activities taking place on levels 22 and 23 of the Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld will also be a useful guide for delegates.

Once the app is downloaded, all other functions besides the messaging feature can be accessed – even without an Internet connection.

Download this app at www.itcmactw.mobi/. - Lee Pei Qi

Happy early birds in action

Patrick Tan catches up with the first wave of IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific delegates



Santa Bali Tours & Travel's Ketut Sedanartha and wife



Congress Rental Singapore's Jeremy Ducklin



Sofia Luxury Travel Bulgaria's Diana Lozanova and Prime Holidays Bulgaria's Antoaneta Petrova



Arika Tour & Travels India's Udesh Kejriwal, Harshil Tours & Travels India's Pravin Shah and SSR Holidays India's Sapneal Rao



UEM Sunrise Malaysia's Liew Lee Chian



Sabah Tourism Board's Josephine Chai and Tay Shu Lan



eGlobal Travel Media Australia's Karuna Laosakhul and Stephen Morton



CCA Transport Australia's Sharon Neave and Hitchmaster Australia's Janet Price



Panorama Tours France's Eka Moncarre



SBT Solution Malaysia's Joyline Chai, Swift Bridge Technologies Malaysia's Jesyca Leong and SK Chong

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AirAsia X spurs more demand for Sri Lanka

By S Puvaneswary

OUTBOUND tour operators from Malaysia are predicting stronger meeting and incentive demand for Sri Lanka following AirAsia X's commencement of four-weekly services between Kuala Lumpur and Colombo on September 28.

With AirAsia X's new service, the Kuala Lumpur-Colombo sector now has an additional 1,508 seats weekly. The route is also serviced by Malaysia Airlines' 10-weekly flights and SriLankan Airlines' 14-weekly services.

Grandlotus Travel Agencies managing director, K Thangavelu, said AirAsia X's affordable airfares, as compared to the rates offered by the other full-service carriers serving the route, would make it easier for his company to promote Sri Lanka to meeting and incentive planners.

He believes that the lower fares may also encourage companies to send larger groups for business events, which now see an average of 50 delegates in attendance.

Small and medium-sized enterprises with smaller event budgets and seeking medium-haul destinations for incentives will also be attracted by AirAsia X's Colombo services, according to RA Jits Travel & Tours managing director, Harminderjit Singh.

He added that Sri Lanka's supply of "good beachfront hotels and varied attractions from nature activities to shopping and hill resorts" would provide the additional impetus for Malaysian clients to choose the destination.

Besides better air access, business

event planners would also benefit from "the slew of five- and four-star hotels that are being constructed in Colombo and other tourist destinations including Negombo, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Nuwara Eliya over the next few years",

opined Johnson Francis, executive director of Oscar Holidays.

Adam Kamal, managing director of Tina Travel & Agencies, said Sri Lanka's favourable visa policy, which offers visa-free entry to Malaysians who stay

less than two nights, provide yet another advantage for his clients who are looking to host brief meetings overseas. Sri Lanka might emerge a more attractive option than India as a result, as travel visas are required by the latter, Kamal added.

Chic shopping draws for MICE

Encouraged by a growing interest among event planners in hosting activities at Chic Outlet Shopping retail villages, the group has developed a MICE strategy that will be led by a newly appointed hospitality expert.

Marnie Kovacs, who brings 18 years of experience representing high-profile businesses including Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, steps into the role of head of MICE under Value Retail, the company that operates the nine Chic Outlet Shopping villages across Europe.

Through the new MICE strategy, Chic Outlet Shopping will offer shopping experiences, priority F&B reservations, VIP hospitality area access, sponsorship branding, use of the village on a large group or sole-hire basis, and gift cards or rewards for incentive winners, among other arrangements.

It will partner corporate organisations, venues, convention bureaus and congress centres, among others, to host bespoke events at the villages.

The company aims to host around 800 events in 2014, up from the 280 events with 22,000 delegates seen so far this year. One of the larger corporate gatherings this year included a 1,700-pax Indonesian incentive group.

Chic Outlet Shopping tourism director, Ian Stazicker expects "good demand" for the new MICE products from both Europe and Asia.

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More corporates flying LCCs

By Lee Pei Qi

COMPANIES' continued quest to keep travel costs down has resulted in a greater adoption of budget flights among business travellers.

According to a Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) report this year, LCCs will be used increasingly by business travellers in 2013, and 34 per cent of travel managers in Asia-Pacific intend to extend their programmes to budget airlines to optimise air transportation savings.

Nandan Bhatia, head of Britannia Industries India, said: "According to our company's policy, we have to book (seats with) the lowest possible fare, so we have to look at LCCs."

Bhatia, who currently arranges for incentive groups from India to Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand, said popular LCCs

include AirAsia and Tigerair.

Sharing the same sentiment, Abhimanya Chettri, manager of Robert Bosch Engineering and Business Solutions India, said: "We have been using LCCs since they started because their prices can be 30 to 40 per cent lower (than full-service airlines)."

According to Chettri, he usually holds meetings and incentives in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia for groups ranging from 30 to 300 delegates.

Fred Seow, vice president for marketing of Asiatravel, who has also been recommending LCCs to his clients, said: "Sometimes the total difference in fares can be quite significant and LCCs today also ply the same routes as legacy carriers, so customers have many choices."

"Company meetings and incentives today are held by organisations of all sizes, types

and budgets."

As companies begin integrating LCCs into their programmes, the CWT report nonetheless highlighted some challenges.

According to the report, companies need to take into account numerous factors, such as less frequent flight schedules, flights operating from secondary airports, as well as the costs and risks related to bookings outside of GDSs.

Akbar A Shareef, managing director and chief executive of Rakaposhui Tours Pakistan who chooses only full-fledged airlines, cited seat availability as his reason for not using LCCs.

Shareef said: "LCCs are driven by their own channels and are always popular with FITs. They don't give group seats and they also operate smaller planes, so they fill up easily on their own."

Sunil Shekhar Gupta, re-

gional procurement manager of Freescale Semiconductor India, said: "LCCs are looked upon as a budget (alternative). Therefore, if we are flying our VIPs, we would rather not use them



Gupta: LCCs not suitable for VIPs

because it does not look good (on us)."

While LCCs are largely available only outside the GDS platforms,

Robert Bosch's Chettri said this is not an issue: "We will usually book directly with LCCs, and since we are buying in bulk with them, there are terms and conditions we can negotiate as well."

A survey conducted by Abacus this year with the region's corporate travel management

companies has revealed similar findings, with almost three-quarters of the respondents seeing clients adopt budget airlines for more of their corporate travel in a bid to tighten corporate travel spend, mostly as a result of policies governing the choice of lowest fare (77 per cent), but also for alternative flight times (40 per cent) and data capture (40 per cent).

To ease the booking process for clients, Abacus is currently working with LCCs to make all their fares available on its platform.

More findings from the Abacus Corporate Travel Practices Survey will be presented at CTW Asia-Pacific on October 2.

In the mean time, AirAsia will be launching a travel programme for business travellers later this week, according to its spokesperson.

HOT LEADS

Sophiya keen on SE Asian cities

Phnom Penh-based Sophiya Travel & Tours is looking for potential partners in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore for meeting and incentive groups from Cambodia. According to director Sophear Mom Sreat, the company is especially interested in hotels, resorts, golf courses, transportation suppliers as well as tour operators who provide excursions to nearby cities from Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Penang.

Email sophear@sophiyatours.com.

Carlsberg wants incentive ideas

Carlsberg Poland's senior buyer Rafal Mielczarek is looking for advice on incentive ideas and destinations within Thailand for groups of around 50 salespeople from Eastern Europe. Will consider options outside of mainstays Bangkok, Phuket and Pattaya.

Email him on rafal.mielczarek@carlsberg.pl.

US buyer interested in Myanmar

CEO of US-based First Incentive Travel, Joost de Meyer, is keen to know more about Myanmar with a view to launching incentive trips to the destination within the next few years. Advice on related travel products and destinations would be useful as well as information on forthcoming familiarisation trips.

Reach de Meyer at joostdm@firstincentivetravel.com.

Large congress venues needed

Destination Unlimited's senior consultant Eric Hacour is seeking congress venues for medical conferences of between 4,000 and 10,000 pax in Asia, particularly in Macau and Thailand, and possibly Singapore and Indonesia. The Brussels-based conference and incentive management company is also looking for medical associations seeking travel expertise from PCOs.

Contact info@destination.be or (32-2) 626-0950.

Language of the young



The Mathematical Association of Victoria Australia's Simon Pryor (centre) guides Thailand Management Association's Salin Ratanapithan (left) and Tanawat Areeprayoonkit through the Association Professional Competencies Briefing

By S Puvaneswary

ASSOCIATIONS must harness the power of new media to attract young members if they were to be sustainable, urged Simon Pryor, principal professional learning and certification advisor of Australasian Society of Association Executives, Australia.

Pryor, who also led IT&CMA's Association Professional Competencies Briefing yesterday, said: "Young people tend to join an association only if it could advance their interests, so associations must have a plan to attract (the new generation) as they are the future (of) associations."

He revealed that his association, The Mathematical Association of Victoria, has young members who volunteer to manage Facebook and Twitter as communication channels, an arrangement that "gives (them) a voice in the association".

Highlighting another benefit of such arrangements, Pryor said: "Young members are also more inclined to get involved in ac-

tivities if they are given specific tasks and the commitment is shorter compared to joining a committee that meets regularly and has a broad brief.

"For example, they can help with the association's Twitter account for a specific time frame or to develop a written plan for a new member service."

While most most associations "have dipped their toes in (social media)", very few are putting it to best use, he observed.

Salin Ratanapithan, project representative management excellence projects of Thailand Management Association, agrees that having new blood in an association is important as they provide "fresh ideas" and tend to "think out of the box".

While most of the members of Thailand Management Association are in their 30s, the organisation has yet to utilise Facebook in its communications.

Salin said there are plans to "have many Facebook accounts in the future" to meet the varied interests of its members.

Oriental Residence Bangkok guns for MICE

By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

FOLLOWING its success in netting the leisure and long-stay markets, Oriental Residence Bangkok is now turning its sights on the MICE sector, in particular the corporate event and meetings segment.

"There's definitely a lot of room to grow in the MICE segment as people tend to perceive us as a serviced apartment," said Victor Madhavan, director of sales and marketing at Oriental Residence Bangkok, which opened in January 2012 as a luxury brand under Oynx.

"We're putting a lot of emphasis on attracting pharmaceutical and FMCG industries. The local market is our top source, whereas Hong Kong and Singapore are also important feeder markets."

To this end, Oriental Residence Bangkok has recently rolled out new meeting offers and will also host corporate bookers to stay the weekend at the hotel. "Later this year, we will also plan an open house to invite corporates in the vicinity (to discover more about the

property)," he added.

Meetings and corporate events currently make up three per cent of the hotel's business but Madhavan targets to grow both segments to eight per cent.

Madhavan also highlighted the versatility of meeting venues at the hotel, such as the 173m² Play Room which can seat between 80 and 120 pax.

Said Madhavan: "Play Room is not your traditional meeting room; it is popular for product launches or informal meetings like brainstorming sessions."

The hotel also boasts the 145m² West Wing, which can seat 80 pax for dinners, the 39m² Boardroom and 16m² Green Room.

"Other selling points will be the abundance of natural daylight and the intimate meeting spaces, so clients don't need to share (the area) with other clients during coffee breaks and breakout sessions," he added.

Transfers by Jaguars, free Wi-Fi access and charters to the nearby Chitlom BTS station on Toyota Alphard are offered as well.

SOUND BITES

"The government needs to remember that not everybody is a terrorist."

Akbar A Shareef, managing director and chief executive of Rakaposhui Tours Pakistan, who urges governments to enable visa-on-arrival for Pakistani MICE delegates, the lack of which, he said, has deterred clients from choosing destinations such as Singapore



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A city of entertainment

The Thai capital is bursting with the hottest eats, fun activities and historical charms, discovers **Greg Lowe**

WHAT TO SEE

Grand Palace

No trip to Bangkok is complete without a call at the Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaew, or Temple of the Emerald Buddha. Located in the capital's historic heart, the impressive grounds are surrounded by almost two kilometres of castellated white walls where the complex houses numerous architectural styles and a diverse range of buildings includ-

ing throne rooms, pavilions, functionary buildings and 17 forts.

Address Na Phra Lan Road
Contact Tel: (66) 2623-5500

Wat Saket

Often referred to by its other name, Phu Khao Thong or the Golden Mount, this 58m tall golden *chedi* used to be the highest point in Bangkok and still affords excellent views of the city's historic centre. Some 300 steps lead up

to the summit of the artificial hill and the monument which houses a Buddha relic.

Address 344 Chakkraphat Diphong Road
Contact Tel: (66) 2621-2280

Jim Thompson House

This beautifully preserved complex of six traditional teak buildings and tropical gardens was once the home of the eponymous American who revitalised the Thai silk trade more than six decades ago. The home was once an epicentre of the Bangkok social scene and houses a wonderful collection of Thai arts and handicrafts.

Address Rama 1 Road
Contact Tel: (66) 2216-7368

Bangkok Arts & Culture Centre

Clearly inspired by the design of the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the centre's spiralling walkway leads to a number of exhibition areas which display work from a range of international and local artists. There is always likely to be an exhibition focusing on a somewhat tired reinterpretation of Thai culture, but this is balanced by more innovative contemporary work.

Address Rama 1 Road
Contact Tel: (66) 2214-6630

Baan Silapin Artist's House

This 70-year-old renovated building along Khlong Luang canal houses a 200-year-old *chedi* in its back garden and a gallery upstairs displaying work

by local artists who run regular workshops. It is a good place to stop by for a couple of hours. Be sure to catch the engaging traditional Thai puppet performances at 14.00 every day except Wednesday.

Address Soi Wat Thong Sala Ngarm
Contact Tel: (66-8) 3034-9858

WHAT TO DO

Koh Kred

As the Chao Phraya River's only island, Koh Kred offers a unique daytrip. Visitors are given the chance to step back in time on this small manmade island where many ethnic *Mon* families still continue their age-old tradition of producing handmade ceramics and other handicrafts. Plenty of small restaurants, cafes and foot massage shops are dotted about the bustling market which only opens on weekends and public holidays.

Address Chao Phraya River, Nonthaburi

Escape Hunt

Ranked by TripAdvisor as Bangkok's top attraction, Escape Hunt is a murder mystery adventure which transports groups of two to five people a century into the past where they get to play detective and have to solve the heinous crime within 60 minutes. While there are strong teambuilding elements to the game, the key focus is fun.

Contact Tel: (66) 2611-2828



Photos courtesy of Philippe Baron

Clockwise from bottom: Wat Saket, Baan Silapin Artist's House and Grand Palace





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Green Lungs cycle tour

It may come as a surprise that Bangkok has its own green lungs just a short journey from the hustle and bustle of Sukhumvit Road, but Bang Kra Jao is a veritable jungle located on the western banks of the Chao Phraya River. Accessible only by boat, one of the best ways to explore the area is on two wheels. Spice Roads runs a half-day tour which covers 25km at a gentle pace.
Contact Tel: (66) 2381-7490

Asiatique The Riverfront

This lifestyle development is the only major space on the Chao Phraya River that is open to the public. Asiatique The Riverfront combines a covered market selling anything from local brands and homeware to custom bicycles and Apple computers. There are also plenty of dining outlets, bars and a giant Ferris wheel, as well as the promenade which offers fantastic riverside views.
Address Charoenkrung Road
Contact Tel: (66) 2108-4488

Healthland

There are few better ways to round off a day's activities in Bangkok than getting a two-hour Thai massage. Choosing where to go for this physical rejuvenation can be a problem given the ubiquitous presence of spas and massage shops throughout the city. The masseurs at Healthland are reliable and consistent in delivering good quality, and the treatments are good value. The spa has a number of outlets across the city with the Asoke location being the easiest to access by BTS and MRT.
Website www.healthlandspa.com

WHERE TO WINE AND DINE

Appia

Appia is regarded as one of the most popular new restaurants in Bangkok due to its successful marriage of Thai-style eating – sharing lots of smaller dishes with friends – and simple but sublime rustic Roman recipes. From hand-cut pasta to slow-roast meats, Appia excels at presenting a traditional Italian experience in a contemporary setting. The interior is just as charming, with raw, concrete floors and warm-coloured woods. Reservations are essential.
Address Sukhumvit 31
Contact Tel: (66) 2261-2056

Gaggan

Gagan Anand was the first Asian chef to study at Michelin-starred chef Ferran Adria's culinary research institute in Spain. His experiences armed him with a unique, unorthodox approach to Indian cooking. Sous-vide, gelification and plenty of liquid nitrogen are deployed to add a new dimension to traditional curries. Trying the tasting menu at the Chef's Table is a must.
Address Lang Suan 4
Contact Tel: (66) 2652-1700
Website www.eatatgaggan.com

Khua Kling Pak Sod

Standing proud as one of the city's best restaurants specialising in fiery southern Thai cuisine, Khua Kling Pak Sod provides a relaxed environment where the focus is on fine flavours and family recipes rather than exuberant design. Be sure to try the *khua kling*, beef fried with shrimp paste, ground pepper, chillies and fresh turmeric, or the *kung phad sator*, stink beans fried with prawns.
Address Thonglor 5
Contact Tel: (66-8) 1811-5458
Website www.facebook.com/KhuaKlingPakSod

Hemingway's Bar & Restaurant

Located in a golden teak building that has played host to a number of ambassadors over the past 90 years or so, Hemingway's Bar & Restaurant is one of the few venues in the city that provides a decent al fresco experience. Guests can choose from a range of artisan beers, fine wines and stiff cocktails which can be enjoyed inside, on the covered veranda or in a garden setting.
Address Sukhumvit 14
Contact Tel: (66) 2653-3900
Website www.hemingwaysbangkok.com

L'Appart

Elegant design and retro interiors fashioned around the concept of a Parisian apartment make L'Appart unique. But what makes this restaurant in Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit especially worth a visit are the stunning views of downtown Bangkok's cityscape afforded by the venue's 32nd floor location. There's a solid range of cocktails to accompany the city's staggering Technicolor sunsets. Contemporary French-Moroccan cuisine is on offer for the more peckish.
Address Sukhumvit
Contact Tel: (66) 2126-9999



Philippe Baron

Clockwise from top right: Green Lungs cycle tour, Asiatique The Riverfront, L'Appart and Gaggan



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Muscling up for the future

A major infrastructure upgrade is now underway in Bali, as it turns its attention on MICE. By **Mimi Hudoyo**



Bali is leveraging high-profile events this year to boost its MICE standing in the minds of event planners

The year 2013 has been a busy one for Bali's MICE trade as the island destination plays host to the APEC Summit 2013 this month and the ninth WTO Ministerial Conference in December.

Balinese players are looking to tap the promotional opportunities offered by these high-profile events to strengthen the island's standing as a MICE destination. Indonesia minister of tourism and creative economy, Mari Elka Pangestu, said: "Hosting a big event benefits a destination as it sees concerted efforts by various government offices to develop facilities and infrastructure."

Prestigious events like the APEC Summit – of which 21 heads of state and their entourages, 1,200 CEOs and 3,000-4,000 media members are expected to attend – are seen as a driver to improve facilities.

Ayana Resort and Spa executive assistant manager, Clive Edwards, said: "(Such) events are not just giving one sporadic business (during the event), but what the destination will benefit is that such events will put Bali on the global map, that events of such magnitude can be handled by an island called Bali."

Long in need of better infrastructure amid surging visitor traffic, Bali has in recent years embarked on a major infrastructure drive; new highways are being built, the airport will soon complete its expansion, new hotels have opened up while MICE venues of different sizes are now entering the market.

Optimistic that Bali's growing room inventory and meeting spaces will enable the destination to attract more MICE

business, Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua general manager, Goran Aleks, shared: "During my recent sales trip to Australia, MICE organisers (there) told me they had never considered Bali as a MICE destination because there were not enough facilities; now with more five-star properties, new meeting facilities and airport expansion, they are starting to consider Bali."

He added: "I believe that when you create something new in a destination, you are opening up new opportunities."

It is hence timely for Bali to build upon the momentum of the high-profile summits and roll out more intensive efforts to market the island as a MICE destination, remarked Conrad Bali's general manager Jean-Sebastien Kling.

He said: "We need to promote and sell Bali as a convention destination as we now enjoy economic and political stability and safety. The constraints Bali might have in the past are well-controlled, and the destination can prove it can sustain a safe and secure environment."

"It is critical for the destination, more specifically the Nusa Dua area, to maximise the brand-new tools and state-of-the-art facilities to attract larger conferences that will bring 2,000-3,000 delegates to Bali," added Kling, who revealed that Conrad Bali has already received leads from South Korea and the US for events of between 400 to 500 pax in 2014-2015.

"(These markets) do not usually consider Bali, and we are looking at events with longer lead time. We believe this is the result of the momentum Bali is gaining from the (improved) infrastructure. This will make

1,200

The number of CEOs expected at this month's APEC Summit, in addition to 21 heads of states and 4,000 media representatives

Nusa Dua an ideal location (for large-scale events.)

Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center recently welcomed its first incentive group from China with the hosting of an award

presentation night for 2,800 Chinese delegates, according to general manager for operations, Yasinta Hartawan.

Similarly, Ayana Resort and Spa has recorded a 50 per cent growth in the Chinese incentive market, a hitherto non-existent segment for the hotel, according to Edwards.

Kling said: "We need to bring in large events which can boost occupancy and also build more awareness of the destination beyond the (traditional) markets such as South-east Asia."

The MICE sector will help to sustain Bali as a destination and fill the burgeoning room inventory on the island, especially in view of current leisure market trends, said Jean-Charles Le

Coz, general manager of Grand Nikko Bali, which was just re-branded from Nikko Bali Resort & Spa. China, Taiwan and South Korea have been showing steady growth in numbers but are very price-driven markets; the Australian market will dip due to their weakening currency while the European market has yet to recover from their economic crisis, he pointed out.

"It's the MICE business, be it domestic or international, that will keep us going. The opportunity is big for both the small and large (events) as the majority of hotels here have meeting facilities," said Le Coz. "For Bali, the market is as big as the Bali International Convention Centre and Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center can accommodate."

Le Coz, who is also vice-chairman at Bali Hotels Association (BHA), which has been pushing for the launch of a convention bureau for Bali, believes that more concerted efforts in destination promotions are needed to compete effectively with neighbouring countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Hong Kong. "We have support from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy to establish the bureau and they have agreed to provide the start-up capital," he added.

BHA is seeking approval from the regional government as well as educating stakeholders on the importance and benefits of such a body for Bali.

Challenges aside, Le Coz expects the bureau to be established before the Indonesian presidential election in 2014. ■

NEED TO KNOW

Going on a Tangent at Westin

The Westin Resort Nusa Dua, Bali has rolled out a new workspace concept, Tangent at Westin, to offer business travellers a place to work efficiently and comfortably while on the road.

Featuring mediascape by Steelcase technology, the workspace offers complimentary Internet access and is equipped with computers, printers, floor-to-ceiling white boards, a Samsung TV, an Xbox 360, as well as office supplies and light refreshments. Video conferencing is also available for small groups of up to four.



More Australian links for Bali

Accessibility to Bali is improving with the resumption of Indonesia AirAsia's four weekly services between Darwin and Bali from July 1. The route is operated on Airbus A320 with a seating capacity of 180. At the same time, AirAsia Indonesia has also added an extra daily service between Bali and Perth on an A320, ramping up frequency on this segment to four flights daily.

Meanwhile, Asiana Airlines has started twice-weekly flights between Seoul and Bali since July 25 on B767-300 aircraft.

Out with the noise

Since May, Indonesian DMC Pacto has introduced the use of Vox Tour Radio Guide for group tours.

This tool will enable tour guides to communicate with clients using a wireless microphone, while visitors can listen to the explanation through an earpiece, allowing them to move around a site at leisure.

According to Pacto CEO-inbound, Umberto Cadamuro, this service was launched as the company wanted "to address the issue of acoustic pollution in places of interest".

Investments in support

Macau's support schemes for organisers are paying off, with better attendance at shows. By **Prudence Lui**

Business events held in Macau in 2Q2013 enjoyed a stronger attendance compared with the same period last year, according to data published by the Government of Macao Special Administrative Region Statistics and Census Service.

While there were fewer meetings held in the second quarter this year (220) compared with the same time last year (226), the events in 2013 saw a 40 per cent increase in attendance.

Macau hosted the same number of exhibitions in 2Q2013 and 2Q2012 – just eight shows – but attendance at the events this year surged 72 per cent, drawing 194,000 delegates.

Some trade players in Macau believe that the government's support programmes for event organisers and groups have a key part to play in boosting event attendance.

The *Convention and Exhibition Stimulation Program*, launched in 2012 by the Macau Economic Services Bureau and enhanced in 2013, offers a variety of support mechanisms including welcome gifts, free admission to selected attractions and financial subsidies.

Incentive organisers are supported by the Macau Government Tourist Office's (MGTO) *Incentive Travel Stimulation Program*, which dishes out a maximum support of MOP\$300 (US\$38) in spending money per non-local incentive delegate, as



The Historic Centre of Macau, which comprises over 20 landmarks including A-Ma Temple (above), is an important attraction

well as other perks.

Cotai Strip Resorts Macao, executive director, MICE Marketing, Natasha Tomé said the government's support schemes were "invaluable to an event's bottom line, especially at a time when budget constraints are felt by many."

The *Convention and Exhibition Stimulation Program* has so far received 81 applications. Macau Economic Services Bureau director, Sou Tim Peng, expects the number of applications to grow "in tandem with the moderate climb in the number of events organised in Macau".

He said additional initiatives to support inbound conventions and exhibitions were being developed, and these would be discussed with industry players prior to implementation.

62,927

The amount in MOP (US\$7,878) spent by exhibition organisers in Macau in 1H2013

The *Incentive Travel Stimulation Program* has received 40 applications this year. Of these, 26 events involving some 13,000 participants have been approved. This compares with 28 applications qualified by MGTO in 2012. These events brought with them 23,114 attendees.

An MGTO spokesman said: "Although the number of appli-

cants is fewer this year, we are happy to have picked up some cases from new source markets such as Vietnam and Israel."

The optimistic MICE performance captured by official data is mirrored in reports shared by some of Macau's top hotels.

The Venetian Macao Resort Hotel received 139 business events in the first seven months of 2013. Conrad Macao, Cotai Central welcomed 70 events during the same period.

Tomé said: "We are seeing a consistent increase in the number of events held at the Cotai Strip and 2013 is turning out to be a very successful year, with many new international congresses being held in Macau. A great deal of repeat clients are also bringing their events back to Macau."

Galaxy Macau hosted "a rough estimation of 10 to 20 groups per month" over the first seven months of this year.

Assistant vice president for hotel and event sales, Samson Woo, said: "Our MICE revenue (so far) has grown 15 to 20 per cent over last year's, due to a greater spend on activities and entertainment."

Although MICE business is looking up for Macau, small-World Experience, executive director, Bruno Simões, warned that the destination's greatest challenge was its limited passenger handling capacity at the ferry terminals and border checkpoints with China. Due to the huge inflow of travellers, these gateways are often congested.

"These issues aside, Macau offers great opportunities for event planners to use unique and historical venues such as Mount Fortress, museums, heritage houses and Nam Van Lake," said Simões.

Macau's portfolio of unique event spaces was recently expanded with the addition of Casa Garden. Built in 1770, this European architecture was once the home of a Portuguese merchant. It was named one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of the Historic Centre of Macau in 2005 and today it is the Macau headquarters of the Orient Foundation. Casa Garden is open for private events, subject to approval from the Orient Foundation. ■

NEED TO KNOW



Roll a sushi together

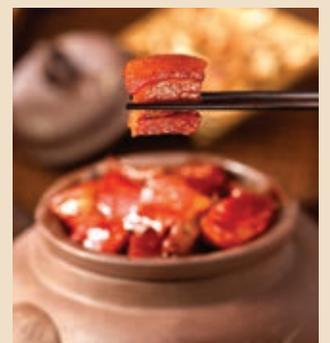
Hotel Okura Macau is offering a sushi workshop for corporate groups seeking a fun teambuilding activity. Held at the hotel's Yamazato Japanese restaurant, the programme can be customised according to the needs of the group. The three-hour class costs MOP428 (US\$54) per person and includes one maki roll, three pieces of nigiri sushi and a set lunch comprising salad, udon, miso soup and dessert.

The sushi workshop is good for groups with five to 15 people.

For more information or reservations, call (853) 8883-5127 or email Yamazato@hotelokuramacau.com.

Good, old eats

Founded in 1987 in Shanghai, Shanghai Min made its debut in Macau's City of Dreams this summer. The restaurant features a nostalgic Shanghaiese culinary concept and is designed with glittering chandeliers and floor-to-ceiling windows. It offers 372 seats and five private dining rooms over two levels. For reservations, email xcd@xiaonanguo.com or call (853) 8868-6661.



Artistic weekends

The Creative Industries Promotion Association of St Lazarus Church organises the *Sun Never Left – Public Art Performance* every weekend. Held at the St Lazarus Church of Rua de Sao Roque from 15:00 to 18:00, the street art performance provides live music as well as an art fair where stalls sell products such as paintings and handicrafts.

Call (853) 2834-6626 for more information.

Party in a garden

Casa Garden is the latest heritage venue in Macau to open its grounds for private events. Built in 1770, this European architecture is now the Macau headquarters of the Orient Foundation. It was named one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of the Historic Centre of Macau in 2005. Event planners require approval from the Orient Foundation for usage.

Call the Cultural Affairs Bureau at (853) 8399-6699 for details.



Take a ride around Macau

For an easy way to see some of the best sights of Macau, hop on the Macau Open Top Bus operated by Goldspark Macau Tours. Departing every 45 minutes, the service takes passengers on a 75-minute tour of the destination, covering 10 famous attractions such as the Macau Science Center, Kun Lam Statue and The Red Market. An audio commentary, available in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Italian, French, German, Japanese, Russian and Spanish, offers an insight into Macau's history and culture. There are 10 departures per day, from 09.30 to 16.15. The tour costs HK\$150 (US\$19) per adult.

Email info@goldspark.com.hk for details.

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A brighter shade of green

Many of Asia's convention and exhibition centres have gone green, but are these green credentials winning over show organisers? **Karen Yue** finds out, with inputs from *TTGmice* reporters

Mother Nature should be proud of the convention and exhibition centres here in Asia-Pacific. Over the past decade, new-build centres have made sure to install environmentally friendly fixtures and capabilities in their venue, and some are continuously updating these features to do even more for the environment.

The Singapore Expo Convention and Exhibition Centre, opened in 1999, added a conference wing, MAX Atria, which became the first purpose-built MICE venue in the country to attain the Building and Construction Authority's Green Mark Platinum award. Energy-efficient measures were implemented right from the construction stage. Cairns Convention Centre is also upgrading to give itself more energy- and water-efficient systems, in addition to its existing bevy of green features that were put in place when the centre was built in the 90s.

There's also the Philippine International Convention Center in Manila, which was built in 1977 and had recently completed a major renovation that gave it lush landscapes and a new Compact Fluorescent Lamp lighting system, among other hardware upgrades.

Beyond establishing environmentally-friendly hardware, Asia's convention and exhibition centres have also instilled a reduce, reuse and recycle concept in the minds of staff and in their service delivery processes.

While green venues in this region are ripe for picking and to satisfy any show owner's environmental objectives, PEOs/PCOs noted that few Asian

clients had made a centre's green credentials part of their checklist.

"For our Singaporean clients, going green is not a priority," said Felicia Teng, general manager of The Meeting Lab Singapore, who added that "no local client has chosen a venue solely because of its green credentials".

"For example, US organisers usually insist on recycling delegate badges, they offer fewer printed materials and stationery and use high-tech audiovisual aids, as well as apps instead of hard copies to transmit information and notes. Asian clients, on the other hand, still want notepads to scribble on and printed forms to fill out," she said.

Max Jantasuwana, director of Thailand's World Destination Management, observed that green credentials of venues were "more of a concern for major events or exhibitions" and that environment-related enquiries were more common among major associations and planners from the US and Europe.

Edwina San, general manager commercial partnerships for Melbourne Convention Bureau, said: "While green unique selling points are appreciated, they do not influence (Asian organisers') decision to hold an event. PCOs who represent association clients will work according to client and meeting requirements which are often based on functional aspects of the venue and

cost. Unless it contributes to significant cost savings, it (green features) is not an important criteria. These initiatives have more influence on the Western markets."

While PEOs/PCOs are engaged to provide professional support for show organisers, these agencies have little influence over clients' green motivations.

"Clients usually come with destinations and venues in mind when they approach us to organise their events. What we have done is to suggest that clients replace Styrofoam displays with visual technology, and instead of printing all conference materials, we provide softcopies to

participants," said Rocky Kalalo, managing director of Panorama Meetings and Events Indonesia.

Teng said: "It is quite hard to convince senior members of organising committees – they can be quite sceptical, as these (green) practices are not that common in this region." She added that green venues might not be able to fully exercise their principles, as they were "bound by clients' requests".

She added: "We have found that convention centres in Singapore often bend over backwards to provide bottled water, instead of water from jugs, because the client prefers it."

However, the lack of commitment towards executing green conventions and exhibitions should not always be mistaken for a disregard for the environment. While Roche Indonesia, a healthcare firm, has not made green events compulsory, site support manager Cony Avianti said there were environmentally-friendly practices in the office.

Justin Pau, general manager of Bangkok Exhibition Services, said: "Many Asians are just as aware of the environment as people in the West. I see good levels of recycling at work and far less food wastage in Asia, compare with what I've seen when I was living in England."

Financial constraint is often cited as the reason why many Asian PEO/PCOs do not insist on having a green event. Indonesia's Puntama Convex CEO, Wisnu Budi Sulaeman, said: "It is more expensive for clients to organise green events. For instance, recycled paper is far more expensive than normal writing paper. Technology can help clients

switch from paper presentation and printed backdrop and banners to digital versions, but these are not cost efficient."

The Meeting Lab's Teng also pointed out that for most organisations, green event undertakings were not "pre-approved in budgets".

For most show organisers, key operational needs which lead to the success of the event also take precedence over green objectives. An executive at a pharmaceutical company in Indonesia said his priority was to secure a venue that could provide sufficient rooms for numerous breakout sessions. "It is not easy to find (such) a venue, let alone one that is green-compliant," he said.

"The Chinese (convention and exhibition) industry is much younger than that of the West, so organisers' top concerns are challenges that impact their survival or development," said Rosemary Ma, managing director of Beijing Sinofastlane Business Services.

For Bussaya Prakobthong, deputy general manager of Bangkok's NCC Exhibition Organiser Co, venue rental rates, special offers and accessibility were also more critical in the venue selection process.

The good news is, mindsets are changing along with the emergence of younger MICE practitioners. Ma said: "I see that companies led by younger, better educated people are more eco-conscious."

Teng agreed, saying: "There has been a small shift in the mindset of Singaporean clients, although I find that is more common among younger managers or executives than senior staff members." ■



THE GREEN ONES

AUSTRALIA

Cairns Convention Centre

Cairns Convention Centre is said to be Australia's first environmentally-designed major public building. It boasts several green features such as a double-layer pleated plate roof that is designed to trap rain and channel it into storage tanks, providing half of the centre's grounds and garden watering needs; water flow restrictors that reduce water consumption by 25-30 per cent; solar water heaters that provide 30-35 per cent of the centre's hot water needs; and

shading devices on the eastern side of the building that save approximately five per cent of the energy required to cool this section.

The centre is undergoing an A\$6.4 million (US\$6.2 million) refurbishment. Part of these works will give it additional sustainable features including more energy-efficient lighting, lighting sensors in back-of-house areas, a better water-efficient commercial dishwasher and a new electrical sub-metering.

Ross Steele, general manager of the AEG Ogden-managed

venue, said: "As Cairns is one of the most environmentally sensitive areas in the world, (we have) to ensure that we meet a high standard of environmental sustainability. Our clients expect this to be the case. Events such as the International Coral Reef Symposium would not have come to Cairns if it was not for our environmental credentials."

And Cairns Convention Centre has many environmental credentials to flash. It maintains EarthCheck and ISO 9001 certifications and has won a number of awards for its green features.

The centre also offers many opportunities for conference organisers to meet their own corporate social responsibility needs and to learn about sustainable practices. For instance, delegates can donate their conference bags to the Mission Aviation Fellowship's children programme in Papua New Guinea and Arnhem Land and child soldier rehabilitation camps in Ghana, or plant trees as part of the Green Corridor project.

"Some cynics do pass off environmental and sustainable options as publicity spin. How-

ever, as the centre is nestled amid the (Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics rainforest), we will continue to support and enhance environmental and sustainable meetings to ensure the maintenance of our pristine region for future generations," Steele said. – **Karen Yue**

CHINA

Shanghai World Financial Center Forum

Shanghai World Financial Center Forum (SWFC Forum) in Pudong has put in place green policies to cater to an increas-

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From left: Cairns Convention Centre, Shanghai World Financial Center Forum, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, and Singapore Expo Convention and Exhibition Centre

ingly discerning client-base.

It was built and furnished with toxin-free materials to prevent environmental illness. Conference rooms are minimalist in design too. Its grand ballroom is equipped with an air-conditioning system that detects changes in the carbon dioxide levels caused by human presence, and adjusts room temperature accordingly.

Other sustainable features include sensor-operated escalators, energy-saving lighting used in 75 per cent of the entire venue, and washrooms which use six litres of water as opposed to 10 litres in the average toilet in China. Biodegradable meeting amenities are used to help keep the venue true to its green philosophy. Organic food is served in this non-smoking venue, while promotional materials are made from recycled paper using non-toxic vegetable ink. For those who need a puff, a smoking area is available on the fourth floor's roof garden.

Said the venue's spokesperson Echo Zhao: "We obtain

professional advice on our environmental programmes, and undergo staff training on selected environmental issues to help us be even greener.

"We try to let our clients know that (using) green facilities are not only good for their events but also good for our planet."

Zhao added that the venue's green features had helped to reduce costs every month and attract events such as Jetro & EXPO Group Energy Saving Conference, Biotherm Aquapower Healthy Water Project and HOPPECKE Group Conference. – **Patricia Wee**

MALAYSIA Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) encourages team members and visitors to reduce wastage by recycling where possible, and there are over 18 colour-coded sets of bins placed strategically around the facility to separate plastic, glass, metal and paper. Its escalators and

air conditioners are regulated by a specially-designed Variable Speed Drive (VSD) and an inverter system respectively.

Peter Brokenshire, KLCC general manager, explained that the centre's sustainability policies extended beyond its physical location. He said: "Since 2010, we've had a tree-planting initiative whereby monies allocated for commemorative gifts for our annual Client Appreciation Cocktail and Association Seminar are channelled towards the planting of selected endangered species at the Forest Research Institute Malaysia's (FRIM) Kepong Botanic Gardens in Kuala Lumpur.

"In addition, we encourage clients to participate in Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau's Let's Meet & Green programme which encourages international delegates to contribute a minimum of US\$10 as part of their event registration. The donation goes towards FRIM's tree-planting programme."

According to Brokenshire, going green has tangible benefits.

"Since we started using LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs in January, our electricity consumption is estimated to have dipped to 28 per cent of the current energy usage. Based on an estimated 5,000 hours of use per year, the LED bulbs could result in savings of some RM250,000 (US\$75,563) a year," he said. – **Linda Haden**

SINGAPORE Singapore Expo Convention and Exhibition Centre

Singapore Expo Convention and Exhibition Centre, in addition to having an environmentally-friendly infrastructure, actively encourages clients to assimilate green practices.

"Placing water dispensers with recyclable paper cups instead of bottled water on the conference tables (and) using metal cutlery instead of disposable ones are just some ways we help clients reduce their carbon footprint," said Aloysius Arlando, the CEO of SingEx Group, which manages both Singapore Expo and MAX Atria.

Arlando believes that the financial savings earned by going green pales in comparison to the societal benefits it generates. "While cost will always be a factor for organisers, delegates and exhibitors, positive feedback from the community counts just as much when it comes to selecting a venue partner. By incorporating green features in our venues, we're actually enhancing the overall event and visitor experience," he said.

Arlando added that even though going green was not on the agenda for most Asian companies, mindsets are gradually shifting. "There is no doubt that the West takes the lead in greening but as affluence and green-consciousness rise in tandem with economic growth in Asia, the focus on sustainability initiatives and green practices will intensify," he said.

"Places like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are more green-conscious (than Singapore), but it's only a matter of time before other Asian countries follow suit." – **Linda Haden**

Snapshots

Energetic beginnings

Eager delegates bring a lively buzz to the show floor. By **Patrick Tan**



Stunning Makeovers New Zealand's Paul McGowan and Mazda Motors of New Zealand's Swee McGowan



Nokia Belgium's Monique Petrus



Saipem Indonesia's Rika Sari and Indika Group Indonesia's Nesya Alfian



Asian Smile Corporation Thailand's Shakunt Bhalla and Rakaposhi Tours Pakistan's Akbar A Shareef



Accenture India's Amarnath Lal Das and Manjunath Shetty



U & Me Spa Cambodia's Leng Rotana and Sopheya Travel & Tours Cambodia's Sophear Mom Sreat



Bosch India's Abhimanyu Chettri and Britannia Industries India's Nandan Bhatia

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