

May 2017

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Karen Yue
Group Editor

Give me the unusual

Over lunch with two industry friends recently, we got into a conversation about hotels in the region – what were the most luxurious, romantic, beautiful, stylish properties we’ve seen or experienced while on the job.

While I’ve fallen in love with many luxurious, romantic, beautiful and stylish hotels and resorts while on personal holidays, I struggled to name even a handful that did the same to my heart on business trips.

As an editor of two business event titles and as an employee of a caring organisation, I’ve had the fortune of being accommodated in some excellent, branded business hotels in Asia-Pacific while participating in MICE fam trips, conferences and exhibitions. But for me, they are just hotels.

The typical branded business hotel is a safe bet, in that they are experienced in supporting and catering to business events, have event facilities and more that meet international standards, have quality guestrooms in room types that corporate groups need, and are in the network of corporate travel management agencies and venue contractors.

There’s nothing wrong with being safe.

But they are often not exciting. Step into one and you’ll almost have stepped into all. They lack a colourful history, an exciting raison d’être, or aesthetically fascinating spaces that make them feel alive and unique.

There are exceptions, of course, like the dreamscape grand ballroom at JW Marriott Hotel Singapore South Beach, with its dramatic lights hanging from a domed ceiling. The hotel has an interesting background too, as it takes in four conservation buildings that were once army facilities in the 1930s. The heritage is captured in the design and conveyed through certain facilities such as the Court Martial Bar.

Design-driven hotels, on the other hand, quirky, tiny and remotely-located as some of them may be, make such exciting alternatives. They can be a serious contender for certain business events – provided planners are willing and able to think out of the box to engage the growing population of younger, well-travelled, demanding attendees who want to be educated and entertained differently and not in yet another classroom environment.

Change is happening, slowly but surely, according to industry players we spoke to for our cover feature this issue, *The rise of design hotels* (page 10-17). Design hotels are gaining favour among planners.

Personally, I also hope that design hotels will soon be featured in more MICE fam trips because it is far easier for us in the trade to identify and reach out to well-publicised business hotels than to know where the hidden, whimsical gems are.

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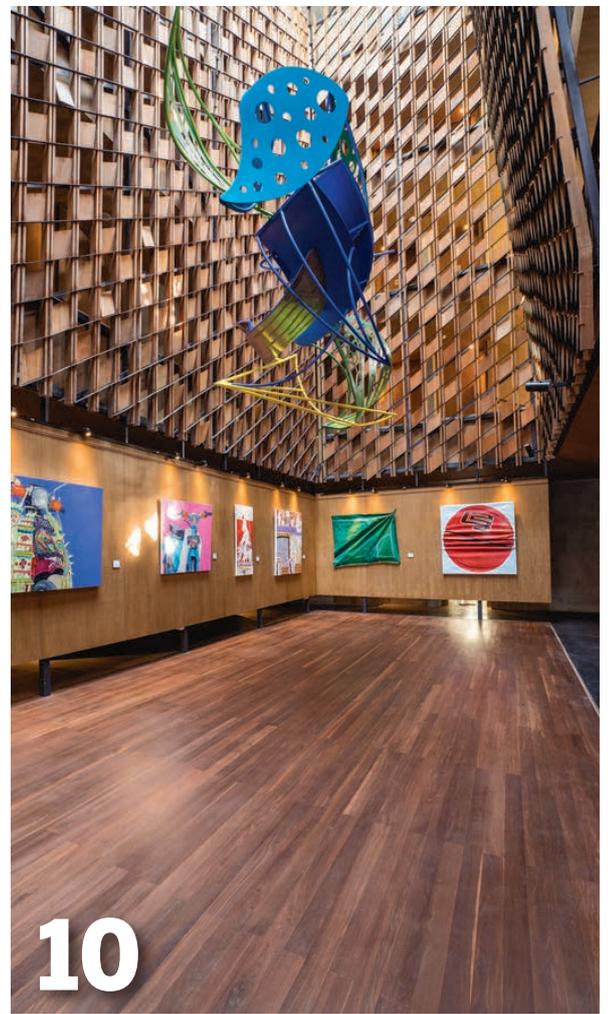
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COVER STORY

10 The rise of design hotels

An increasingly younger, well-travelled, demanding event audience is forcing planners to be more creative and allowing exciting design-driven hotels to get onto their shopping list. By Karen Yue

COUNTRY REPORTS

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TCEB has been hard at work launching various campaigns, as well as promoting the country in more Chinese cities, reports S Puvanewary

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A growing reputation among travellers, new hotels aplenty and stronger marketing efforts keep Seoul shining for events. Julian Ryall reports

24 Melbourne // Rediscover Melbourne

Melbourne pushes the envelope with fresh products, big and small, that can give corporate programmes a special touch. By Adelaine Ng

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Snapshots

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The TTGmice team has arrived in **#Shanghai**, all ready to get cracking on the production of TTG Show Daily for **#IT&CMChina** and **#CTWChina**. If you see us, give us a wave! 20 March



TTGmice's Mimi Hudoyo leads today's panel discussion on how to strengthen business events traffic between Singapore and Indonesia at Singapore Tourism Board's **#Singapore MICE Networking Event** in **#Jakarta**. 17 March



#Malaysia has won the bid again to host the Asia Pacific Life Insurance Congress (APLIC) this May. APLIC's Tang Kia Seng (second from left) and MyCEB's Zulkefli Sharif (second from right) announce the good news. 16 March



The Mulia **#Bali**'s Adhiyanto Wongso tells TTGmice's Karen Yue that although clients are increasingly looking beyond hotel venues, his property's varied spaces and off-site catering support have kept business coming. 2 March

What's happening



May 9-12

TRENZ, Auckland, New Zealand



May 10-12

ITB China, Shanghai, China



May 16-18

IMEX Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany

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Q&A



Oni Chukwu, head of etouches, tells Karen Yue that as the use of technology seeps into our daily lives, business events are forced to head the same way.

Perspectives



Emmanuel Ebray, managing director, Southeast Asia, HRS Global Hotel Solutions, pens his views on what dynamic hotel rates really mean to corporate end-users.

Review



Karen Yue checks out VLV, one of the latest hybrid lifestyle venues to open in Singapore. It offers a restaurant for lunch and dinner, a club lounge where fashionable elites get their entertainment from world-class DJs, and spaces for private events.

We love



Cam Ranh Bay unveils luxurious new gem

Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay is fast shaping up as a resort destination, and the latest product to materialise there is The Anam, a luxurious 117-villa and 96-room resort framed by swaying palm trees (3,000 of them!) and turquoise waters of the East Sea.

The Anam's design pays homage to both colonial-era and age-old Vietnamese aesthetics by way of imperial Hue-style roofs, glowing lanterns, big-bellied water vases, decorative pools, customised mosaic floor tiles and stone pathways.

The independently owned and operated 12-hectare hotel dangles a 10 treatment-room spa, a 3D movie theatre, three swimming pools, a water sports centre, a yoga room, a tennis court as some of its myriad recreational lures, making it an attractive reward stay for top achievers.

Business events were considered in its design and construction too, with The Anam offering The Colonial Room (170 pax theatre-style or 80 pax banquet), The Au Lac Room (250 pax theatre-style or 120 pax banquet), and three other meeting rooms. The movie theatre can be hired for corporate presentations too, and can seat 60 guests.

A kids club providing various indoor activities and games adds to The Anam's ability to satisfy business event travellers' growing desire to inject personal pleasure into their work trips.



Pacific World gets emotional

Foreseeing that emotional engagement will be a significant factor to consider when planning events for 2017, Pacific World has created new products and designed experiences to stir emotional engagement to enhance the effectiveness of meetings, incentives and event programmes.

Meeting and event planners can look forward to experiences such as meeting with local craftsmen and artisans, engaging with local entrepreneurs, as well as becoming part of an eco-label community at an organic farm.

The company has also linked up with local small NGOs in destinations like Myanmar and Dominican Republic, allowing planners to work on tailored projects that help with sustainable development.

And to generate emotional engagement between guests and the brands/companies, and also between the guests and the destination, Pacific World product developers in each country and region will collaborate with their creative and marketing team to monitor industry needs.



CWT M&E ups travel security with International SOS partnership

CWT Meetings & Events (M&E), a division of Carlson Wagonlit Travel, has launched the only global corporate meetings and events service to include International SOS services as part of its core customer offering.

While travelling to and attending meetings and events, CWT M&E customers can now access best-in-class pre-travel advice and integrate further International SOS Services such as Event Medical Support Plan into their programme.

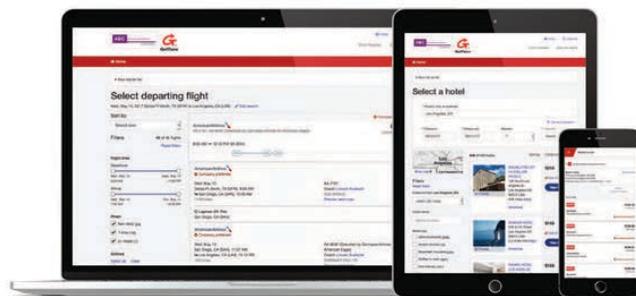
Additionally, this agreement allows CWT M&E's planners and customers to subscribe to medical and security alerts. Customers will also benefit from access to a bespoke Travel Risk Assessment Tool.

Sabre enhances GetThere for better travel management

Sabre has revamped GetThere, its online travel management solution, after conducting research sessions to evaluate what travellers and travel managers wanted and needed out of a booking tool.

The newly redesigned GetThere features include a simplified and responsive design; an intuitive booking workflow powered by Sabre's technology that is accessible and consistent on any device – desktop, tablet, and smartphone; and Sabre's air merchandising capabilities to support airlines' branded fares with existing travel policy.

Travel managers also have more options to use fare rules to identify Out-of-Policy fares and control whether certain flights are displayed within the search results. Business travellers now have access to the full breadth of available fares offered by the carrier, beyond the lowest airfare.



In the pipeline



The 160-room **DoubleTree by Hilton Vientiane**, scheduled to open in early 2020, will mark Hilton's entry into Laos and the brand's debut in the capital city. The property will sit close to That Dam, an iconic stupa in the city centre, and attractions such as the Presidential Palace.



Dusit International will operate the 200-key **dusitD2 Chaengwattana** when it opens in 2020. The upscale business hotel will sport a cantilevered design featuring tiered gardens, and offer facilities such as a banquet hall, a rooftop international restaurant and bar, and a rooftop infinity swimming pool.



Deutsche Hospitality's first hotel in South-east Asia will open in 2019. **Steigenberger Hotel Riverside** in Bangkok on the banks of the Chao Phraya River will offer 259 guestrooms, 900m² of banqueting facilities, a pool restaurant, a roof terrace bar and restaurant, a VIP lounge and fitness facilities.

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- ✓ Increased employee satisfaction thanks to a business travel-orientated hotel portfolio, high availability and regular quality checks by HRS hotel procurement specialists
- ✓ Continuous optimisation of the hotel portfolio by means of transparent evaluations and benchmark data

Hot deals



Mandarin Oriental, Macau

The hotel has launched *Meetings with More*, which bundles meetings with pampering breaks and room perks.

Highlights for the full-day package include local-themed coffee breaks and massages or stretching sessions during breaks.

Planners also get to enjoy room rates from MOP1,500 (US\$187.50) per room night including breakfast, Internet access and complimentary room upgrade to the Waterfront Suite for every 10 paid rooms per day (maximum of three suites per day).

Promotion is valid until December 29, 2017 for bookings of minimum 10 rooms per night. Other terms apply.

Email momac-sales@mohg.com

Langham Hospitality Group

Langham Hospitality Group has launched the *No Strings Attached PLUS* programme offering event organisers more flexibility with rewards and privileges when an event is hosted at participating hotels. Privileges include waived cancellation terms; no attrition rate charges; complimentary Internet charges; and no minimum spend on F&B.

Also included are perks such as complimentary room, room upgrade, 30-minute cocktail reception, themed refreshment break and round trip airport transfer, in addition to carbon footprint offset with a range of sustainable options to choose from.

The offer may be booked from April 1 to August 31, 2017 for events taking place from April 1 to December 31, 2017. Other terms apply.

Visit www.langhamhotels.com/en/no-strings-attached-plus/.

Regal Airport Hotel

2017 Residential Meeting Packages are now available at Regal Airport Hotel.

Priced from HK\$1,380 (US\$177.60) per person per day, the package includes one night's accommodation (on twin sharing basis) with in-room Internet access, full-day meeting package with Wi-Fi access (one IP access per person) for one day, and free daily buffet breakfast.

Planners can also access rewards such as a 30-minute stretching exercise during meeting and use of MICEAPP+ to stay in touch with event delegates.

Terms and conditions apply.

Email meet@airport.regalhotel.com.



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NECC spurs exhibition growth

By **Caroline Boey**

Shanghai's National Exhibition and Convention Center (NECC), which opened officially in June 2015, is set to strengthen the Chinese city's standing as a top exhibition and business travel destination.

In UFI's latest global ranking of exhibition cities, Shanghai is top in China and among the five biggest in the world.

Thrice the size of Shanghai New International Expo Center (SNIEC), NECC allows show organisers to expand their events beyond the 200,000m² cap at the latter venue.

According to Mark Cochrane, regional manager Asia-Pacific, UFI, shows are moving from SNIEC to NECC.

One NECC's win – and SNIEC's loss – is the Child Baby Maternity Expo (CBME), the world's largest trade fair for products and services.

Michael Duck, executive vice president of UBM Asia, owner of CBME, said the event has grown from 130,000m² to occupy 239,732m² of space at NECC this year where 88,000 trade buyers and 2,600 suppliers selling 4,000 brands are expected to attend the three-day show in July.

"Mega events seem to be (trending) and a number of shows have become too big for SNIEC," Duck said, adding that big shows from Guangzhou such as the China (Guangzhou) International Beauty Expo have been launched at NECC.



Duck: tradeshows need space to grow

The 2017 Shanghai International Beauty Expo will take up 190,000m² of space and 2,000 companies from all over Asia, Europe, America and Oceania will be represented.

Lan Xing, expert consultant, Shanghai Convention & Exhibition Industries Association, commented the number of large-scale events of more than 100,000m²

was growing: "Mega shows are also increasing in size, attracting exhibitors from Japan, South Korea, Russia, the Middle East and the 'Stan' countries who want business from China."

Cochrane told TTGmice Shanghai's advantage as an exhibition city is that the "key pieces" of being a commercial and business centre are in place.

"Shanghai is up there with Las Vegas and Frankfurt and it is among the world's top five, if not top three exhibition cities," he remarked.

Hoteliers – such as Dorian Rommel, general manager of Capella Shanghai, Jian Ye Li – also believe Shanghai's business events industry is on a growth spurt because of NECC.

Quoting the Shanghai Municipal Tourism administration, Rommel said 23 exhibitions moved from Beijing and Guangzhou to Shanghai and the city is projected to host up to 45 per cent of all business events, including exhibitions, taking place across the country.

Luxe MICE events on the rise in Japan

The growth in luxury travel into Japan is rubbing off on the business events sector as consumers increasingly seek the unusual and the unique.

Naomi Mano, founder and CEO of Luxurique, said demand for her company's services has been so strong that she had to turn away clients and will open a new office in Kyoto to better cope.

"Japan is increasingly appealing as a destination because it is unique and has a good balance of culture, cuisine, history, art and everything else," she said, adding that corporate visitors can simultaneously draw inspiration from many of Japan's tried and trusted approaches to doing business, while spouses can enjoy the cultural, dining and shopping opportunities.

She pointed out that the Japanese government could achieve its goal of doubling international arrivals to 40 million by 2020 by targeting luxury corporate event groups, which is a segment "still largely untapped".

Representatives of Cox and Kings Japan were equally upbeat about the outlook for Japan's high-end business events market in the year ahead. Enquiries from the US and Australia are up, and many travellers are drawn to Japan because of its 2020 Olympic Games host status, according to Eri Sato.

"Other cities around the country (are gaining interest). Some may not have the accommodation capacity or infrastructure, but the government is keen to make sure those facilities are developed." –

Julian Ryall

Business objectives drive Chinese events to farther lands

More Chinese groups are heading for meetings and incentive programmes in Europe this year, with DMCs and CVBs reporting growth rates as high as triple digits despite a less buoyant Chinese economy.

Ulrike von Arnold, deputy director, Vienna Convention Bureau, said: "With China's 329,000 overnight stays in Vienna in 2016, China for the first time ranks among the top 10 (source markets) and delivered three-digit growth rate in January 2017."

Vienna now wants to build up its corporate meeting and incentive arrivals from China, having long been recognised as a "world leading destination for European and international association meetings".

She believes that Austrian Airlines' direct flights from Beijing and Shanghai would help.

Maggy Wang, spokesperson of China Marketing Association, said business development objectives are directing its activities to Europe.

"We are working with a European Chamber of Commerce alliance representative (for) our first trip to Europe in June to meet government officials and commercial enterprises in Poland, Germany and Belgium. We expect 30 to 50 members on this 10-day trip to promote their agricultural goods, garments and other products."

Also confirming keen interest in Europe is Cheng Quan, general manager, CITIC MICE Beijing. "We are expecting growth of 10 to 20 per cent for outbound meetings

and 20 per cent for incentives," she said. However, with a less buoyant forecast among auto, insurance and beauty companies, incentive group sizes have shrunk from the thousands to just 100 to 500 people.

Quan pointed to the "easier" visa application process and the softening pound as draws for Chinese clients.

Chinese companies looking for business opportunities in the Middle East and Africa are also driving traffic to the region.

Wang is planning raw material sourcing trips to trade fairs in the Middle East and Africa this year, while Quan is also reporting interest in Africa. – **Caroline Boey**



Quan: business interest in Africa too

Event safety plans more critical than ever: experts

By Karen Yue

The March 22 attack in London has underlined the growing necessity for business events to come with a crisis contingency plan, industry players say.

Joost de Meyer, chairman and CEO of US-based First Incentive Travel, said: "The London incident is a reminder that the world today is no longer as secure. However, it does not make sense to stop travelling in order to stay safe. Companies can choose to go somewhere they perceive to be safe for incentive programmes, but business meetings have to happen wherever the money is. So the key is to plan for crisis and be ready to respond."

Kitty Wong, president of Taiwan's K&A International Co. and World PCO Alliance, agrees, noting that while "safety cannot be guaranteed", steps could be taken to minimise impact when security issues arise.

"As a PCO, we can and have to pro-

vide a safety plan for the client. This is an increasingly common request now. We also recommend that they buy insurance," said Wong.

Wong noted that since many clients are unsure how to get started on safety planning, the World PCO Alliance is helping to write a set of guidelines on this.



Wong: invest in plans, insurance

Ulrike von Arnold, deputy director, Vienna Convention Bureau, opined that the host city, too, has to take responsibility for the safety and security of event delegates as "it is the city that attracts business events and delegates over".

Von Arnold added that meeting planners should also study the safety standards of event venues and be clear about escape routes. She warned against venues that keep ballroom doors locked or have fire escapes blocked by audio-visual equipment.

That said, von Arnold believes that "we are living in the safest of all times".

Priority Pass gains more corporate adoption, expands lounge network

UK-based Collinson Group has seen recent success with corporate take-ups for its Priority Pass worldwide airport lounge membership programme, most of which are from clients in the oil and gas, education, telecommunications and pharmaceutical sectors.

Tony T Low, general manager and senior vice president, Asia Pacific lifestyle benefits, Collinson Group, told *TTGmice*: "A wide range of companies, from SMEs to MNCs, across a variety of industries have purchased Priority Pass Corporate Membership to support their travelling employees."

He added that while "some companies still view airport lounge access as a luxury, many (others) recognise that it is a valuable and practical solution which provides benefits to both employees and employers".

Low explained that companies could reap both financial and non-financial benefits through the provision of airport lounge access.

"The wear and tear of regular business travel on employees...impacts motivation, morale and employee engage-

ment. Benefits such as airport lounge access can make staff feel more valued and engaged with the requirement to travel and spending time away from home," he said.

"A lounge access programme (also) supports better travel policy governance and there are cost efficiencies at the airport where the cost of lounge access will be less than expenses claimed for food and drink subsistence and Wi-Fi while on the road."

Low shared that research conducted by Collinson Group has found that six out of ten frequent business flyers consider access to a premium airport lounge to be an 'important' or 'very important' factor when selecting an airport, with 40 per cent admitting to going straight to the lounge when they arrive at the airport.

Meanwhile, Priority Pass has added 12 airport lounges to its global network this month. They include Miracle First Class Lounge at the International Terminal, Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok. Today the programme offers access to over 1,000 lounges. – **Karen Yue**

New management structure for FCM

FCM Travel Solutions (FCM) has unveiled a new management structure in Asia headed by Bertrand Saillet, general manager, Asia, corporate.

Previously the general manager for South-east Asia, Saillet in his new role will oversee sales and marketing, account management and operations across the entire region.

The new management team comprises Carlo Bezoari and James Ellis as sales director for South-east Asia and North Asia respectively, while Nathan Zhang will remain general manager for China and report to Saillet.

The new management structure, effective April 1, comes against the backdrop of a broader change within Flight Centre Travel Group (FLT).

Suyin Lee, previously the managing director for South-east Asia, has taken on a new role as managing director of Buffalo Tours.

Meanwhile, David Fraser, managing director of FLT's Greater China (mainland China and Hong Kong) will now take on an expanded role of managing director Asia (excluding India). Fraser will oversee FCM Travel Solutions, Corporate Traveller, ciewents, and Flight Centre brands and businesses in Greater China, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines, together with the FCM Travel partner network in the region.

In brief

Resorts World Genting wins APLIC

Around 5,000 life insurance practitioners from 13 countries in the Asia Pacific are expected to attend the 16th Asia Pacific Life Insurance Congress (APLIC) 2017 at Resorts World Genting this month. Hosted by the National Association of Malaysian Life Insurance and Family Takaful Advisors (NAMLIFA), the congress aims to promote the business development and productivity of financial services professionals.

Adelaide scores big incentive group

South Australia will receive its first massive Asian incentive group this June when 3,000 top achievers from Perfect China visits Adelaide in two waves – one from June 17-20 and the other June 24-27. The movement is expected to bring an estimated A\$11.2 million (US\$8.58 million) boost to South Australia's visitor economy.

Singapore, Sydney sweep top spots for APAC meeting hotels

In a ranking by cloud-based event management company Cvent, seven of the top 10 meeting hotels in APAC were from Singapore, and the remaining from Sydney, Australia.

The top 50 list was compiled by analysing meeting and event booking activity through the Cvent Supplier Network featuring more than 245,000 hotels, resorts and special event venues.

Marina Bay Sands Singapore topped the list, followed in order by Grand Hyatt Singapore, Shangri-La Hotel, Sydney, Hilton Singapore, Conrad Centennial Singapore, Fairmont Singapore, Hilton Sydney, InterContinental Sydney, Pan Pacific Singapore and InterContinental Singapore.

“Hotels have become increasingly focused on developing more meeting and event business, and as such, have become more sophisticated in competing for the most lucrative opportunities for their respective venues,” commented Kevin Fliess, vice president of marketing for Cvent’s Hospitality Cloud.

“(They) are increasingly embracing a data-driven approach to more effectively pursue the optimal meetings and events for their venue. This, coupled with another year of notable investment in renovation and other upgrades, have led to shifts in the rankings as competition remains fierce even in a robust market.”



Marina Bay Sands Singapore

TPB proposes formation of CVB

Currently handling both leisure and business events, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) has recommended having a separate agency solely for the latter to take better care of this growing inbound segment.

Sources told *TTGmice* that as the marketing arm of the Department of Tourism (DoT), TPB’s budget and staff limitations mean shortchanging business events. For example, out of TPB’s 150 staff, only 17 are assigned to business events and they have to scrounge for budget unlike some of their counterparts in Asia which get fat funding directly from the presidential office.

Having a separate agency for business events will mean a return to the old days when there was the Philippine Convention and Visitors Bureau (PCVB) before it became TPB.

However, sources said it would take a

“long time” as it would require legislation but as a short term measure, TPB will have “additional manpower” for handling business events.

Vilma De Claro Mendoza, president of Mart Evers Travel and Tours, favours having a CVB given the “insufficient planning and promotions” for business events, especially since such gatherings require advanced preparations of six months to a year.

Agreeing, Gaurav Rai, general manager of Crowne Plaza Manila Galleria and Holiday Inn Manila Galleria, said the presence of a Philippine CVB would bring about a “more focused and tactical” approach to business events.

“It’s time for (business events) to have its own budget and resources”, said Rai, adding that other countries have been able to attraction large-scale events because of CVB support. – **Rosa Ocampo**

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The rise of design hotels

An increasingly younger, well-travelled, demanding event audience is forcing planners to be more creative and allowing exciting design-driven hotels to get onto their shopping list.

By Karen Yue

The millennial generation has been credited – or blamed, depending on which side you take – for many new business travel and event trends today, including the growing acceptance and demand for venues in design-driven hotels, properties that were often not built with events in mind.

Cvent, Inc. has reported a “marked increase in the number of planners looking to use design or boutique hotels – up 15 per cent in 2016 compared to 2015”, said Kevin Fliess, vice president of marketing for Cvent’s Hospitality Cloud.

“Gone are the days when traditional mass hotels won all the corporate business,” remarked Fliess, adding that clients use design hotels for various types of events such as meetings, conferences, conventions and educational seminars and workshops.

“Our data also reveals that 33 per cent of these bookings are for a duration of three days, and 26 per cent for one day,” he added.

Although Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) does not track the use of design hotels by its clients – at least for now, due to the lack of sufficient critical mass to warrant such an effort, senior director, meeting and events for Asia-Pacific, Michael Chiay, told *TTCmice* that the trend is worth watching.

“There is definitely a rise in the use of design hotels for business events, and I believe this is a result of the growing



presence of millennials in the workplace. They have a different motivation when attending meetings and events. And as a generation that will dominate the workforce demographic in the next few years and take on leadership roles in buying positions, you can expect to see them drive even greater use of quirky venues for business events,” said Chiay.

Joost de Meyer, chairman and CEO of US-based First Incentive Travel, agrees.

“The clientele is getting younger and this group does not want the big, corporate hotels. They prefer the smaller, trendy hotels that allow them to feel at home. This is why you will find that lobbies (of such hotels) resemble living rooms where guests can meet fellow guests,” said de Meyer.

A well-travelled society is also influencing the acceptance of design hotels as event venues. Gerhad Aicher, general manager of The Mira Hong Kong – a member of Design Hotels, a global network of properties with thought-provoking design and architecture, among other features – said: “As travellers get more experienced they become attracted to design-driven hotels, each with a unique identity reflecting their location which is often widely recognised as a hip and happening destination.”

Caitlin Flynn, director of sales and marketing with The Warehouse Hotel, Singapore – also a member of Design Hotels – said she is seeing “big demand”

in non-traditional, creative industries such as media, fashion and technology, and clients are hosting product launches, industry networking parties and influencer marketing events at the hotel which was once a spice warehouse.

Another contributing factor, according to Chiay, is the growing popularity of lifestyle events. “Lifestyle and luxury events conducted by businesses that emphasise on experience and service are more likely to use design hotels, as their event objectives are in line with the promise and forte of such hotels.”

A serious matter

Can quirky hotels work for serious corporate events? Definitely, according to Chiay.

Citing an example, he said a client had chosen to launch his new London property at The Upper House in Hong Kong because the design hotel has a luxury, British vibe that resonated with the product. The event was conducted in the hotel lounge which had indoor and outdoor spaces, something Chiay said few other traditional hotels in Hong Kong offered.

Further driving home his point that “serious events can be delivered in a not too serious manner to encourage interaction” and to emphasise key messages, Chiay shared that a recent financial technology conference held at the Singapore Expo’s Max Atria turned a traditional conference room into “a very cool and laidback space with beanbags and other lively setups”.



“...attractive design hotels opening up in cities unusual for business events will lead to a rise in corporate demand for such locations.”

Michael Chiay

Senior director, Meetings & Events, Asia Pacific, Carlson Wagonlit Travel

“Now, I understand that the venue is not a design hotel, but this shows that how a serious event is presented depends on the attendee profile. In this case, the attendees were young entrepreneurs who needed to be engaged differently,” Chiay explained.



The allure of small, beautiful hotels

The flexibility and exclusivity of design hotels, made possible by their often smaller-than-usual size and independent management, have come up repeatedly as winning factors.

Fliess opined: "Design hotels have the advantage of being able to offer a very personal and dedicated service. At the same time, they can offer the wow factor when it comes to setting, aesthetics and ambience."

It is easier to do a property buy-out with a smaller hotel, according to de Meyer who has also found that small-sized, high-end incentive groups take well to design hotels.

"It is typically small, luxury incentive groups that (go for design hotels) to reward their staff, not so much business (meetings)," observed Rosanna Leung, head of MICE & business development with Towa Tours Hong Kong.

The location of such hotels is a draw too. "Design hotels tend to be in upcoming new districts which could be undergoing (an exciting) revival programme, such as in areas like New York's Meatpacking District," de Meyer said.

Chiay agrees. "They are often in a less commercialised neighbourhood which is rich in local culture and history. This adds flavour to events," he said.

He added: "Design hotels tend to offer facilities that set them apart from traditional hotels. For instance, in space-starved cities, new-age hotels have to find unique ways to present their facilities and thus you are more likely to find chic rooftop bars in a design hotel. They make great venues for corporate gatherings. Hong Kong, perhaps for this reason, is at the forefront in design hotel offerings."

China, according to Chiay, said is now seeing a design hotel revolution, especially in the city fringes.

"Shanghai's quieter, less developed Northern Bund is becoming rather hot for designer properties, like The Water House," said Chiay, adding that attractive design hotels opening in cities unusual for business events will lead to a rise in corporate demand for such locations.

There is also cost savings to be had.

Jezz Goh, head of meeting and events with Pacific World Singapore, said: "Instead of going for luxury hotels, clients are now more inclined to (use) less expensive boutique-style properties that can enhance delegate experience through their unique (interiors and furnishings). The small size



"There is an expectation that design hotels will provide a service which is personal to the client rather than take a one-size-fits-all approach."

Kevin Fliess

Vice president of Marketing for Cvent's Hospitality Cloud

of design hotels also often bring about a more exclusive experience."

Chiay added that "design hotels are almost always luxurious but are priced competitively against similar high-end traditional hotels of international brands".

When it is not a good fit

Of course, design hotels are not for everyone. Companies that take a more traditional view on meetings and events are unlikely to venture out with a quirky property, while space limitations in terms of guestroom inventory and meeting room capacity can cause planners with a more complex programme or larger group to turn away.

"Events with more intricate requirements and need careful setup are unlikely to go for a design hotel. A designer space can be restrictive, as opposed to blank canvases that are the typical hotel ball-rooms," said Goh.

Hotel policies play a part too, opined Fliess. "Some companies will stipulate use of hotels that satisfy a certain budget or grade, or are a certain distance from the city centre. Design hotels need to recognise that in these circumstances, they cannot compete with traditional business hotels," he said.

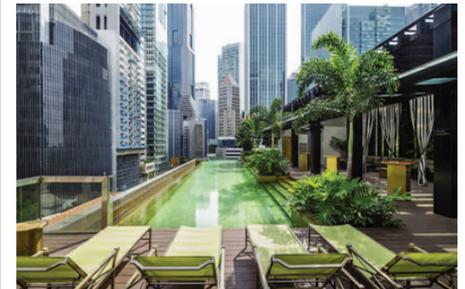
The misperception that design hotels are pricey and "troublesome to manage in a normal contract" is also a hurdle, added Chiay.

Big boys get in on the design action

While design hotels are commonly defined as being high on aesthetics, low in room inventory and facility range, and independently run, some have defied that with their association with global hotel chains. Marriott International and AccorHotels, for instance, boast their own design-led hotel brands and the occasional whimsical gem of a property.

Properties of JW Marriott brand often bring to mind visions of timeless elegance, but the new 244-key JW Marriott Phu Quoc Emerald Bay, Vietnam is modeled after a magical university and adopts "a design concept focused on the process of learning and discovery and the influence of (18th century French naturalist) Jean-Baptiste Lamarck".

Ramesh Daryanani, vice president, global sales – Asia-Pacific (excluding Greater China), Marriott International, said unique highlights at the hotel include the Lamarck Auditorium grand ballroom, which showcases a series of vintage atlases; and uniquely designed meeting rooms, each with their own story to tell, such as the Room of Bad Inventions where quirky references to failed designs and ideas can be found.



So Sofitel HI-SO bar

Marriott International's W hotels are also strong design-led products that have earned the favour of creative and media industry clients. Within this collection are also "unique spaces that are custom-built for a specific objective".

Daryanani said: "For example, W Bali houses the first W Hotels' Soundsuite, a professional recording studio that (welcomes) corporate companies wanting a creative team-building venue."

AccorHotels' So Sofitel label also seeks to satiate the growing desire for unique, design-driven event venues. According to spokesperson Karen Chang, So Sofitel Bangkok reels guests in right from the start with "amplified amusement, vibrant lounges, innovative cocktails and novel cuisine".

At So Sofitel Singapore, HI-SO bar is a gem for creative gatherings, with its "chic open-air terrace and stunning golden-titled pool".

She said: "Creative businesses are drawn more to boutique hotels, and high-end clients want unique spaces and inspiring venues that such properties offer. Smaller firms and entrepreneurs are also seeking boutique hotels to give their delegates an exciting experience that is out of the ordinary." – **Barathi Narayan**



Beauties on the block

Beauties with character? Oh yes, they exist. We profile some of our favourite design hotels in Asia-Pacific that work well for business events



ARTOTEL Sanur-Bali, Indonesia

Event venues One meeting room for up to 80 pax, plus ROCA Sanur restaurant and Bar at ARTOTEL which are open to private events

Design story The boutique hotel's architecture pays tribute to Sanur, a seaside town well known for its annual kite festival. Rhombus shapes and inspired designs are found in the tiles, balcony partitions and roof of its restaurant.

But more than its quirky architecture, the hotel's bigger design story lies in its role as a supporter of artworks by some of Indonesia's leading contemporary artists. Consistent to the brand's artistic commitment, ARTOTEL Sanur-Bali has the ARTSPACE, an ARTOTEL signature gallery, where artworks are displayed. The hotel also provides a painting course for groups.

The design of MEETSPACE, the hotel's meeting room, is however more subdued, with white walls and wood paneled floors and ceiling. – **Mimi Hudoyo**

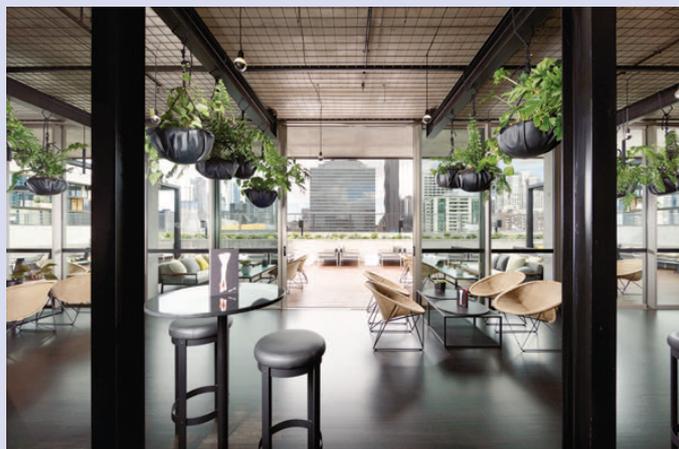
QT Melbourne, Australia

Event venues Two meeting rooms accommodating 32 delegates each

Design story The QT chain of hotels are designed to be unique to their location and QT Melbourne has stayed true to the brief.

Launched in September 2016 in the CBD's Russell Street, the hotel is inspired by the rag traders of nearby Flinders Lane from the 1900s, which also sees its influences in the city's 'Paris end' of Melbourne famed for its fashionable luxury shops.

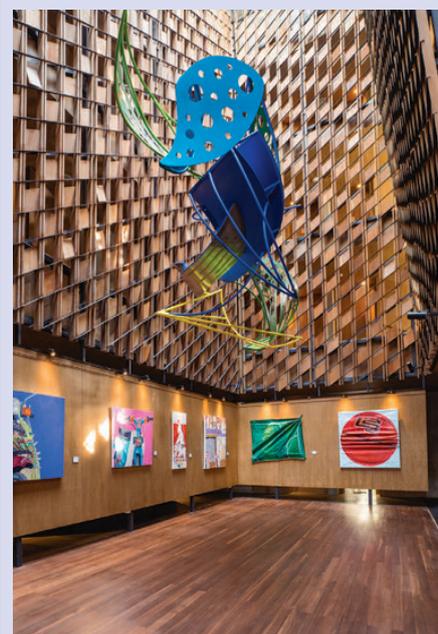
The hotel is tucked in a city laneway emphasizing its connection to its surrounding shops and eateries and has a strong urban European style, combining vintage and modern. But there's also plenty of quirky charm, which becomes quickly evident when you step into one of its interac-



tive lifts, ever ready with a cheeky greeting or remark in one of three languages as you enter or exit.

Meeting rooms are furnished in rich tones and feature the bold and contemporary artwork of

Tony Garifalakis. The room names Barclay and Paramount pay homage to the Greater Union Cinema that stood in the place of the hotel until the cinema closed in 2013. – **Adelaine Ng**





Alila Fort Bishangarh, Rajasthan, India

Event venues Various indoor and outdoor venues

Design story Once a warrior fort and now a luxurious resort under a brand known for its breathtaking properties, the Alila Fort Bishangarh perches atop a granite hill with its conserved 2m-thick walls and battlement turrets and arches looking very much like a natural extension of the surrounding terrain.

The heritage resort is said to be a unique example of Jaipur Gharana architecture, influenced by both the Mughals and the British, and much of that has been carefully restored.

The resort boasts 59 stately suites, each individually created to capture the stunning views of the surroundings.

The regal atmosphere is carried through the hotel's suites, four specialty theme restaurants – particularly Amarsar all-day dining restaurant which features restored Rajasthani thikri work and handpainted wall art, and The Nazaara terrace lounge with its elegant Indian arches, and Spa Alilla.

For private events, the resort has plenty to offer too, including a royal banquet hall, a banquet dining room, conference and meeting rooms, an open-air terrace and large banquet lawns. – **Karen Yue**

Suiran, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Kyoto, Japan

Event venues One multipurpose venue with garden views

Design story Sitting amid the Arashiyama hills to the west of central Kyoto, Suiran is a traditional-style property overlooking the lazy Hozu River.

In keeping with the serenity of its location, Suiran has only one meeting room which makes it just as exclusive as the entire hotel. The 98m² space is equipped with modern conference technology and tantalises delegates

with views of a stunning Japanese garden beyond the sliding paper screens and windows.

Upgrade the meeting experience with refined *kaiseki* cuisine, or host dinner at the hotel's Kyo-Suiran restaurant, built in 1899 as baron Shozo Kawasaki's summerhouse. Kyo-Suiran combines Meiji era architecture with contemporary lighting and seating. An intrinsic part of Japanese design, the indoor-outdoor aesthetic is fostered by floor-to-ceiling windows that offer unobstructed views across the countryside. The restaurant has a private four-seat *teppanyaki* room and a private dining room for 12 guests. – **Julian Ryall**



Hotel Luna, Vigan, Ilocos Sur, the Philippines

Event venues Three, accommodating up to 180 pax altogether

Design story This museum hotel has retained the character and features of the original Spanish colonial house built in 1882 by an affluent father as a wedding gift to his daughter.

It pays tribute to one of the illustrious sons of Ilocos, Juan Luna, the world-renowned painter and activist of the Philippine revolution. Luna was a close friend of the country's national hero Jose Rizal while his younger brother, Antonio Luna, was a great general who fought during the Philippine-American war.

Hôtel Vagabond, Singapore

Event venues One, for up to 350 guests

Design story The luxury boutique hotel lives, breathes and plays art. Housed in a 1950s Art Deco building and designed by renowned French designer Jacques Garcia, Hôtel Vagabond embodies his design philosophy of "all things in excess" from the bronze rhinoceros that doubles as a reception desk to the life-sized golden elephants that 'hold up' the elevator.

Come evening, the Vagabond Salon, which comes with a touch of Parisian glamour, takes centre stage, providing guests with a space to experience art through interaction with the artist-in-residence. The 400m² venue encompasses a bar and a restaurant kitchen,



and can adapt to different event requirements. Its floor-to-ceiling velvet curtains are soundproof, allowing the space to cater to intimate soirees or be opened up, catering up to 100 pax seated or 350 standing. – **Barathi Narayan**



Hoshino Resort Risonare Yatsugatake, Yamanashi, Japan

Event venues Two convention rooms, four boardrooms and a ballroom

Design story A winner of a dozen international architecture and design awards, Hoshino Resort Risonare Yatsugatake appears as a contemporary complex of various facilities set high in the spectacular mountains of Yatsugatake.

The complex – which incorporates striking design concepts by a number of prominent architects – also has a 300-seat auditorium, reception venues and restaurants, including the newly created Yygrill. Other facilities include a cafe with a wide selection of books, a spa with top-of-the-range therapies, an indoor pool and the Yatsugatake Winehouse.

There are a number of meeting facilities, including venues that permit work to continue on a shady deck with mountains forming the backdrop. Meeting rooms can accommodate 12 to 120 people.

The surrounding environment also lends itself to teambuilding events, including treasure hunts and cooking classes. – **Julian Ryall**



Blossom Villa Resort & Spa, Sichuan, China

Event venues A multimedia room for 150 guests plus an attached outdoor terrace

Design story Opened in December 2015, the latest China member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World is located 140km from Chengdu in Jiangyou, the hometown of famed Chinese poet Li Bai.

The Jiangyou authorities commissioned the developer to build a poetry-themed European-style wellness retreat where the design of each of the 24 rooms, measuring between 65m² and 70m², is different and based on a selected poet and poem.

The hotel has an art gallery, a café, a swimming pool and Thalgo Spa, known for its thalassotherapy treatments using sea water and sea products, and the 90m² One Room Chinese restaurant where dishes are made using seasonal, non-genetically modified, organic ingredients.

One Room restaurant is divided into different sections comprising a living room corner with sofas and armchairs, a long table with a screen and equipment for a business meeting, and a 20-seat round table in front of a fireplace.

The hotel offers modern lifestyle concepts in a village-setting and meeting planners can consider booking the entire hotel for a high-end retreat or incentive trip. – **Caroline Boey**

Hotel Luna boasts a museum with an impressive collection of contemporary artists, national artists, and of course, Luna masterpieces.

The hotel is a destination in itself, with the Spanish colonial theme extending to the architecture, vintage furniture and fixtures of the meeting rooms, priceless paintings that adorn the property throughout. Even the Chula Saloon Bar is named after the Chula series of painting by Luna.

And while it turns back time with its colonial architecture and lifestyle, the hotel isn't averse to modern concessions. Wi-Fi is available property-wide and in the guestrooms are orthopaedic beds and electronic toilets. – **Rosa Ocampo**

TAIWAN

An ecotourism dream come true

Home to numerous mountains, forests, wetlands and surrounded by the ocean, Taiwan comes alive as a MICE destination that promises delegates an unforgettable ecotourism experience.

With a broad variety of activity options, delegates will be spoiled for choice be it scaling one of the many picturesque mountains or relaxing on a palmy beach. Taiwan's West Coast is dotted with sand dunes, sandy beaches, sand bars and lagoons, while the East Coast presents a dramatic coastline of towering cliffs. Rock formations of the North Coast alternate with beautiful bays that offer the most varied seaside landscapes, while the South Coast harbors colourful coral reefs.

A VIBRANT OFFERING OF NATURAL ATTRACTIONS AWAITS IN TAICHUNG

Taichung, located to the west of central Taiwan, forms a key gateway for exploring the island's mountainous interior.

MICE planners can host their delegates in the newly opened five-star hotels or boutique hotels located at Taichung city center. Delegates can also visit the National Taichung Theater, which privately hosts MICE banquets and receptions in their restaurants. Following which, they can make their way to Gaomei Wetlands.

Located in Taichung's Qingshui District, the wetlands are comprised of a special mix of mud and sand that make the locale perfect for spotting birds, fishes and crabs. With windmills forming as the backdrop, this scenic spot is highly popular for biking activities as well.

To end the day, it is almost mandatory for delegates to visit the Feng Chia Night Market, which promises a premiere night market experience for both shopping and feasting.

Pictures: Gaomei Wetlands (top), National Taichung Theater (bottom)
Picture credits: Taichung City Government
www.meettaiwan.com



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Hotel Mecure Danang French Village Bana, Vietnam

Event venues A grand ballroom and six meeting rooms

Design story With Danang becoming an attractive destination for business events, AccorHotels pledged to offer something slightly different when it opened Mercure Bana Hills French Village in April 2016. Sitting at 1,480m above sea level in an area that was once popular with French colonialists seeking respite from the heat, it is only accessible via a 5,800m long cable car. Boasting unparalleled views of the surrounding mountainous region of central Vietnam, the village is modelled on 19th Century France and is home to 494 European-style rooms, seven F&B outlets, a fitness centre, spa, indoor pool, golf centre, shopping area and attraction park.

The village is also home to a range of event facilities, catering for up to 1,000 guests. Private events can also be arranged in the sprawling gardens, the fantasy park or other open areas. A dedicated events team is on standby. – **Marissa Carruthers**



The Anam, Nha Trang, Vietnam

Event venues A conference room, a ballroom and three meeting rooms

Design story The five-star resort celebrated its grand opening in April 2017. Inspired by Vietnam's bygone Indochine era, the resort's romantic design evokes nostalgia with its imperial-style roofs, lanterns, decorative pools, customised mosaic floor tiles and stone pathways. It features 117 villas, 96 rooms and suites and various facilities including a restaurant, a pool bar and beach club, three swimming pools, a Balinese spa, a 3D cinema, a water sports centre, and yoga facilities.

Understanding that the modern business is seeking a destination that combines top event facilities with culture and breath-taking beauty, The Anam is a paradise tucked away in the northern Cam Ranh peninsula. The Colonial Room can host up to 170 people, while the ballroom caters for up to 250. A dedicated team is tasked with creating one-of-a-kind events, with the stunning ocean-side location making the resort already popular with event planners. – **Marissa Carruthers**

The Edison George Town, Penang, Malaysia

Event venues Two cabanas, each for 12 people

Design story The building was constructed in 1906 as a residence for a local tycoon named Yeo Wee Gark. It was designed with many of the opulence associated with the wealthy of that era, for instance, generous space planning and the extensive use of metal works imported from the UK.

After an eight-month-long restoration refurbishment and renovation effort in 2016, The Edison George Town was unveiled, showcasing an interior design that is a quirky take on Penang's heritage while bringing back the luxurious ambience the mansion once knew.

While the hotel lacks dedicated meeting rooms, it makes up for this with flexible venues that can be transformed for private events.

– **S Puvaneswary**



Macalister Mansion, Penang, Malaysia

Event venues Two private rooms within The Dining Room, one for up to 10 people boardroom-style, the other for up to 20; The Lawn accommodating up to 200 people

Design story Located along the historic Macalister Road, the eight-room Macalister Mansion is a restored colonial mansion built in the early 1900s and named in honour of Penang's British governor Norman Macalister who ruled from 1808 to 1810. Numerous references to



Jaya House Riverpark, Siem Reap, Cambodia

Event venues Adaptable space

Design story Since opening on the outskirts of Siem Reap in October, Jaya House Riverpark has been creating a name for itself. The stunning resort takes in 36 rooms, two swimming pools, a spa and restaurant dotted among tropical gardens and lush trees. Chic modernity dominates, with clean contemporary décor elegantly balanced against Angkorian-influenced carvings, with the hotel's design based on Kos Ke Temple.

For private events, the resort can be transformed into a unique venue, from the majestically lit, landscaped gardens to the spacious restaurant, reception area and silver-tiled pool area.

The brainchild of Christian De Boer, former general manager of the nearby exclusive Shinta Mani hotel, and Kan Rinna, former Shinta Mani F&B manager, service at Jaya House Riverpark is one of the finest to be found in Cambodia's Temple Town, with dedicated teams on hand to help look after every detail, including organising tailor-made group excursions to the surrounding area.

– **Marissa Carruthers**



The Warehouse Hotel, Singapore

Event venues One, for up to 28 guests

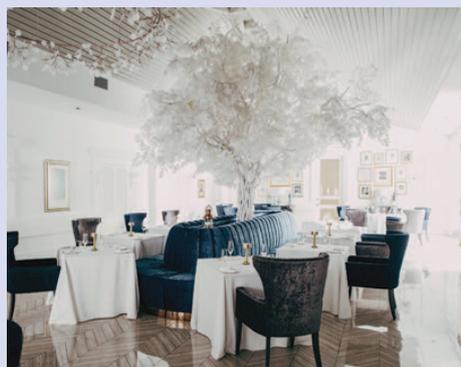
Design story Fancy staying in a meticulously restored spice warehouse dating back to 1895, which also housed an illegal alcohol distillery when the area was a hotbed of secret societies and underground activity, and later a vibrant disco? The Warehouse Hotel in Robertson Quay might be right up your alley.

The 37-room hotel stays true to the building's heritage and local culture with features including original industrial beams, high ceilings and historical detailing, that is further enhanced with a contemporary minimalistic design and locally sourced room furnishings. The theme is also carried over to the multipurpose event space, The Den – an extension to the hotel's lobby – for intimate business events for 28 guests. For non-exclusive events, The Den and the lobby bar can accommodate a larger gathering of up to 80 guests. Meetings can also be catered in the hotel restaurant, Po, which pays tribute to a local favourite snack, *popiah*, and celebrates the richness of Singaporean dishes and flavours with a modern twist. – **Barathi Narayan**



the historic figure are captured in the host of specially commissioned installation art pieces displayed throughout the premises.

Guests can expect a dramatic sense of arrival through the generous ground fronting the historic mansion. When viewed along the main road, the Macalister Mansion logo floats above the green hedge and original wrought iron gate, with the elegant mansion in the distance. Entering the hedge-lined driveway, guests are welcomed by an oversized 2.5m



high fractal bust of Norman Macalister. Arrival at the reception area is under a turquoise scalloped canopy and through a pair of restored ornate wooden double-leaf doorway.

The reception is central to the rest of the Macalister Mansion experience and is linked to three F&B outlets and to the eight rooms above.

The Living Room has its own distinct entry on the southwest side of the building with a pathway connecting it to The Lawn's pool and pool bar.

At the pool, a white cannon and series of cannonballs on display are a tongue-in-cheek reference to a legend surrounding Norman Macalister's days of governing – apparently he incentivised local islanders to aid in the clearing of a piece of forested coastal land by shooting gold coins into the forest.

The entire mansion can be booked for RM80,000 (US\$18,161) nett per day.

– **S Puvaneswary**

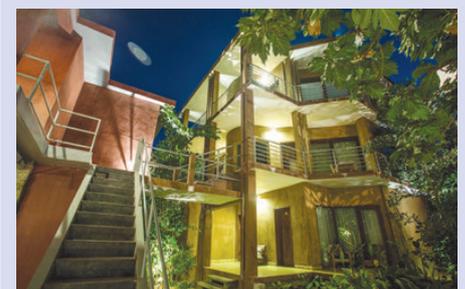
Knai Bang Chatt, Kep, Cambodia

Event venues One meeting room for up to 40 people

Design story Understated simplicity is the order of the day at Knai Bang Chatt, a stunning resort in the quaint coastal resort of Kep.

Knai Bang Chatt beautifully blends old with new, harking back to Cambodia's Golden Age in the 1950s and 1960s, when Kep was a destination reserved for the rich and famous. Its five villas, which are home to 18 rooms, were built in the 1960s by protégés of revered Cambodian architect, Van Molyvann, who studied under Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier. Resort owners worked with French architects to restore them to their former glory, and what stands today is a truly stunning minimalist resort that has an earthy vibe.

Besides the resort's dedicated meeting room, less formal private events can also be held at the neighbouring Sailing Club and The Lounge area which comes with sea views. It is also possible for groups to hire the entire resort. – **Marissa Carruthers**



Primus Hotel Sydney, Australia

Event venues Three boardrooms and three multifunction meeting rooms

Design story The hotel oozes Art Deco charm not just for stylish reasons. It is a salute on a grand scale to a past era, resulting in the meticulous restoration of an old government building that was responsible for Sydney's sewers from around the 1930s.

Opened in December 2015, visitors are greeted by 8m-tall red scagliola columns in the lobby restored by Italian master craftsmen flown in for the job. Think cream travertine marble flooring, and a central seating area with plush salmon pink and navy velvet sofas and brown leather armchairs.

But there's also much history retained in the walls and windows of the building. The original water bubblers for example, can be seen in places throughout the ground level.

The geometric influences of the pre-Depression era are dominant in the hotel's function room. – **Adelaine Ng**



Enticing the dragon

TCEB has been hard at work launching various campaigns, as well as promoting the country in more Chinese cities, reports **S Puvanewary**



Travelmania/Shutterstock



Christian Mueller/Shutterstock



OLOS/Shutterstock

Clockwise from top: Twilight view of Bangkok; Suvarnabhumi Airport; Damnoen Saduak Floating Market

Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has recently intensified its marketing efforts, via the launch of campaigns, in China's second- and third-tier cities.

Traditionally, TCEB's marketing efforts were concentrated on first-tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, but Nooch Homrossukhon, director of meeting and incentive promotion department at TCEB, said that she has seen a growing interest from other cities.

Citing examples, she said Thailand attracts direct selling companies from Shenzhen and Qingdao, and IT and finance companies from Hangzhou. As well, businesses in China, from third-tier cities including Suzhou, Xi'an, Chengdu and Nanjing, are growing tremendously and companies

have travel budgets for incentives.

"Over the years, we have developed a Chinese client base and (cultivated) a good relationship with Chinese intermediaries, and this helps to bring back repeat business. (One example is) Infinitus (China) Company, a health firm focused on traditional Chinese medicine. The company will return to Thailand for the 14th time this year, and hold their event in Bangkok and Pattaya in May," said Nooch. Around 8,000 delegates are expected, and as of press time, it will be China's largest outbound incentive group to Thailand.

Aside from TCEB, the trade is putting in relevant efforts. For instance, Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Centre's marketing development and research manager, Kantarath Jirakittirath, said the four-

year-old convention centre is targeting businesses from Beijing, Shanghai and Hangzhou due to direct air accessibility. She added that the facility was "planning to organise a fam trip for MICE organisers to Chiang Mai this year".

On March 31, 2017, TCEB, together with allied Thai partners, kicked off *Thailand's MICE United IV* campaign in Beijing, as well as launched the country's brand campaign, *Thailand CONNECT: Your Vibrant Journey to Business Success*. Both campaigns were presented to more than 150 business event players at the Thailand CONNECT: China Business Events Road Show 2017.

Thailand's MICE United IV, now in its fourth edition, features 10 alliances, two of which are new – Airport of Thailand Public Company (AOT) and King Power International Company. The two new partners contribute to the Thailand CONNECT Welcome Packages, through discounts and perks for business event delegates.

Another campaign, *Thailand Big Thanks*, which runs until December 31, 2017, is particularly popular with Chinese direct selling and multi-level marketing companies as it provides a financial subsidy of up to two million baht (US\$58,055) for group sizes of at least 2,000 delegates and a minimum stay of three nights.

Nooch said: "The subsidy allows organisers to use the money to upgrade menus, or enhance the entertainment."

Another campaign running until December 30, 2017, is the *Meet Double Cities* which offers a subvention of 100,000 baht per group of at least 200, and staying at least four nights in more than one destination.

"This campaign is to encourage groups to extend their events beyond Bangkok, for economic distribution to the regional level," said Nooch.

Meanwhile, the *Meet the Sustainable Way* campaign provides a financial subsidy of up to 100,000 baht for events held at venues in Thailand that have been certified as Thailand MICE Venue Standard and/or meetings that incorporate CSR activities.



“Thailand is seen as an affordable and accessible destination. Subvention support makes the destination even more appealing.”

Sydney Yang
Sales representative (China),
Sukosol Hotels

Caiyan Qin, assistant sales manager at Royal Cliff Hotels Group and Pattaya Exhibition and Convention Hall, said: “Subventions offered are important as MICE organisers are always asking for support. As other countries offer it, we stand to lose the group if there isn’t.”

Benjamin Krieg, general manager at Novotel Bangkok Sukhumvit 20, added: “Subventions will help attract repeat business. Thailand is good value. It is favoured by overseas business events organisers because you get good experiences for very good value.”

Sydney Yang, sales representative (China) for Sukosol Hotels said many

corporate companies in China have been cutting their budgets since 2015 as company profits have dipped.

Regardless, he said: “Thailand is seen as an affordable and accessible destination. Subvention support makes the destination even more appealing. There are many beach destinations such as Pattaya, Phuket and Samui which interest the Chinese.”

Through these efforts, the bureau is targeting to grow Chinese business event arrivals by five per cent this year.

China has been the top international business events market for Thailand ever since it overtook India in 2013.

{ Talking numbers }

6

The number of Chinese cities that Thai Airways currently flies to in China from Bangkok. They are Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Xiamen, Kunming and Chengdu

418,179

The number of business event travellers from Thailand’s top five source markets – China, India, Singapore, Malaysia and Japan – in 2016

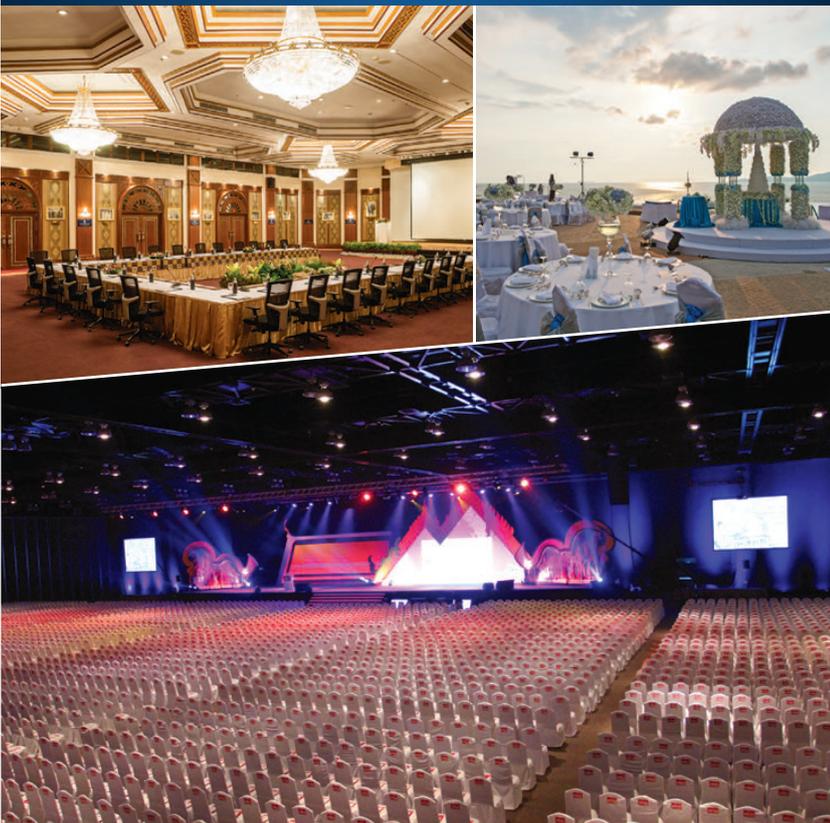
1.27 million

The number of China nationals travelling to Thailand for business events in the 2016 fiscal year (October 2015 to September 2016)

10.3 billion baht

The total revenue generated from Chinese business events segment, equivalent to US\$299.6 million, the 2016 fiscal year

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A determined soul



Parrot Pinikulu/shutterstock

A growing reputation among travellers, new hotels aplenty and stronger marketing efforts keep Seoul shining for events.

Julian Ryall reports

There is little disguising the fact that South Korea's travel industry has been affected by deteriorating relations between Seoul and Beijing over the deployment of the US Army's THAAD anti-missile system in South Korea. The nation's MICE sector, however, is determined that temporary political impasses will not hamper its long-term development and growth.

The number of Chinese incentive travellers to Seoul climbed 33 per cent in 2016 on the previous year, surpassing 123,000 arrivals. Given the state of bilateral relations, however, that figure is likely to fall significantly this year, along with Chinese attendees at meetings, conventions and exhibitions.

"Seoul jumped to third spot on UIA's charts last year and we are working to build on that momentum for the business events sector this year," said Park Jinhyeok, director of the Seoul Convention Bureau.

"We have just returned from a successful roadshow in Mumbai and New Delhi – coordinated together with the Korea Tourism Organization, Incheon Tourism and Gyeonggi Tourism Organization – in March, which was a first for us.

"We are also planning similar roadshows and marketing efforts in other markets, such as South-east Asia, throughout 2017," Park added.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government has also stepped up its support for the sector, announcing in March an extra 10 billion won (US\$8.74 million) in funding for 2017 and devising a five-point plan to make the capital city a more attractive business event destination.

The effort includes making more exhibitions and conventions eligible for financial support, developing a



Clockwise from top: Skyline of downtown Seoul from Bongeunsa Temple; N Seoul Tower framed by cherry blossoms; girls dressed in pretty hanbok in Gyeongbokgung Palace



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“The Perfect Storyteller!” – The Telegraph, UK

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For further information, please visit:

PATA.org/patacademy-hcd-june-2017



{ Developments to watch }

1 A business events approach was officially included in the action plans of the Cheongsong Tourism Bureau in November 2016 as the county in Gyeongsang province looks to take advantage of its history and spectacular position amid the mountains on the eastern side of the Korean Peninsula.

Visitors are able to stay in modern hotels or traditional Korean homes, including in the Minyechon folk art village. Teambuilding activities include climbing, trekking and making traditional cuisine. Jinho Kang, director of the Bureau, has no intention of competing with major cities as a destination and instead wants to offer a pristine natural environment as a backdrop for corporate events.



2 Goyang City, a satellite city of Seoul, has similarly launched a CVB in November 2016. It already houses the Korea International Exhibition Centre (KINTEX, pictured) which started operations in 2004, as well as a wide selection of accommodation, restaurants, a cultural

centre, aquarium, sports and shopping facilities. KINTEX will complete its third expansion in 2022, while the city is in the process of redefining itself as a technologically advanced “smart town.”

3 Stretched thin by soaring traffic, Incheon International Airport is due to complete its new Terminal 2 before the end of 2017, raising its total capacity to 72 million passengers a year. In 2016, the airport handled 57.7 million passengers – significantly more than its 54 million capacity. Preparatory work is also under way for the construction of a fourth runway and an airline maintenance facility. Terminal 2 will utilise advanced technology, including AI and robotics.

new range of promotion packages, and devising new programmes to provide delegates with hands-on experience of Korean culture, arts and entertainment.

That coincides with ambitious plans to develop the district around COEX, Seoul’s largest convention facility, and Jamsil Sports Complex into an “international exchange complex.” The city has announced that it intends to create a global MICE hub “where exhibitions, conventions, sports, entertainment and waterside cultural leisure will exist in harmony”.

Work on the project, which will include at least two hotels and a skyscraper that will be the tallest in the country and has been tentatively named the Global Business Centre, will start in 2019, with construction due to be completed in 2025.

Additional infrastructure is also coming online, with a 1.7km stretch of the Seoul Station Overpass – once a key artery through the centre of the city – reopening on May 20 as a park that is also available for event usage. Titled Seoulo 7017, the project is the first in a series designed to make the city more pedestrian-friendly.

Seoul is also experiencing a surge in the number of luxury, international hotel chains opening new properties or expanding their existing facilities.

The Signiel Seoul – the city’s first six-star hotel – occupying the 76th to 101st floors of the Lotte World Tower, opened in April to offer 235 guest-rooms

In the same month, the former W Seoul Walker Hill reopened as the drastically remodeled Vista Walker Hill.

Come September, Seoul will welcome yet another high-end property by both Ambassador Hotel and AccorHotels, in the Yongsan district. A Four Points by Sheraton property will also rise in the up-market Gangnam area in November.

“I believe South Korea in general and Seoul in particular has developed into a very desirable destination for all travel sectors, but going forward I see that as being particularly applicable for the (business events) sector,” said Lubosh Barta, general manager of Four Seasons Hotel Seoul.

Barta pointed to the country’s safety, developed infrastructure and public transport system, and thriving history, cuisine, pop culture, music, shopping, fashion and design scenes as strong lures for business event groups.

{ Talking numbers }

10 The number of new places added late last year to the Seoul Tourism Organisation’s list of Unique Venues for MICE events, bringing the total to 50

24 The maximum number of participants in a match of Bubble Soccer, the newest teambuilding event available in Seoul

123 The number of storeys in the Lotte World Tower, home to the luxurious Signiel Seoul Hotel, placing it among the world’s top ten tallest buildings

The 317-room Four Seasons Hotel Seoul, located between City Hall and Gyeongbokgung Palace, is itself among the city’s newer hotels, having opened in September 2015.

Housing two ballrooms and six meeting rooms across 2,196m² of space, the hotel targets smaller, high-end corporate groups.

Barta is not fazed by the influx of new luxury hotels in the city, and welcomes them instead. He insists that the hotel boom underlines his belief that the destination is gaining popularity, while the added competition ensures that properties be constantly innovative in their business events offerings and deliver a consistently high level of service.

“Seoul jumped to third spot on UIA’s charts last year and we are working to build on that momentum for the business events sector this year.”

Park Jinhyeok
Director Seoul
Convention Bureau



{ Review central }

Floating Island Convention Centre, Seoul

 By Julian Ryall

The addition of a water taxi terminus alongside the Floating Island Convention Centre lends a new dimension to getting to and from Seoul's most eye-catching and unique event location.

Concept The convention centre occupies the lion's share of one of three man-made islands in Seoul's Han River, with impressive views to the east and west, particularly at sunset. Since opening in 2014, the convention centre has become a local landmark and a key component of the Han River Renaissance Project, which is designed to make the most of recreational areas along the river banks.

As well as convention facilities, the islands include an entertainment hall, a marina, restaurants, bars, shops and the floating Media Art Stage that incorporates a huge LED screen. The cutting-edge design of the centre, as well as the clever use of exterior lighting at sunset, have helped make the Floating Island Convention Centre the most quirky in the city.

MICE application Designed to host banquets, conventions, international



symposiums, product launches and performances, the second floor Main Convention Hall has a capacity of 600 people. It is equipped with an under-floor lift large enough to hoist a car into the auditorium.

The domed roof can be used as a vast screen for light shows or video presentations, while the stage is backed by a window overlooking the river.

It has hosted events such as the 3rd Women Economic Forum and the local launch of Ferrari 486.

Villa de Noche European restaurant has a private balcony that is perfect for social events. Vista Pub wraps around the

second floor of the venue and is ideal for events of up to 350 people. Rive Gauche is a hall for as many as 150 people.

The building is topped by a spectacular open space that is tailor-made for social parties.

Service Comprehensive.

Contact

Website: ficonvention.com
Tel: (82) 82 2 537 2440

The Hotel Cappuccino, Seoul

 By Julian Ryall

The uber-hip Hotel Cappuccino opened in the chic Gangnam district in December 2015 as a lifestyle hotel appealing to millennials and creative types. Occupying 18 floors, the property adopts a décor that is industrial chic combined with primary colours and bold design strokes.

Rooms Guestrooms are out of the ordinary, with the Quad Room offering

four bunk beds and lockers for clothes, making guests feel like they are in the military; Bark Rooms for dog lovers who travel with their pets and are equipped with dog beds and a selection of treats. The property is committed to social causes, with "angel" programmes supporting local charities and guests are invited to make the most of a car-sharing scheme and donate clothes that they no longer need.

MICE facilities The hotel's 95m² function room seats 50 people theatre-style, while two smaller meeting rooms can be used individually or combined to provide space for around 16 people.

Other facilities There is a cafe on the ground floor, a self-service laundry and a gym. The 17th-floor restaurant and bar have impressive views across the city, and the bar is stocked with a surprising number of gins.

The rooftop terrace is the crowning glory, and works well for cosy receptions for up to 150 guests. Previous users of this space include Google, Facebook, Swatch and Bulgari.

The hotel is also just three subway stops from the COEX convention and exhibitions facility.



Room count 141

Star rating 4.5

Contact

Website: hotelcappuccino.co.kr
Tel: (82-2) 2038-9500



ymgerman/shutterstock

View of Melbourne skyline and Yarra River in the morning

Rediscover Melbourne

Melbourne pushes the envelope with fresh products, big and small, that can give corporate programmes a special touch. By **Adelaine Ng**

There's movement under the hood of the most livable city in the world.

Melbourne may be known for its expansive sights on the Great Ocean Road, the bustling Victoria Market and a lively theatre scene but the hidden gems are also coming to play to attract corporate visitors.

This can range from a quintessential Australian farm in regional Victoria to a mega international event like the Grand Prix, which surprisingly is far

less well-known than the Australian Open in countries like China.

And the key to promoting Melbourne's offerings seems to be collaboration rather than competition. "There's a ton of new products and hotels on board," said Karen Bollinger, CEO of the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB). "What we're doing is working with all the major events in Melbourne and figuring out how we can package them together and get them to the market with us."

Four new hotels have opened just in the city area over the past 18

months, with about 10 more announced for the next three years, including the W and the Ritz Carlton. Also anticipated is the new Hyatt in Essendon which opens in June, next to the newly launched Australian Events Centre, located about six kilometres from Melbourne Airport.

Giving Melbourne's business events scene extra tools to attract corporate meetings and incentive players are new attractions and services like the state-of-the-art gondola ride at Arthurs Seat overlooking a section of park and ocean views of the Mornington Peninsula and on-trend food truck precincts that will station permanently around the CBD from April this year.

As things are, the city is already doing well for corporate meetings. The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) hosted about 690 corporate meetings last year, representing 66 per cent of their business events pie and bringing in A\$12 million (US\$9.12 million) in revenue.

"We are on track to have another record year," said Anne Jamieson, MCEC's director of customer experi-



"Asian incentive groups like to show off and make it a unique and fabulous experience. They want to enter the room and go, 'wow, I wasn't expecting this!'"

Anne Jamieson

Director of customer experience,
Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

ence. “We’re looking to do a couple more hundred corporate meetings going into the next financial year and build on that when our new expansion site opens,” she added, referring to MCEC’s A\$205 million investment by the Victorian state government to expand its facilities with an opening scheduled for July 2018.

The MCB also had its most successful incentive business year on record in 2015/16, securing the greatest number of delegates for Melbourne annually but the sector appears to be slowing down.

“We’re just noticing that the very large incentive groups aren’t as actively seeking destinations as they were over the last two years,” said Bollinger, who noted the groups that had been coming seem to have halved in size, even though attendance still numbered around 5,000.

To grow the incentives sector, the MCEC is promoting its ability to host a pop-up gala event space that can accommodate 200 to 2000 guests in a highly customisable set-up called Lorem Ipsum, which has only catered to local groups for Christmas events before.

“We found out, in talking with meetings and incentive groups out of Asia that this really appeals to them as well, so we’re in the process of adapting it to be available all year round, not just at Christmas,” said Jamieson. “Asian incentive groups like to show off and make it a unique and fabulous experience. They want to enter the room and go, ‘wow, I wasn’t expecting this!’”

Bollinger agrees that incentive groups have tailored and bespoke experiences high on their list and catering to that can pay off handsomely.

“They want bragging rights,” she said. “Last year, Amway Taiwan took a large group to Sydney but from that they had 70 people in Melbourne for the Grand Prix and they spent A\$1 million, which included helicopter rides to the Great Ocean Road, an amped up bespoke experience to the GP, rides on horses and carriages and meals at some of the best restaurants in Melbourne”.

The MCB has also been reaching out to other tourism players like the Victoria Racing Club (VCR) to join them more actively in overseas trips.

The VRC hosts the annual Melbourne Cup Carnival but has more recently specialised in customised horse racing events for incentive groups which include millinery classes and workshops on how to bet on a horse.

“(Our work in Asia) is only now coming to fruition,” remarked Lisa Patroni, head of international tourism for the VRC, which will welcome 200 Mary Kay delegates from China in October.

“We’re quoting a lot more in this space now than ever before, a tenfold increase over the past two years,” she added.

But smaller players are also a significant part of the mix. Green Olive at Red Hill in Victoria’s Mornington Peninsula has existed since 2002 but the picturesque farm and vineyard only recently started working with the MCB to attract corporate and incentive groups.

Owner Greg O’Donoghue’s interest in marketing to Asia has brought him to Singapore and China and resulted in his decision to open a new store in the CBD in May and the launch of a body products range.

Other attractions like specialty coffee shops and secret pop up gardens are also in the mix, ensuring that Melbourne remains the city of continual discovery for corporate groups.



“We’re quoting a lot more in (the incentive) space now than ever before, a tenfold increase over the past two years.”

Lisa Patroni

Head of international tourism,
Victoria Racing Club



Top to bottom:
Green Olive at
Red Hill; Degrares
Street, a cafe and
retail laneway
between Flinders
Street and Flinders
Lane

{ Talking numbers }

1,700

The number of guests that can be hosted for a pop-up Secret Garden dinner event by hospitality curator Tommy Collins

4,000

The number of delegates at CISCO Live at MCEC, making it the largest corporate meeting group received by Melbourne in 2016



moomsabay/shutterstock

55,000

Total business event arrivals into Melbourne in 2016

{ Developments to watch }

1 Melbourne's biggest Asian source market for tourism and business events, China, is slowing down economically, which brings uncertainty to bookings and financial projections. Political uncertainties in China are also being monitored by industry watchers. This may impact the incentive market specifically as they rely on optimistic outlooks for business

2 Bidding is set to become more competitive nationally. Melbourne is improving its meeting facilities, expanding the MCEC to improve its offering but so are Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and the Gold Coast and quite aggressively so. More than ever, Melbourne will have to find new experiences to offer to ensure that prized clients return

3 While Melbourne's booking numbers look healthy, Australia's ICCA ranking has slipped to 15th in the world, a direct correlation to Melbourne's performance together with Sydney as the biggest drivers of the industry. This could change if industry advocates get what they are calling for, a government national bid fund of up to A\$10 million (US\$7.6 million) annually to compete with other destinations receiving government funding to support their bids

{ Review central }

Donovans, Melbourne By Karen Yue



Pictures by Karen Yue

Family-run Donovan's restaurant on the St Kilda foreshore has been in business for the past 21 years but it never feels old, thanks to owner Gail Donovan's obsession with fresh, new interiors which she overhauls every six months.

With its location in a popular part of Melbourne and set against gleaming white sands and sparkling blue sea, the restaurant makes a lovely, relaxing spot for lunch during a post-conference city tour around the area.

Concept Donovan's restaurant feels like a beach house touched by Martha Stewart and inhabited by a loving couple that have travelled the world and collected plenty of souvenirs along the way. Furniture is large and plush, and the sandstone fireplace is enticing. The walls are adorned with happy photos of Gail and her family which includes her beloved dogs.

During my visit in February, the interior was a warm palette of orange and beige. The gents took on a baseball theme, complete with bats and baseball cards, while

the ladies went all industrial with cogs and metal boxes. Gail intends to go with chocolate and navy hues for the second half of the year, and to give a new design theme to the bathrooms.

Food-wise, Donovan's serves comfort food and the menu changes daily according to the freshest produce available in the market that day. However, 10 signature dishes loved by regular diners stay put on the menu. They include the old-fashioned chicken pie with mushrooms and vegetables in a milky gravy and a crispy pastry lid on top.

MICE application While full venue hire is not allowed – Gail insists on being able to welcome her regular diners always – there are two beautiful rooms set aside for private functions.

The sea-facing room with a small sandstone fireplace is the larger of the two, accommodating up to 20 guests seated. A smaller, more contemporary styled room on the other side can seat up to 12 guests. Room layout can be altered to suit the objective of the gathering. Menus can be customised.

Service Service staff are attentive and friendly, and Gail is always around to make diners feel at home. When it isn't too busy, Gail might even take you on a private tour of the restaurant bathrooms!



Contact

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Avoid an Oscar mix-up at your next event

CWT Meetings & Events identifies six simple steps to minimise errors in event execution, allowing your show to shine for all the right reasons



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In what was perhaps the biggest mishap in the Oscars' history, on February 26, movie *La La Land* was wrongly announced as the winner of the coveted Best Picture award instead of *Moonlight*. Human error, probability theory, celebrity distraction – regardless the mitigating explanation behind this mistake, the Oscars and the event organiser suffered an embarrassing hit to their reputation.

How can you avoid a similar blunder at your next event? We've got you covered with our top tips:

Planning

Attention to detail is key. Always take some time to check, double-check and even triple-check your work. Grab a colleague to take a second look at the project – we're often so consumed that we may not spot errors a fresh pair of eyes can easily identify.

We always recommend having a pre-planning stage when organising events all around the world. Have procedures in place to minimise the possibility of nasty surprises.

Rehearsals

Carry out full running orders and rehears-

als prior to the start of the event. This ensures that all stakeholders during the event, from your spokespeople to your event technicians, know what will happen and when.

Never assume anything and check every single detail during rehearsals. This is the time to answer any doubts and troubleshoot any possible problem.

Behaviour

When an issue does occur, event managers need to be trained in how to behave in order to maximise the best possible outcome.

They can own the moment (like Warren Beatty) or make good of it (like Jordan Horowitz who speedily and gracefully announced there was a mistake), while always remaining focused on the attendees' experience.

Communication

When the wrong winner was announced, reports suggested that there was confusion among the backstage crew at the Oscars for over two minutes before someone decided to communicate that error. In those two minutes, three thank-you speeches were finished by the time the mistake was made known.

Keeping people informed at all times minimises time wastage and ensures everybody is clear in their roles. Technology and event management tools can play a huge role here in enabling clear and instant communication with all stakeholders.

Partners

Any event organiser will need strong partnerships with their suppliers to ensure the event runs successfully. Trust and familiarity form the bedrock of such relationships.

Having capable partners on-site will enable you to focus on your objective – to provide the best possible service to your clients and deliver an excellent event experience.

Reflection

Knowledge is power. Reflecting on the event within your team and with external stakeholders helps exchange and amass knowledge that would ultimately be useful to your team and future events.

No matter how well (or badly!) an event went, it is essential to carry out a full debrief to reflect on what worked and what could be improved.

People can learn from mistakes, while best practices during the event can be shared as a successful case study for future events.

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Orchestrating a global undertaking

How does one coordinate a teambuilding and CSR event held simultaneously across 42 countries? With flexibility and precise plans, discovers **Barathi Narayan**



Event brief

Catalyst Global partners – the largest international network of corporate teambuilding professionals – joined in from 42 countries on a 24-hour corporate treasure hunt, an event that is the first of its kind worldwide. Go Give, a corporate social responsibility event, saw 50 teams completing checkpoint activities including video and photo challenges that benefitted projects under Buy1GIVE1, a global business giving initiative.

The event kicked off at sunrise in Auckland, New Zealand and concluded 24 hours later in Mount Maunganui, New Zealand.

Challenges

Given the global scale of the event, deciding on even a date and time when each of Catalyst Global's 42 partners could participate proved to be difficult.

"Invariably there would be one team that wouldn't be able to attend during work hours because of an event," said Catalyst Global's spokesperson, Esther Daniel.

Apart from the four set checkpoint activities, unique tasks had to be created for each team in locations of their choice, with activation codes having to be distributed the night before.

A further challenge was collating videos streaming in from the different countries where

Event

Go Give

Organiser

Catalyst Global

Venue

Worldwide in 42 countries

Date

December 12, 2016

Number of participants

313 participants split into 50 teams

the teams were located, after the event due to delays, which included the Turkey team's cameras being confiscated by police for safety checks.

Solutions

Catalyst Global had to compromise and settle on a date that excluded three partners. The decision was also made to have the event at sunrise in the respective countries, with certain exceptions as "it was far too cold and dark in

some countries to do right on sunrise, whereas in others like South Africa, sunrise was at 04.00," explained Daniel.

Communication with each of the teams was made easier through the appointment of a 'Go Give Go To' person who was also responsible for watching deadlines. The team leaders coordinated activity locations, collaborated with teammates to create a task related to their country that another team would have to go through, and distributed activation codes.

Each team also appointed videographers who took charge of sending videos back to Daniel and her team of two, who collated and compiled them.

"I was so tired but the excitement and joy of watching all the videos and photos of the teams coming in kept me going. It was like an addictive online game," said Daniel.

Key takeaways

Looking back on Go Give, Daniel said: "The benefits go beyond the joy of giving. When employees participate in an organised giving programme, there is usually a process of learning and engagement as a group.

"Appointing key people in each team enabled coordinated communication. (I'm) glad we set strict deadlines, (as) they helped us to complete the project."



Amway Taiwan's extreme production

Expanding production requirements and an order for an impressive fireworks display put Staging Connections' event planners to the test, writes **Rebecca Elliott**

Event brief

Amway Taiwan awarded 1,150 of its top achievers a five-day incentive programme to Sydney, culminating in an elaborate gala dinner at one of the city's newest venues, the Cutaway at Barangaroo.

According to Chris Lewis, event director at Staging Connections, the event brief was fairly standard as far as gala dinners go – entertainment, processions, a toast and reveal of the following year's destination, all within the allocated budget.

Staging Connections was awarded the contract based on two key factors – providing one point of contact from development through to event execution and its "warts and all" approach.

Lewis explained: "We look into all avenues of the concept and include things that won't work and advise the client."

Challenges

Staging Connections faced a number of challenges in executing the gala dinner. Being a brand new venue, the event was the first of its kind and size to be hosted at the Cutaway.

"It was a steep learning curve for all involved," said Lewis. "There were power restrictions, limited weight loading on the floor, ceiling and rigging points, and engineering that had not been signed off. There were also massive audio delays being such a large venue."

In addition, while guest numbers remained the same, the size of the event doubled in terms of production, projection, stage set, table styling and entertainment. While the original proposal estimated 70 performers, the final number grew to 130.

"Finding a solution for green rooms and travel distances from green rooms to back stage areas without being seen was a huge

Event	Amway Taiwan gala dinner
Organiser	Staging Connections
Venue	The Cutaway, Barangaroo, Sydney
Date	March 27, 2016
Number of participants	1,150

challenge. We could not fit another thing in the room," he recalled.

"Plus we had to drive seven Classic Mustangs on and off the stage, do a loop of the room and pick up the next lot of winners for the procession. It was extremely tight."

The final challenge was Amway Taiwan's request for fireworks that were "bigger and better than New Year's Eve". Lewis said gaining approval for a pyrotechnics display is difficult at the best of times and having that in a new location made for a whole new level of complexity.

Solutions

Lewis said working closely with the Barangaroo Delivery Authority (BDA) was key to the success of the event.

"For a new, untested venue there lots of teething problems," said Lewis. "But when they (BDA) raised concerns, they provided solutions for a work around."

Good pre-production, detailed meetings, and allowing his team to take ownership of their roles were also essential according to Lewis.

He said the audio solution was the hardest to get around, but they were able to create walls and draping to absorb some of the sound and minimise delay.

"The set up through to the final fireworks was delivered flawlessly."

Key takeaways

Lewis said allowing the client to get to know his team grew their trust in Staging Connections' ability to deliver the event.

He concluded: "Trust in yourself and the team you surround yourself with and great things happen. The client sees it as well, which leads to a more than successful event."





Jeremy Brook

Jeremy Brook

InterContinental Hong Kong has picked Jeremy Brook as director of sales & marketing. He has over 26 years of global sales and marketing experience in the luxury hotel and travel industry, spanning Europe, the US, China, Australia and South-east Asia.

Lothar Nessmann

Lothar Nessmann is now CEO of Pan Pacific Hotels Group (PPHG), taking over from Bernold Schroder who vacated the position in December 2016. Nessmann joins PPHG after a 20-year career with the Shangri-La Group, where he held senior management positions.

Louise Osborne

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre has picked Louise Osborne as its business development manager. She joins from Rendezvous Hotel Melbourne where she was associate director of sales and marketing.

Michelle Caporicci

Marriott International and Rajawali Group have made Michelle Caporicci managing director to lead the strategic direction and growth of The St. Regis Langkawi, The Westin Langkawi Resort and Spa, and The Langkawi International



Lothar Nessmann

Convention Centre. She was last regional vice president, sales and marketing for The Ritz Carlton, Asia-Pacific.

Nicolas Auger

JW Marriott Hotel Bangkok has appointed Nicolas Auger as director of sales and marketing. He joins from Washington DC where he was previously based, supporting 14 Marriott hotels in Paris as multi-properties director of sales.

Nicolas Bailet

Nicolas Bailet has joined The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore as executive assistant manager for F&B. He was last with the Bulgari Hotel London, where he was the director of F&B since 2013.

Prachoom Tantiprasertsuk

Dusit International has named Prachoom Tantiprasertsuk vice president of sales. She will oversee areas including MICE. She was previously general manager of Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket Resort.

Richard Greaves

Richard Greaves now leads Grand Hyatt Hong Kong as general manager. The Hyatt veteran was last general manager of Grand Hyatt Shanghai and area vice president for the Shanghai region.

Rick Aylett

Rick Aylett has moved



Michelle Caporicci

from the Atlantic group where he was group general manager for operations, to his new role with Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre as senior manager operations.



Prachoom Tantiprasertsuk

Sebastian Gassen

InterContinental Hong Kong's newest director of F&B is Sebastian Gassen, who was last with Mandarin Oriental Jakarta, where he headed F&B operations for two years.



Sebastian Gassen

Sumontha Urvois

Sumontha Urvois has been named executive assistant manager at Novotel Phuket Phokeethra. She last held the position of executive assistant manager at Grand Mercure Phuket Patong.

One minute with Sanghamitra Bose

American Express Global Business Travel's (GBT) Singapore team now has a new chief – Sanghamitra Bose, who leads as general manager. She rises to the position from her previous role as director, Global Client Group with the company

You've been with the American Express Company since 2003. What do you enjoy most about being associated with the company?

This company has afforded me many opportunities, here and abroad, including this latest as general manager. I'm proud of our company culture which is collaborative, and encourages respect for each individual. Our flexible working opportunities provide an environment where employees are empowered to design their own approach to delivering results for our business. Lastly, our origins as part of a bank holding company ensure we are heavily focused on compliance and risk management which is hugely beneficial to our clients.

What do you look most forward to in your new role?

I'm excited about the opportunity to lead Singapore, which is a key market for GBT, both within the region and globally. We are proud to support the business travel programmes of many multinationals based in Singapore, and I am also looking forward to supporting local Singaporean businesses as they grow and expand internationally. The US\$900 million capital invested into our business when we became a joint-venture has provided us with significant resources to invest in exceptional technology, and I look forward to sharing our solutions with customers.

The most underrated attribute a successful leader possesses is...

I believe the ability to encourage dissent and disruptive ideas is highly underrated. This requires a cultural shift which is driven from the top down. But in my experience, a culture of disruption leads to innovation the best ideas.



Des Pugson

The managing director of Banyan Tree Hotels & Resort tells **Karen Yue** it is high time his company chased the MICE dollar

What motivated Banyan Tree to pursue business events?

A lot of our hotels are developed with good event facilities but our focus has always been on the leisure business, aside from our city hotels of course. We realised that increasingly, planners are looking for venues new and different, and we started to see that we fit quite nicely into that need. We are a leisure-driven resort but there is no reason (why) we cannot translate all that into a business events environment.

To a lesser degree, that decision (to court business events) is also a realistic one. Resorts' peak days are typically Fridays and Saturdays, while Mondays to Thursdays are always a little bit soft. We could fill that gap with the right type of business events.

What types of events are you most keen on?

Meetings and incentives, but (what we want and can handle) differ by brands. Angsana is built for volume and so the meeting and banquet facilities are geared to larger groups. Think of hotels like Angsana Xi'an, which houses the brand's largest ballroom, over 1,000m² (720 pax banquet-style), and 400 keys. It is catered to the meetings market that has time for an offshoot activity, such as a visit to the Terracotta Army Museum.

Angsana Fuxian Lake also has an enormous ballroom (1,000-pax banquet).

On the Banyan Tree side, people used to say to me, "Oh, we can't do meetings there". Well, we can. We just don't do big meetings. We take executive retreats and

board meetings with 10 to 15 people. Delegates can hide away to brainstorm, which is easily done at any Banyan Tree property.

We can also build distractions into their programme if they wanted, such as CSR-type activities which are part of our *Meet for Good* offer. Our hotels are very active on the environmental side.

How are you communicating to corporate clients who may know your brands more for their leisure appeal?

This has become one of our key messages going forward for all our main accounts. We've engaged with planners and will continue to do so to build the awareness.

Will your intensified focus on events influence how future properties are built?

Our new hotels are designed to contain good meeting facilities that are in line with (current and future) market demand.

When we were designing Angsana Xi'an, I remember wondering, my god, were we designing too big a ballroom? But at the end of the day, I'm glad we did!

Its (Chinese pavilion-style) courtyard is beautiful and designed for unique banquets. The massive hot springs (part of the hotel) also provide a great incentive activity option.

Planners sometimes associate resorts with beaches. That's no longer the case. More and more resorts, particularly in China, are in the mountains. We're about to open a Banyan Tree in Jiuzhaigou (Sichuan), half-way up the mountainside. It is a beautiful location, and



and an Angsana in Turkey in 2019.

Your brands are seen as being luxurious. With the general business outlook being conservative, is it hard to get clients onboard?

I'm a positive thinker. When you tell me the economy is bad, I'll say as bad as it may be, there are always companies doing well. And the desire to recognise achievers in the company transcends economic limitations. As a (commercial entity) ourselves, we've got to hunt down that piece of business, find those customers that are doing well.

How does the AccorHotels Group alliance benefit your company?

We now have a great opportunity in business development because of AccorHotels' worldwide network, which a company our size can never have. This will raise our brand awareness worldwide.

We can leverage on AccorHotel's worldwide reservation system to get more visibility. Corporate accounts wanting to book hotels will see Banyan Tree brands and properties in the system.

AccorHotels' loyalty programme is also accessible to us. Their guests can redeem stays at our properties, which opens up another market for us. The cost of developing our own loyalty programme is prohibitively high.

Is there a risk of your management style, brand identity and products being influenced by the bigger partner?

AccorHotels' interest in Banyan Tree is because it is Banyan Tree. They want our level of hotels in their portfolio. They consider us the market leader in luxury resorts.

The hotel business is increasingly centred around a few massive, global players, so smaller players like ourselves have to tie up a relationship with a bigger partner which does not affect our brand and experience yet enable us to fly more flags around the world.

another perfect place to host high-level, do-not-disturb type of meetings.

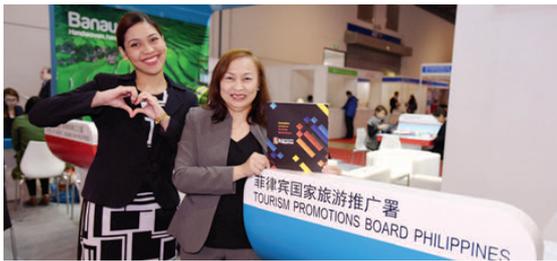
Can we expect to see more of your brands in non-beach locations then?

We still tend to be approached more for beach resorts than for hillside or mountainside resorts. The latter have a certain appeal though, and we are starting to get more requests from planners for something that's not by the beach.

Europe would be an interesting place for such properties, with so many hills and mountains around. We are getting closer to Europe, with Banyan Tree Tamouda Bay opening last year in Morocco, a 20-minute ferry ride from Spain. We will open Angsana Corfu (Greece) in March 2018,

Warmer relations

Held from March 20-23, this year's **IT&CM China** saw 720 MICE-savvy exhibitors from 288 organisations and companies interact with 540 buyers. The event also played host to numerous forums, luncheons, and conferences. By **Caleb Richard Lai**



What's next?

This June *TTGmice* checks out various technology available today to make event management a little easier and delegate engagement a little stronger. The issue also spotlights the latest business event developments in Singapore, Taiwan, Macau and India. Don't miss it!

SECRET ESCAPES FOR SUCCESSFUL EVENTS

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