

April 2019

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Tailor-made subventions

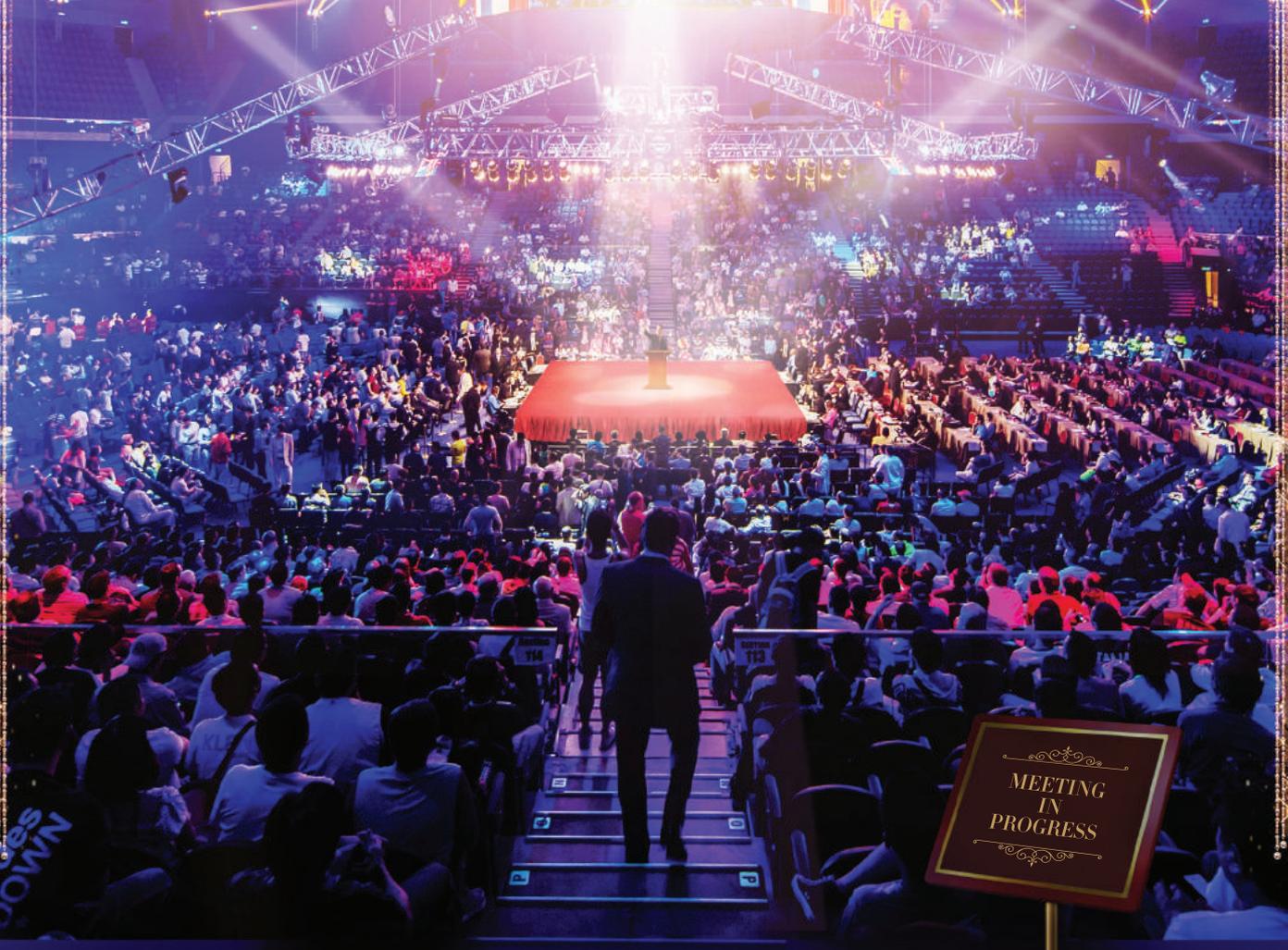
Destinations are offering distinctively different subvention benefits to draw corporate groups, but they all share one common thread – tailored support services that promise a win-win relationship for both parties



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Subvention matters

All around the world, destinations are in stiff competition to attract international meetings to their cities. City officials are well aware that it's no longer enough to have just good business events facilities or hotel accommodation, or rely on the destination's offerings to appeal to meeting planners and corporate decision makers.

What else can destinations do to sway meeting planners and organisers' decisions to stage their next event in their city? This is where subventions come in.

Countless reports have shown that proactive support from the government can strengthen the country's business meetings brand, and position the destination as a leading business events destination.

Subvention packages can be a vital instrument to attract more international events, especially for associations meetings, as association planners and executives are facing greater difficulty in securing funds.

Direct cash subsidies are usually cited by meeting planners and organisers as having the most significant form of subvention support, ahead of discount on venue costs and other assistance.

In Asia-Pacific, where it's increasingly costly to hold events, subventions can certainly help to defray costs in expensive cities like Singapore, Hong Kong and Seoul to edge up their proposition.

However, assistance needs not only be financial but can come in other forms of meaningful in-kind support to international associations.

Offering cash rebates are a common way for regional tourism and convention bureaus to attract companies and associations, but the variety of non-cash and cash-equivalent services, ranging from complimentary cultural performances to free public transportation passes to discounts on advertising spaces in airports, are definitely worth a look at.

Look no further than our April cover story on Tailor-made Subventions (pages 12-17), which details the numerous subvention benefits available for corporate groups in Asia-Pacific.

But beyond subventions, what else holds the key to influencing the decisions of meeting planners? Are subventions a must for the meeting industry, or is it the least of your consideration? If subventions are not offered, what else can destinations do to stay competitive?

We would love to hear more from you.



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INFINITE MEETING POSSIBILITIES IN RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA



Equarius Hotel Ballroom

Crowned as Asia's premier MICE destination, the award-winning Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) Singapore presents unique and flexible meeting spaces, promising delegates an unforgettable experience.

The sprawling 49-hectare development offers innovative and versatile venues for intimate or large events. The meeting spaces are complemented by luxury hotels, celebrity chef restaurants and outstanding entertainment.

ONE-OF-A-KIND VENUES

With its unique and vibrant event spaces, RWS provides planners the flexibility to transform and adapt the space for any kind of meetings or events.

With a ceiling height of 11 metres and 6,000m² of unobstructed space, the **Resorts World Ballroom** which reigns as the largest column-free ballroom in South-east Asia surpasses many venues in terms of grandeur and magnificence. The newly renovated **Equarius Hotel Ballroom**, which features natural daylight will wow guests with a scenic view of the tropical forest surrounding the hotel. Both ballrooms provide the flexibility to be divided further, ideal for any customised event.

Apart from ballrooms and function rooms, RWS is well-renowned for its extraordinary venues. Imagine transporting your delegates back into time in the 1950's New York Street

at **Universal Studios Singapore (USS)** with event spaces that can stretch the entire park. When the sun comes down, the entire New York Street zone, which has a 1,500 standing capacity, is available for exclusive use.

Planners can consider throwing an exclusive banquet in **S.E.A. Aquarium** against a panoramic backdrop of swimming manta rays and other exotic marine animals. Perfect for any event, the gallery there can accommodate up to 450 pax in a cocktail setting.

A tropical paradise awaits delegates at **Adventure Cove Waterpark** where they can even forge bonds amidst thrilling waterslides, drifting down Adventure River and snorkelling among 20,000 colourful reef fishes. This exhilarating spot can be booked for night events as well.

For a quieter retreat, opt for **The Royal Albatross**. This four-masted ship is available



From left: S.E.A. Aquarium Ocean Dome; Celebrated Chefs Richard van Oostenbrugge and Thomas Groot; Universal Studios Singapore™

for charter in Asia, offering breathtaking views of the Singapore coastline while guests can wine and dine whilst enjoying the sea breeze.

CELEBRITY CHEF RESTAURANTS

There's nowhere better to complete the MICE experience as you treat your delegates to a unforgettable gastronomic adventure in RWS. This resort is home to a bevy of celebrity chef restaurants, nostalgic local flavours, and an outstanding repertoire of international cuisines from Chinese and Japanese, to Mediterranean-Californian and Italian.

Be sure to check out table65, newly opened by celebrated chefs Richard van Oostenbrugge and Thomas Groot of the critically acclaimed 212 in Amsterdam.

With this vibrant plethora of extraordinary venues and facilities, delegates are promised a fun and unforgettable meeting experience which can be made possible only in RWS.



Website: www.rwsentosa.com
Email: mice@rwsentosa.com



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■ Snapshots

@ttgmice



Caroline's House is The St. Regis Singapore's newest event space. The minimalist, bright and airy space can hold up to 160 people banquet-style, or about 280 cocktail-style, suitable for high-level meetings, company gala dinners and luxury showcases.
January 22



Months after establishing a second events team to power up its pursuit of international business events, Tourism Fiji has moved to launch an annual Asia Roadshow in Malaysia and Singapore.
January 23



■ PERSPECTIVES

Shaped by ever-changing market demands and destination challenges, Asia's business events scene is evolving faster than ever. Mikael Svensson, senior vice president of hospitality management company Louis T Collection, shares his projections and the changes he thinks it'll bring



TTG Asia's editor Xinyi Liang-Pholsena gets onto the glass deck of the new Mahanakhon SkyWalk, 78 floors above the city of Bangkok. Event planners can negotiate to use the space for private gatherings.
December 21, 2018



Kabuki performers entertain delegates at the reception after Sakura International's Decennial Meeting at the Tokyo International Forum on December 19.
December 20, 2018



■ INTELLIGENCE

Biodegradable meeting spaces, artificial intelligence and serendipity will all play a significant role in the future of meetings and business events, according to PCMA's *Trends of 2019: The Future of Meetings & Events* study

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What's happening



April 3-4
WTTTC Global Summit,
Seville, Spain



April 28 - May 1
Arabian Travel Market,
Dubai, UAE



May 21-23
IMEX Frankfurt,
Frankfurt, Germany



We love

Balloons Over Bagan soars above new state

Balloons Over Bagan, under Myanmar-based Memories Group, has launched a new hot-air balloon flight in Kayah State.

Hot-air balloon rides in Loikaw take off at sunrise on a daily basis throughout the year and can carry six to eight passengers per flight. Air time lasts one to two hours, and balloons will reach a maximum altitude of 10,000 feet. Flights cost US\$300 per person. Private charters for groups up to eight persons can also be requested.

Balloon Safaris Loikaw is the fourth option hot-air balloon adventure from the tour operator, following Bagan, Inle Lake and a two-day “balloon safari” in Shan State.

Situated on a 914m-high plateau surrounded by mountains and rice paddies in eastern Myanmar, Loikaw is home to ethnic groups including the Kayan, whose “long-necked” women are famed for the brass coils around their necks and colourful traditional costumes.



Nikko Hotels announces new opening in Bangkok

Hotel Nikko Bangkok at BTS Thonglor has opened its doors at 27 Sukhumvit Soi 55 in Thailand.

Located within walking distance from the BTS Skytrain Thonglor station, the Japanese luxury hotel boasts 301 guestrooms and suites, including 10 extended stay rooms featuring a kitchenette. Japanese bathrooms are a feature of the guestrooms.

The hotel features four F&B outlets – Hishou Japanese restaurant, The Oasis all-day dining restaurant, Curve 55 lobby lounge and The Pool Bar. Breakfast choices include an international breakfast at The Oasis, or a full Japanese breakfast at Hishou.

As the group traditionally serves a mostly Japanese clientele with around 90 per cent of the guest profile from the corporate sector, meetings and events will be a major component of Hotel Nikko Bangkok.

Aside from the Fuji Grand Ballroom that can host 1,250 persons cocktail-style, there will also be eight small- and medium-sized function rooms together with an outdoor terrace and balcony which takes the total meeting space to over 1,800m².

Capella goes to Sanya

Singapore-headquartered Capella Hotel Group has opened the Capella Sanya – styled by architects Jean-Michel Gathy and Bill Bensley – on China’s tropical island of Hainan.

The beachfront resort boasts 190 rooms, suites and villas. Room sizes range from the 88m² oceanfront or garden rooms, up to the one-to-four bedroom pool villas measuring from 170-816m².

The four-bedroom Oceanfront Pool Villa is the largest residence of the resort, and comes complete with its own swimming pool, jacuzzi, outdoor bar, massage pavilion, sunken lawn, barbecue pavilion, garage, kitchen and staff accommodation.

Health and wellness facilities on-site include a gym with its own private 125m² heated lap pool, two tennis courts, and a 4,020m² Auriga Wellness spa complex complete with Hainan’s first Moroccan bath and Snow Cabin. There are four dining options as well, ranging from the Chinese fine-dining restaurant Lan Ting, to the tropical pool and beach restaurant The Dempsey.

For events and meetings, the resort offers over 2,000m² of meeting and function facilities, including a 676m² ballroom that can cater for up to 520 guests. There’s also several indoor and outdoor venues such as the 255m² Romance Lawn.



- ADVERTORIAL -

IHG opens in Bangladesh's capital

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has opened InterContinental Dhaka at a prestigious address in the Bangladeshi capital and close to the downtown business district.

The hotel offers 226 guestrooms, including 25 suites, a Club Lounge, a temperature-controlled swimming pool overlooking Ramna park, a spa offering signature therapies, and a variety of dining options. For meeting planners, InterContinental Dhaka houses two ballrooms and seven spacious meeting rooms, all equipped with the latest audiovisual technology.



A closer look at indigenous art

Red Desert Dreamings has partnered with Pan Pacific Melbourne to open a gallery on level four of the hotel. The art gallery specialises in Aboriginal art from the Central and Western desert regions, and holds both contemporary and traditional work, from the old masters of the Aboriginal art movement to up-and-coming second-generation artists.

The space can also be hired for corporate functions, ranging from small cocktail parties for up to 120 pax to intimate sit-down dinners for 34 guests in a long-table configuration. Business events groups can also make bookings for talks, or go on a guided tour around the gallery.



Hot deals

Sands Resorts Macao

Sands Resorts Macao has launched a new 2019 offer, Meetings Beyond Imagination, which features an array of value-added benefits.

The offer is also extended to delegates, where those who attend events booked under Meetings Beyond Imagination are entitled to a range of dining, shopping and leisure perks available exclusively at Sands



The Parisian Macao's Ballroom

Resorts Macao.

Event organisers who book 25 to 100 rooms will be able to enjoy one offer, and this scales up to four offers for bookings of 201 rooms or more. Offers are five per cent off the master bill; one complimentary room for every 25 rooms booked; one complimentary room upgrade for every 25 rooms booked; and 50 per cent off the Cotai Water Jet ferry ticket.

Meanwhile, extra offers extended to event organisers and delegates include 20 per cent off audio-visual equipment rental; 50 per cent off selected in-house entertainment; 50 per cent off Gondola Rides and Eiffel Tower Experience; 15 per cent off cocktail receptions at selected venues; and 20 per cent off at selected restaurants.

This offer is valid for meetings held between now and December 18, 2020, and the booking period is now through December 31, 2019.

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24 September 2019 | Bangkok, Thailand

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Certification of exhibition venues are next in ASEAN committee plan

By Mimi Hudoyo

Following the adoption of standards for hotel meeting rooms at ATF last year, the ASEAN committee on MICE competency standards is making further progress on certification with the focus now turned to exhibition venues.

The standard for exhibition venues is part of the ASEAN MICE Venue Standards (AMVS), whose committee is led by Thailand to focus on hotel meeting rooms, exhibition and convention venues, and public areas (special events venue).

Supawan Teerarat, senior vice president strategic business development & innovation, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), told *TTGmice*: “This year we would like the ministers to adopt and endorse the standards for exhibition venues so that we can start the (implementation) of the category in the region.

“We’ve had the meeting for the second draft of the exhibition venue standard last November and the 10 countries have come to an agreement (following adjustments to make them suitable for application in South-east Asia),” she shared.

Once the draft receives ministerial endorsement, regional NTOs will be invited



Supawan: this year's aim is to ensure exhibition venues in South-east Asia are AMVS-certified

to Thailand to receive auditor’s training of the exhibition venues. The auditors would then return to their respective countries to begin the auditing and certifying process, with the first exhibition venues expected to be certified in 2020, added Supawan.

Having certified venues based on common standards will be useful in courting international event organisers to the region, she stressed.

“The difficulty for South-east Asia at the moment is (to meet the needs of) organis-

ers from Europe and the US looking for venues with high standards... Safety and security is the number one (concern), as well as accessibility and facilities within the venue, while physical, technical and services (also need to be addressed).”

Additionally, South-east Asian NTOs are developing standards for MICE professionals, through a working group led by Indonesia.

Ani Insani, head of the delegations for the Indonesian NTO, said: “We have developed the competency standards for MICE and events professionals from front liners to managers, and the ASEAN Secretariat has published the full set of them.”

The plan is to add the MICE and events professionals category to the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP), which currently houses hotels, restaurants as well as tours and travel standards.

Ani said: “To add the MICE professional standard to the ACCSTP, we need to have all member countries’ endorsements. The Indonesia Minister of Tourism has sent the letters to his counterparts in ASEAN member countries, with Myanmar, Singapore and Brunei signed so far.”

SingEx reveals plans that take on a collaborative approach

With the renewal of its management of the Singapore Expo Convention & Exhibition Centre (Singapore Expo), SingEx Holdings will shift its focus to form more collaborative and consultative partnerships with its clients, as well as craft “a suite of solutions”, said its CEO.

In an interview with *TTGmice*, SingEx Holdings CEO, Aloysius Arlando, said: “You can have a range of services, but it’s how you pick and choose the service that (anticipates and meets) the unmet needs of a customer.”

He revealed that SingEx will “have some investment” channelled into building this area of its business, about which more information will be revealed at a later date.

Besides providing exhibition space, SingEx is also the organiser of the Singapore FinTech Festival.

On the diversification of SingEx’s portfolio, Arlando shared: “As a product, Singapore Expo started off with an exhibition focus. We need to bear in mind what the changing needs and expectations are of attendees and organisers. It’s not just about a space for play, but it has to move towards a solutions focus.”

When questioned about the renewal of SingEx’s management contract, he said: “A key point that we hope worked in our favour was a very clear demonstration of our understanding of the market dynamics and trends, and more importantly, who our customers are.”

Under the renewed agreement, SingEx continues to operate Singapore Expo for up to 10 years from January this year. – Pamela Chow

Arlando: plans have been charted



Young Skal initiatives ramp up in Singapore

With manpower shortage continuing to be a pertinent challenge in Singapore’s hospitality sector, Skal International Singapore is ramping up its outreach via Young Skal initiatives.

In December, the association kicked off the first in a series of events targeting young career professionals, and it also announced that it was setting up a Young Skal executive committee in the city state.

The inaugural Young Skal mixer in Singapore was a casual affair that enticed participation from young professionals with opportunities to learn the art of making cocktails, as well as for networking and mentoring. More of such events will take place over 2019.

“The Young Skal committee will organise their own events for the year and generate more members. These shall be after-office fun events at trendy and hip venues, (and act as) a platform for networking opportunities in a more relaxed manner,” revealed Tony Cousens, president, Skal International Singapore. – Yixin Ng

Indonesia's MICE sector receives boost with new tradeshow

By Tiara Maharani

Jakarta is gearing up to host a new international B2B travel mart for the business events sector.

Named Indonesia International MICE Expo (IIME), the event will take place on May 2 and 3 at The Kasablanka in Jakarta. IIME is expected to attract 100 sellers, 100 hosted buyers (both local and international), and 1,000 trade visitors.

IIME is the brainchild of Alcor MICE – the owner of The Kasablanka hall – in collaboration with RajaMICE, with the aim of supporting the Ministry of Tourism's efforts to grow the country's business events industry.

Jim Tehusjarana, director of Alcor Prime (holding company of Alcor MICE), said: "The number of business events travellers to Indonesia may not be as many as leisure travellers, but the length of visit and the amount of money spent by business events travellers is (appeal-

ing). The government is committed to increasing (the arrival numbers of such) quality visitors, and has set a target of two million corporate travellers to Indonesia in 2019."

There is still much room for growth for the business events sector in Indonesia, he opined, adding that IIME could trigger the advancement of the industry by providing inspiration to event planners.

Panca Sarungu, founder of RajaMICE as well as chairman of IIME's organising committee, shared: "The number of hosted buyers may be small (compared to other regional MICE marts), but we ensure that these buyers are the ones (who can bring) hundreds of delegates or incentive groups to Indonesia."

Buyers and trade visitors selected by the committee will mostly come from corporations that engage in banking, manufacturing, insurance, and business events, Panca added. The number of



The Kasablanka

international buyers will be around 30 to 50 people.

Besides having a B2B meeting component, IIME will also include business events clinics, networking sessions, as well as site inspections and post tour programmes for buyers.

In brief

MACEOS welcomes executive director

Ho Yoke Ping, who was part of the founding team of the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau, is now the new executive director of the Malaysian Association of Convention & Exhibition Organisers & Suppliers (MACEOS).

She will inject fresh perspectives and more than two decades of industry experience into the long-standing association of 29 years. Her role will entail enhancing the profile of MACEOS in the business events industry through strategic plans.

KTO partners Marriott

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) has signed a co-marketing agreement with Marriott International to drive international corporate meetings to the country. As part of the agreement, KTO will be participating in Marriott's overseas roadshows and exhibitions, and carry out programmes for key decision makers. KTO also has plans to expand the partnership with other hotel chains should this prove to be a success.

PCEB develops online MICE database

Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB) has rolled out a new online system for Penang's industry players to submit data on events taking place in the city.

Named Vision Insight, the system was initiated and developed by PCEB. Data collected will be analysed by PCEB for its annual Business Events industry review.

Touted as the first of its kind in Malaysia for business events, the online portal is accessible on Google Chrome through visioninsight.my and requires a registered email and password.

Green light given for new Wellington space



Wellington Conference and Exhibition Centre

The city of Wellington in New Zealand will soon welcome a new Conference and Exhibition Centre (WCEC).

Construction on the 18,000m² venue, which will feature 10,000m² of convention space spread across its top two floors and a 1,650m² ground-floor exhibition gallery to accommodate touring exhibitions, is set to start next year.

The WCEC will enable the city to put in bids for larger international conferences, and put the city on equal footing with Auckland and Christchurch, where both have conference venues under construc-

tion, as well as Australia, where its major cities already have purpose-built convention facilities.

Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency (WREDA)'s general manager, regional development destination and attraction, David Perks, said the business events market is currently worth around NZ\$240 million (US\$162 million) to the city, and the WCEC "will take things to a new level".

He added: "Business event visitors each spend on average NZ\$299 a day compared to non-business event visitors who spend NZ\$190 each a day. That spending gets spread across the city on things such as accommodation, transport, eateries and bars, and in the retail sector."

Moreover, the new convention centre is slated to host 111 new events annually, delivering nearly 149,000 new delegate days to Wellington, stated a report by Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL). This represents a 16 per cent growth from its current position. The space also expects to attract over 272,000 annual visitors, generating an additional NZ\$3.8 million in direct visitor spend.

Making sense of the NDC

While the NDC programme sounds good on paper, the Asian corporate travel community desires greater clarity as it is still finding it a complex concept, writes **Caroline Boey**



Industry players discuss NDC's implications on the corporate travel booking process. From left: Troovo's Kurt Knackstedt, Delta Air Lines' Samson Lim, Accenture's Amarnath Lal Das, Sabre Asia Pacific's Todd Arthur, and American Express Global Business Travel's Sanghamitra Bose

New Distribution Capability (NDC) – a travel industry-supported programme launched by IATA to transform how air products are sold to corporations and business travellers by addressing the industry's distribution limitations – took off in 2012.

Three years later, IATA delivered the first set of official standards for product differentiation and time-to-market, access to full and rich air content, and a transparent shopping experience.

According to IATA, the NDC Standard is aimed at enhancing communication between airlines and TMCs and is open to any third party, intermediary, IT provider or non-IATA member to implement. Airlines, TMCs, corporate buyers, GDSs and other technology players contribute to the NDC Standard.

This collaborative approach is meant to ensure that the supporting models are functional, and can be used by all regardless of business focus,

geographic location, size, target markets and individual commercial policies.

Structured around distribution-related functions, the NDC Standard aims to address the end-to-end airline distribution process and deliver enhanced customer experiences.

But at an ACTE Education Forum held in Singapore last October, speakers on a panel discussion described NDC as “complex”, raised questions like “who takes that cost”, but also saw the “opportunity” it provided.

Sanghamitra Bose, general manager, Singapore and Thailand, American Express Global Business Travel, said: “Amex sees it as an opportunity to produce content like you see in leisure travel and how it is received across channels. The question is how to deliver NDC to business travellers in a cost-effective manner and how travel disruptions can be handled.”

For Amarnath Lal Das, manager, country travel management, Accenture,

“To go Beyond NDC will have a huge impact on the global space.”

Todd Arthur
Vice president,
Sabre Asia Pacific

NDC provided a new revenue stream for the airlines but could become a cost for the corporate. He questioned who would be the cost bearer.

There was the complexity issue when it comes to providing NDC content versus traditional content, Todd Arthur, vice president, Sabre, Asia Pacific, said. He commented that of the 30 Asian airlines on its system, only 30 per cent had the right functions for ancillary products.

Bose shared that Amex wanted to be prepared for content to be distributed via new and different channels and believed NDC was getting close to the “end-to-end booking and servicing experience”.

She admitted: “There are lots of solutions but there is also the cost challenge for airlines to allocate resources.”

Das expressed the need for one central payment card, without having to split expenses with a personal card for reimbursement, adding that this remained a challenge.

Among international airlines, Delta Air Lines attained NDC Level 3 certification last September, enabling it to deliver a consistent retail experience for customers regardless of booking channel.

According to its general manager-China sales, BSP and Digital Agencies, Samson Lim, the carrier was committed to providing access to all fares across different channels and partners.

Meanwhile, Sabre has expanded its Beyond NDC programme by entering into strategic relationships with additional airlines and agencies. This new NDC Level 3 certification is in addition to Sabre's previously announced NDC Level 3 capability as an IT provider.

Arthur shared: “To go Beyond NDC will have a huge impact on the global space.”

On whether the industry has reached a “tipping point” or is a “slow burn”, Das said there is still no right content from a single source now.

“Corporate travel is dynamic. What if a business traveller changes to a different seat, does he pay more for the same seat? Corporates will have to negotiate with the airlines and relook travel policy to make it seamless.”

The panel concluded that the NDC conversation was not “regional yet”, that B2C solutions could impact B2B corporate travel, and that the corporate travel sector was in a “confused state and more clarity is needed”.



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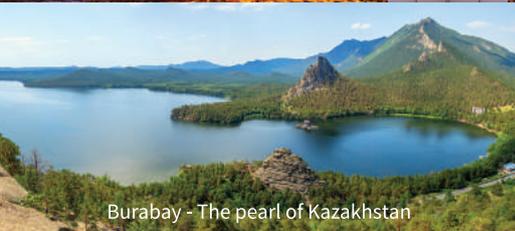
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Tailor-made subventions

Destinations are offering distinctively different subvention benefits to draw corporate groups, but they all share one common thread – tailored support services that promise a win-win relationship for both parties

These Asia-Pacific destinations are offering a slew of customised subvention schemes, ranging from local culture immersions to tailored financial support services, but all are designed with the aim of attracting more corporate groups this year.

AUSTRALIA

Tourism Australia announced an A\$12 million (US\$8.7 million) Bid Fund Program (BFP) in March 2018 through which event organisers may apply for subvention programmes.

The fund prioritises events that are aligned with Tourism Australia's business events strategy and trade sectors of national significance to Australia such as Food and Agribusiness; Advanced Manufacturing; Infrastructure; Resources and Energy; International Health and Services and Disruptive Technologies.

The programme can be used to help with actual event costs such as accommodation, venue hire and transport. It will not cover administrative, logistics or marketing cost for bids, marketing collateral, delegate acquisition or travel costs for organisers. Submissions must be for a minimum of A\$100,000 (US\$70,970; excluding GST).

International association events and exhibitions must demonstrate that their

event will attract at least 500 international visitors while incentive events require a minimum of 1,000 international visitors and/or bring an economic value of over A\$3 million dollars.

There are no deadlines to apply for the programme, but the BFP can only support bids where a decision will be taken by June 30, 2021.

Funds will only be released after contracts are finalised and will be provided in instalments, and are subject to the delivery of key performance metrics as outlined in BFP contracts. – **Adelaine Ng**

HONG KONG

The Hong Kong Rewards! programme

offered by Hong Kong Tourism Board's Meetings & Exhibitions Hong Kong (MEHK) offers attractive privileges to meeting and incentive groups, as well as convention delegates.

MEHK has been working with hotels, airlines, attractions and travel industry partners for a number of years, and together, they continue to create new and exciting incentives.

Value-added rewards include complimentary cocktail receptions; dining and attractive shopping discounts at Hong Kong Disneyland; "Fun & Feast" offers at Ocean Park Hong Kong; "Party on Us" at Hong Kong Jockey Club's Happy Wednesday carnival-themed events; extra baggage allowance; and meet-and-greet services at the Hong Kong International Airport by

Right: The Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre against the Hong Kong skyline. Below: Parliament House in Canberra, Australia



Tommy Ahrens/Shutterstock



FriedMAGE/Shutterstock

Cover story

Cathay Pacific and Cathay Dragon.

In an effort to showcase Hong Kong's colourful past, MEHK is also offering an array of complimentary cultural performances for event dinners or airport arrival welcomes.

For group sizes of 100 or more, event planners may choose between traditional lion and dragon dances; acrobatic and kungfu shows or "three cultural extravaganzas" featuring Chinese rain-bow calligraphy, Chinese knotting and flour doll making. The art of face-changing, Chinese quartet performances or Chinese drum shows are also available for groups of at least 300 people. – **Prudence Lui**

JAPAN

Organisations planning incentive group tours in Japan can benefit from various services from the Japan Convention Bureau (JCB), a division of the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO).

This support includes access to online resources and information from regional JNTO offices throughout the world. The JCB also coordinates support provided by cities and regions nationwide in which planners have an interest.

Prior to choosing a destination for the incentive trip – and with at least one international destination still in contention – planners can receive partial support for international flights to Japan and domestic transportation from international airports to destination cities.

Eligibility depends on the size of the incentive group, number of room nights and experience chosen in Japan.

Long-stay or large Japan-bound incentive groups that apply to their local JNTO office one month in advance of their visit to Japan can enjoy a welcome greeting or token Japanese gift such as a fan during their trip, provided by the JCB. Guidebooks and maps can also be provided to all groups.

While the JCB does not offer any other specific support, it does provide advice for all kinds of business events and considers other support on a case-by-case basis, mostly related to assisting in bids rather than hosting events. – **Kathryn Wortley**

MACAU

Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) has consolidated its subvention support programmes into one programme called the Convention & Exhibition Financial Support Programme.

It assists with bidding and hosting business events in Macau. The application process has been streamlined to cater for confirmed events and for potential events to take place in Macau.

For confirmed meetings, IPIM offers financial support towards accommodation; F&B; meeting packages, marketing promotions; simultaneous interpretation; ground transportation; on-site inspection support and more.

Eligibility is dependent on the size of each group. A minimum of 100 participants or more for general conventions, and 200 participants or more for international conventions is required.

In terms of potential meetings, conventions or exhibitions, Site Inspection Support will be provided if Macau has been shortlisted as one of the potential destinations. This includes support for round-trip transportation to and from Macau, local transportation support and a maximum of three nights of local hotel accommodation for four key individuals in each group. – **Prudence Lui**

PHILIPPINES

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) – the marketing arm of the Philippine Department of Tourism – offers customised incentive experiences that give back to the community; a network of contacts; site inspections; marketing promotions; airport welcomes and complimentary dining for groups.

Based on the nature of each business event or the preferences of incentive groups, TPB can also curate a host of CSR and culturally immersive experiences in the Philippines.

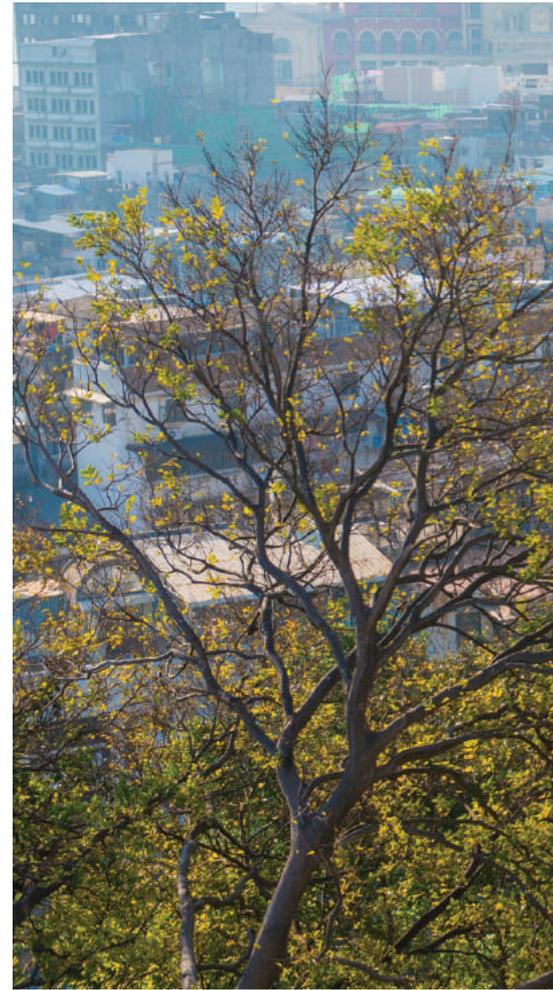
Through these imaginative experiences, delegates are given the opportunity to interact with indigenous peoples, volunteer at PWD centres; build houses and schools; engage in teambuilding activities using local martial arts known as "Arnis"; and learn survival techniques in the jungle.

Events may also be held in exotic island locations, where Chinese, Spanish and Filipino-themed parties can be hosted to showcase the country's culture and heritage. – **Rosa Ocampo**

SINGAPORE

The Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau (SECB), which champions the growth of the business events industry under the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), offers a number of incentive schemes for organisers.

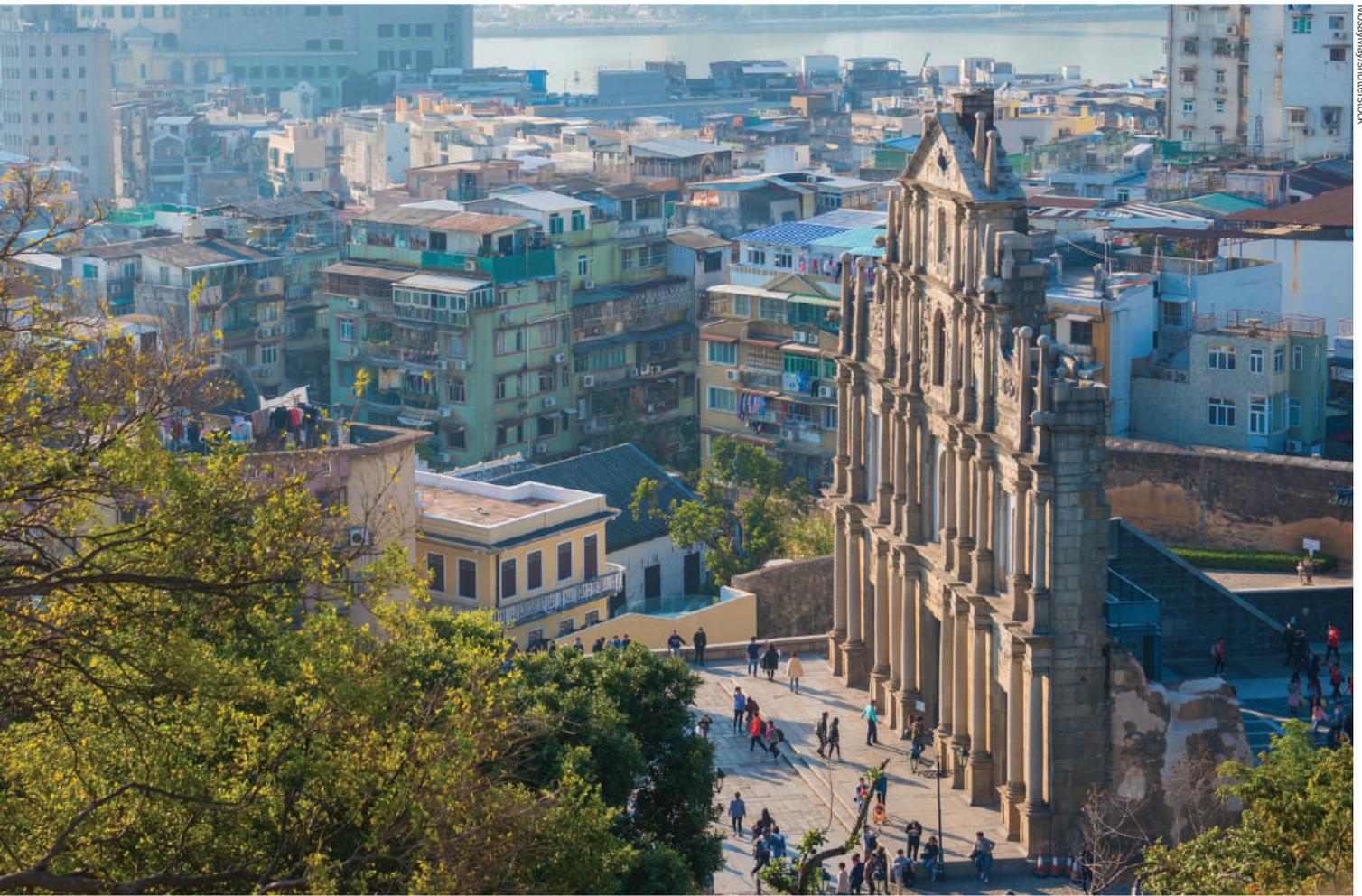
The Business Events in Singapore



Clockwise from above: St Paul's Cathedral in Macau; Metro Manila's business district in the Philippines; Tokyo Tower, Japan



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Cover story

(BEiS) scheme offers customised support that may include funding; facilitation in securing venues; introductions with leading government agencies, local associations and business partners; as well as marketing; and publicity support. Funding support is also given through the BEiS scheme on fulfilment of its evaluation criteria and deliverables.

The successful SMAP (Singapore MICE Advantage Programme), now in its second phase, is a partnership between the SECB, Changi Airport Group, Singapore Airlines, Grab and JetQuay.

SMAP was designed to provide business events organisers and delegates greater value such as savings on air tickets, enhanced event planning and delegate experiences, financial grants and discounts on advertising spaces in Changi Airport, among other benefits. It is intended to complement the BEiS incentive scheme.

Finally, INSPIRE (In Singapore Incentives & Rewards) is an incentive programme that leverages Singapore's unique attractions to curate value-added experiences for meetings and incentives. These are centred on dining, entertainment, attractions and thematic tours. INSPIRE is currently available in Europe & the Americas, China, India and the Middle East. – **Pamela Chow**

SOUTH KOREA

The Korea MICE Bureau (KMB), under the Korea Tourism Organization, offers a range of support for corporate meetings, corporate incentive programmes and international conventions held in the country.

Corporate meetings and incentive groups that hope to qualify for subvention must stay for at least two nights, and have at least 10 foreigners in attendance. For corporate meetings, delegates must convene for at least four hours. Other terms apply.

Subvention comes in the form of arrival support services for VIPs, sponsorship of performances, tourist experiences, destination-specific souvenirs and entry to tourist attractions, as well as grants for a welcome event, cultural experience or teambuilding programme.

The range of subventions available to the group grows with the number of delegates in attendance. For instance, a corporate incentive group of 10-49 attendees can enjoy a complimentary souvenir, while a group with 3,000 delegates and more will benefit from specialised support and VIP arrival support.

For international conventions, KMB dishes out hosting and bidding support,



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Clockwise from left: Aerial view of Singapore's CBD; Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok, Thailand; Jiufen Old Street in Taipei, Taiwan; SM Town in Seoul, South Korea

with the extent of subvention dependent on the size of the qualified event. Hosting support includes an official banquet and coffee break, cultural programmes and tours, cultural performances and souvenirs, while bidding support includes complimentary site inspections that come with accommodation and airfare sponsorship, as well as liaison assistance.

Large-scale international conventions stand to enjoy premium hosting support, such as having an allocated MICE Concierge Desk and exclusive immigration checkpoint at Incheon International Airport, event app development, and more.

To qualify, the convention must be hosted by an international organisation or affiliate with a minimum of 100 foreign attendees, and run for at least three days. Conventions hosted by an organisation that is not a member of an international body must have a minimum of 150 foreign attendees and a programme lasting at least two days. It must also meet UIA and ICCA conference standards.

– Karen Yue

TAIWAN

Taiwan's MICE project office MEET TAIWAN, sanctioned by the Bureau of Foreign Trade, has a Business Events in Surprising Taiwan (BEST) Rewards Program to provide incentives and support to overseas groups coming to Taiwan for corporate meetings and incentive travel.

BEST Rewards' Partner Package offers incentives such as premium local products, inspection subsidies, and complimentary tour passes. Rewards are scaled according to event size and type, and are stacked for planners and agencies that rebook events in Taiwan.

Groups of 50 people and more who stay for at least two consecutive nights can benefit from the Taiwan Tourism Bureau's administrative assistance, as well as various benefits like welcome gifts and a cultural show valued at up to

NT\$150,000 (US\$4,800).

Groups from target countries under the government's New Southbound Policy that stay more than three consecutive nights can enjoy customised support and more financial rewards.

Various city governments in Taiwan also provide individual incentive programmes for different MICE events.

– Pamela Chow

THAILAND

The latest subvention schemes offered by the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) are the ASEAN MaxiMICE programme, and Fly and Meet Double Bonus - Redefined campaign.

ASEAN MaxiMICE, created in partnership with Thai Airways International (TG), is aimed at business events travellers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore.

Privileges are offered across three tiers – Silver for 40-99 delegates, Gold for 100-149 delegates, and Platinum for 150 and more delegates. Qualified groups can enjoy a range of benefits, such as a dedicated immigration lane, cultural performances, additional baggage allowance, pre-assigned group seating, and a BTS Card for skytrain travel.

To qualify, groups must arrive in Thailand on a TG flight, and stay for at least two nights.

TCEB has also teamed up for the second year running with Bangkok Airways for the Fly and Meet Double Bonus - Redefined campaign, targeted at corporate travellers from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV).

Benefits include financial support, fast-track immigration service at Suvarnabhumi airport, cultural performances, meet-and-greet services, one free ticket for every 30 tickets purchased, pre-assigned group seating, priority boarding and extra baggage allowances.

To qualify, each group must comprise at least 30 persons, fly to Thailand on Bangkok Airways, stay for at least two nights, or hold an event at a venue recognised by the Thailand MICE Venue Standard or a registered hotel.

Applications for both programmes are open from now until August 31, 2019, with travel to be completed by September 30, 2019. – Rachel AJ Lee



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Editor's note: Information above is correct at press time. Some Asia-Pacific destinations not included in this feature were pending 2019 subvention programme details or do not offer them. Please contact individual convention bureaus for more information.

A wealth of developments

Major redevelopment plans on Sentosa Island are set to lower costs and draw more business events to the destination, writes **Pamela Chow**

Upcoming developments slated for Sentosa Island are poised to mould Singapore into a stronger magnet for meetings, conferences and incentives, as the island prepares to welcome new facilities catering to the mid-tier business segment.

The first of these developments are three mid-range hotels operated by Far East Hospitality (FEH). They are Village Hotel at Sentosa, offering 606 rooms; as well as The Outpost Hotel with 193 keys, which features a stylish adults-only colonial island concept.

In 3Q2019, the old-school luxury-styled Barracks Hotel will accompany its sibling properties along Artillery Avenue, bringing 40 rooms within a conserved colonial building. These three properties will raise Sentosa's total room count to more than 4,000.

With the entry of FEH's more affordable accommodation options, Sentosa is expected to gain points with the business events segment.

FEH's CEO, Arthur Kiong, said: "Sentosa is a driver of business and is very popular, but it's interesting that 90 per cent of its 3,200 rooms are in the luxury class. (Our new



Far East Hospitality

From top: The Commune is an event space housed within the new Village Hotel at Sentosa; an aerial view of Sentosa island



Halfzuddiv/shutterstock

cluster) caters to families, groups, MICE and niche segments.”

He added that the rooms will be “egalitarian” and “priced effectively”, and that FEH is “working on establishing key partnerships with attractions on Sentosa”.

For the past decade, midscale conventions were largely limited to facilities at Resorts World Sentosa, said Judy Lum, general manager, Diethelm Travel (Singapore).

“Sentosa is a great MICE destination. Greater availability of midscale properties should stabilise hotel pricing on the island, which would in turn be able to attract more events,” predicted Lum.

Cyril Constantino, Asia Pacific supplier management lead, CWT Meetings & Events, concurred.

He said that while Resorts World Sentosa and Shangri-La’s Rasa Sentosa Resort are popular choices for corporate events, “the hotels in Sentosa are typically priced slightly higher than those in the city”, and that “rates have been rising significantly on the island due to limited availability”.

He added: “We expect that Village Hotel at Sentosa will generate considerable interest for corporate meetings and events, as it will provide a more cost-effective option compared



“We always say that we are a world-class destination, but this will bring us to another level.”

Chin Sak Hin

Assistant chief executive and chief financial officer, Sentosa Development Corporation

DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH

1 SingEx Venues (SingEx) has been appointed by the Singapore Tourism Board as the operator for the Singapore Expo Convention & Exhibition Centre (Singapore Expo) for up to 10 years starting January 2019. SingEx will continue to operate the venue, and will soon reveal plans for commercial and business events to be held in Singapore Expo.

2 Jewel Changi Airport, a mixed-use development, is due to open in 1H2019. The complex will boast more than 280 retail and F&B units, floral landscapes, accommodation, as well as aviation facilities. Linking Terminal 1 Arrivals Hall and Terminal 2, and connected to Terminal 3 via pedestrian linkways, Jewel is poised for travellers and visitors to enjoy Singapore’s largest air-conditioned indoor garden.

3 Raffles Hotel Singapore has confirmed a mid-2019 reopening, which will see its venues renovated to markedly increase the hotel’s event space. For instance, the theatre-style Jubilee Hall will be converted into a 302-pax ballroom, while the original ballroom will be refreshed and expanded to seat 200 pax. The East India ballroom and the outdoor lawn have also been given a modern update. Room inventory will also increase by 10 per cent from 103 to 115 keys, which includes two Presidential Suites – also bookable for events.

modation will appeal particularly to the European and UK markets, opined Guy Allison, director of procurement, Tour East Holdings. He observed that in recent years, European and UK visitors have eschewed five-star luxury accommodation for three- to four-star boutique hotels.

He remarked: “Sentosa is starting to attract people to stay in Singapore for not just one or two nights, but three or four – maybe even a week. With the new developments, it might even become a destination in itself.”

He also expressed assurance that while Singapore is costlier compared to its neighbours, the country is “becoming more value-for-money”, and more affordable, compared to five years ago.

In the near future, Sentosa will be expanded to provide more leisure and business facilities.

Sentosa Development Corporation’s (SDC) assistant chief executive and chief financial officer, Chin Sak Hin, told *TTGmice* that in these plans, the nearby Pulau Brani will be “transformed” into a part of Sentosa, “retaining the island charm with new attractions and nature zones”.

“We always say that we are a world-class destination, but this will bring us to another level. We are

TALKING NUMBERS

\$218.80

The average room rate from January to November 2018, equivalent to US\$161.30, marking a 0.9 per cent increase from 2017

6,000

The number of expected visitor arrivals for the Intelligent Transport Systems World Congress 2019

16.9 million

The total visitor arrivals into Singapore from January to November 2018, up by 6.6 per cent year-on-year from 2017

working closely with other government agencies on planning this whole area, and we are now at the masterplanning stage,” said Chin. SDC is also currently developing the Sentosa 2030 masterplan.

The tides of change are also rolling beyond Sentosa. In October last year, senior minister of State for Trade and Industry Chee Hong Tat announced major rejuvenation plans for the nearby Tanjong Pagar waterfront.

This 1,000 hectare area, which Chee said is “as large as Sentosa island itself”, will be branded the Southern Gateway of Asia.

FEH’s Kiong commented that this development is set to be “the harbinger of very, very exciting developments for Sentosa, as well as the rest of the precinct”.



TTG Travel Trade Publishing is proud to be the travel trade media partner of the ASEAN Tourism Competitive Committee, working together to support the ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy and promote ASEAN destinations for tourism and business events

Heritage moves events forward

Local experiences have an important role to play in driving the city's MICE sector. By **Prudence Lui**

For event planners who are constantly looking to create one-of-a-kind experiences for their groups, Hong Kong's historic destinations are just the place, as the city's rich culture and heritage have yet to be fully explored.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) is looking to tap into this area, having launched the brand new *Ultimate MICE Guide to Old Town Central* in November last year.

"(Listings) in the guide have been recommended by top planners from four strategic markets across the region. It's a useful guide for planners to designate the best spots in the Old Town Central (OTC) cluster, a 100-year-old community which offers a variety of meeting ideas," a HKTB spokesperson said.

"Hong Kong definitely has a lot to offer in 2019 with its heritage venues," the spokesperson added.

The OTC cluster is the heart and soul of Hong Kong's central district. Home to a number of Hong Kong's

cultural landmarks, contemporary street art and exceptional dining, it is a colourful neighbourhood and cultural hub where East-meets-West.

The Ultimate MICE Guide has five categories: multipurpose event venues; dining options designed for different requirements; a scavenger hunt; and a choose your own adventure option with more than 20 locations to match every interest.

Meanwhile, the Authentic Scavenger Hunt in Old Town Central is designed to give delegates the opportunity to learn as much as they can about the OTC cluster. This team-building activity features 10 unique checkpoints, and fun-filled ideas that encourage corporate groups to complete competitive challenges while getting acquainted with the neighbourhood's historical gems and local food.

"Looking ahead, we will work with local trade partners to identify heritage sites and experiences, to craft even more MICE-friendly products and experiences," the

HKTB spokesperson said.

For instance, at the recently opened Tai Kwun arts centre and West Kowloon Xiqu Centre, corporate groups can hold a variety of cultural team bonding experiences, from tea appreciation sessions to enjoying dim sum while watching traditional Chinese opera."

Operators like Hong Kong A La Carte focus not only on venues, but also on local activities. Alexandra Malandain, its managing director, revealed that corporates want to organise new and unique events for their employees that combine local culture with off-the-beaten-track adventures.

"They want to surprise their colleagues who can be blasé about teambuilding events organised in Hong Kong. We recently organised a champagne cocktail team building event for a large French company in "the middle of nowhere" at a private garden on Lantau Island," she elaborated.

Initially, the organiser was not keen to host the event in the middle of nowhere, as it would be impossible to drive there.

However, both the client and Hong Kong A La Carte insisted that the uniqueness of the place would make the event a big success.

"Most people taking part in this event had been to Hong Kong numerous times but had no idea Hong Kong's country side is stunning and worth visiting. The 'wows' we heard arriving at the garden after a 40-min-

From left: Old Town Central's You Wu Studio; The Tai Kwun Centre for Heritage and Arts



Hong Kong Tourism Board



“The ‘wows’ we heard arriving at the garden after a 40-minute hike was definitely our best reward.”

Alexandra Malandain
Managing director,
Hong Kong A La Carte

ute hike was definitely our best reward. We achieved our objectives, which were to show an off-the-beat-en-track Hong Kong, and to make people happy at working together as a team,” Malandain shared.

Hong Kong Greeters revealed that while corporates are interested in getting the “local feel” by walking through a city, they still want classic Hong Kong experiences such as a Aqua Luna harbour tour or Victoria Peak and the Peak Tram.

Amy Overy, owner and operator of Hong Kong Greeters, said: “I think the Sai Ying Pun and Sheung Wan areas should definitely be on the list.

“They have dried seafood and medicine shops, as well as cool co-working places, great restaurants, and the Western market. Operators may consider Kwun Tong or Fotan with their history as industrial centres. Whampoa too has a great food scene and plenty of local culture.”

She said corporate travellers would benefit in the future if HKTB were to understand their needs, and share those needs with supporting

TALKING NUMBERS

5 per cent

The percentage growth year-on-year in overnight MICE arrivals as of June 2018

70

The number of World’s Best Airport Awards received by Hong Kong International Airport. The airport celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2018

50

The number of direct flights between Hong Kong and Mainland China

Hong Kong International Airport



businesses who can create appealing itineraries for this segment.

Additionally, Overy opined that the future for corporate clients visiting Hong Kong would fare better by concentrating on particular areas of interest by location, rather than trying to create an entirely brand new experience for groups.

“There is a lot more of Hong Kong’s culture to embrace by walking around specific neighbourhoods, rather than by joining a workshop or doing just one activity,” she posited.

DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH

1 Ocean Park Hong Kong has recently opened the 471-room Hong Kong Ocean Park Marriott Hotel on its premises, offering more than 1,340m² of event space, while a Water World attraction is also in the works.

Another theme park, Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL), recently opened the Marvel-branded attraction, Ant-Man and The Wasp: Nano Battle! on March 31. This opening marks the world’s first attraction featuring characters Ant-Man and The Wasp, as well as the first Marvel-themed attraction featuring a female superhero as a lead character. The ride is the latest in HKDL’s multi-year expansion plan between now and 2023.

2 Hong Kong is set to welcome an array of new and revitalised historic sites.

The latest additions to the scene are Tai Kwun – Centre for Heritage and Arts; The Mills; and West Kowloon Xiqu Centre. They all have unique characteristics, and are perfect off-site venues for business events planners looking to create memorable events.

3 The metropolis will also welcome luxurious hotels on both sides of Victoria Harbour this year. They include the 413-room Rosewood Hong Kong in Tsim Sha Tsui, and the 129-room St. Regis Hong Kong in Wanchai.



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Tang Tung Kien/Shutterstock

From left: The Golden Bridge is a popular tourist attraction in Ba Na Hills; the annual fireworks festival over Danang

Makings of a MICE hub

Heavy investment in infrastructure, tourism products and attractions are helping to mould Danang into becoming a major player on the global MICE stage, writes **Marissa Carruthers**

Danang has seen a rapid growth in its business events sector in recent times, and there is no sign of abating.

According to the latest figures from Danang Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the city welcomed more than 7.6 million visitors in 2018, a 15.5 per cent year-on-year increase. Of these, 2.8 million were

international arrivals, a rise of 23.3 per cent year-on-year.

Jeff Redl, managing director of Diethelm Vietnam, said: "In recent years, Danang has seen a dramatic growth in MICE tourism. Danang is now recognised as an important hub for luxury MICE."

Also indicative of Danang's development is the rapid rise in hotel developments. Figures show the number of five-star keys increased 78.3 per cent, with 6,832 rooms available as of June 2018, compared with just 3,832 in June 2017. This is predicted to increase by another 25 per cent to 8,574 in 2019.

Nguyen Duc Quynh, vice chairman of Danang Hotel Association, said: "At the end of 2018, Danang overcame the capital city of Hanoi to be ranked number two in Vietnam,

after Ho Chi Minh City, with 785 accommodation units providing 35,615 rooms."

Meanwhile, South Korea visitors dominate the market, with almost half of international arrivals from the country, fuelled by the more than 100 weekly flights available.

In April 2017, a new international terminal at Danang International Airport opened, increasing capacity from 13 million to 28 million. Better flight connectivity is another force driving Danang's rise.

New routes, such as Qatar Airways' four-times-weekly connections with Doha – launched last December – is predicted to lure more longhaul business travellers.

Matilda Otsuki, director of sales and marketing at Novotel Danang Premier Han River, said: "This allows corporates from Europe and the Middle East to consider holding meetings, events or incentive trips in Central Vietnam."

Meanwhile, the Sheraton Grand Resort Danang, which opened in January 2017, has become the city's

TALKING NUMBERS

43,131

The total number of hotel rooms in Danang by the end of 2019, a 37 per cent year-on-year increase

328

The number of weekly flights to Danang International Airport, 86 more than in 2017 thanks to the addition of a new terminal

8.2 million

The number of tourists Danang aims to welcome in 2019, a 6.9 per cent year-on-year increase

"Danang can positively position itself as a new MICE hub in Asia as it still has plenty of hidden attractions left for visitors to discover."

Jeff Redl

Managing director of Diethelm Vietnam





Tang Tung Kien/Shutterstock

largest luxury hotel conference venue with 3,300m² of meetings space. The addition of luxurious venues such as these, have helped plant Danang firmly on the business events map. Other projects in the pipeline include JW Marriott Danang and Courtyard Danang Han River.

“(Danang is) not just a city with large convention spaces, it has welcomed new levels of luxury in its meetings venues that provide meeting planners with options for large-scale, high-level meetings,” Redl added.

Since its opening in October 2017, Ariyana Convention Centre (ACC) has also attracted a swathe of international events. These range from APEC 2017 through to the 6th Global Environment Facility 2018, with 1,500 delegates from 183 countries.

The ACC forms part of Ariyana Danang Tourism Complex, which takes in the luxurious 1,400-key Ariyana Beach Resort & Suites Danang (slated to open late-2019), and the existing 254-key Furama Resort and Furama Villas. It is also connected to Furama Danang International Convention Palace – Vietnam’s largest conference and exhibition complex – which boasts a Grand Ballroom that seats 2,500.

In April 2018, Nicklaus Course opened at BRG Danang Golf Resort as Asia’s first bulkhead course, adding to the destination’s appeal.

Two other key projects are Empire Group’s Tourism Entertainment Complex CocoBay Danang, a US\$1.1-billion investment, and Soleil Danang’s five-star hotel and luxury apartment complex at My Khe Beach. This will stand as Danang’s tallest building,



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with a 58-storey five-star hotel and three 47-storey apartments, and will launch 1,000 luxury flats in 2020.

Redl opined: “Danang can positively position itself as a new MICE hub in Asia, as it still has plenty of hidden attractions left for visitors to discover.”

Rolling out a range of cultural events, festivals and attractions have also helped entice visitors, said Sheraton Grand Resort Danang general manager’s Frank Bochmann.

Since its inauguration in June 2018, the Golden Bridge at Ba Na Hills has attracted global attention, with the annual Danang International Fireworks Festival, Danang International Marathon and Ironman 70.3 Vietnam also gaining momentum.

Said Bochmann: “The tourism marketing board is starting to hold many more events to bring people into Danang, which as a destination has a lot going for it. Hue is up the road, there is Ba Na Hills and historic Hoi An. These are all great day destinations for MICE delegates.”

However, Otsuki said more can be done for Danang to retain its competitive edge: “The government needs to source more international events or conferences to benefit the entire city... and continue to offer new attractions to maintain competitiveness from new destinations within Vietnam, such as Phu Quoc.”

DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH

1 Ho Chi Minh City’s Tan Son Nhat International Airport is set to undergo expansion plans that include the addition of a third terminal and a 250 hectare expansion of the airport to 791 hectares.

The new terminal will be able to handle 20 million passengers annually, while expansion work to Terminals 1 and 2 will raise their combined capacity to 30 million. The work is slated for completion by 2020.

2 A masterplan for tourism development in the southern coastal province of Ba Ria-Vung Tau by 2025 has been approved by authorities.

As part of the plans to develop Vung Tau into an environmentally-friendly centre of tourism, finance and trade, with a developed maritime economy, there will be a focus on turning Xuyen Moc district – already home to upscale accommodation and facilities – into a business events hub.

3 Vietnam’s eVisa project has been extended for another two years after the pilot scheme was expired in February 2019.

Visitors from 40 countries, including China, Japan, India, the US, Germany and Sweden can apply for the online visa, which offers a 30-day, single-entry visa for leisure and business. The cost is US\$25.

Making history with surprising venues

Capitalising on its historical attractions and automotive industry, the state of Saxony is opening up its unique spaces to meetings, functions and incentives. By **Pamela Chow**

As Germany has been receiving an increasing volume of longhaul business travel out of Asia, the state of Saxony is now mobilising its wealth of historical sites and resources in its automobile industry to draw Asian corporates.

In 2017, business arrivals from Asia to Saxony posted double-figure increases. Mainland China and Hong Kong accounted for 48,700 visitors in 2017 as the state's top Asian source market, with a year-on-year jump of 38 per cent. Japan and Korea placed second and third.

This "promising market" has brought with it "big demand for different (business) functions", explained Dorothea Schäffler, international marketing, Tourism Marketing Company of Saxony.

These developments have been especially prominent in the cities of Dresden and Leipzig, where business tourism has become crucial to increasing international visitors' overnight stays as well as F&B expenditure, observed Schäffler. In 2017, Leipzig reached a record 3.2 million international overnight stays.

As a result, both cities have seen more historical sites – such as castles and museums – branching out "beyond their primary purpose" to host functions and banquets.

Saxony's vibrant automotive industry has also made it a prime destination for corporate enthusiasts and incentive experiences. Schäffler shared with *TTGmice* that more groups have been spicing up their incentive or meeting programmes with unique activities such as test-driving sports cars at Leipzig's Porsche circuits, and

touring the iconic Volkswagen Transparent Factory in Dresden.

Encouraged by these burgeoning developments, the Dresden Convention Bureau is channelling efforts toward growing the Chinese business segment. In 2017 and 2018, the bureau partnered with the German Convention Bureau on a WeChat campaign to reach Chinese planners. In April 2019, Dresden will conduct a China Summit marketing event and possibly hold a roadshow or exhibition in China.

Neighbouring Leipzig supports business event planners through Leipzig Tourism and Marketing, which provides information about event and dining venues, transport and interpretation services as well as other supporting programmes.

Leipzig has also created *Feel the spirit... do-it-at-leipzig.de*, a congress initiative designed to present Leipzig as the place to meet in a matter of a few clicks through this virtual site inspection. This is a network of some 50 industry partners – including congress and event venues, conference hotels, service agencies, local PCOs and logistics partners – available on a service portal. A 360-degree Virtual Site Inspection is also available on the site offering panoramic views of Leipzig's venues.

Volker Bremer, CEO of Leipzig Tourism and Marketing, credited this initiative, as well as the suc-

From left: Dresden Skyline at night; Mendeburgen fountain juxtaposed against a city skyscraper in Leipzig



Sebastian Rose

“We have a strong cooperation with the German Convention Bureau and its representative based in Beijing, as China is our most important business market in Asia.”

Hiskia Wiesner

Head of MICE,
Leipzig Tourism and Marketing

cess of large-scale events like the Chaos Communication Congress, for helping Leipzig reach three million international overnight stays in 2017.

In 2019, Leipzig will expand its range of international events, including the LINC Asia-Pacific congress in March, and the ITF International Transport Forum in May.

Leipzig Tourism and Marketing’s head of MICE department, Hiskia Wiesner, said: “We have a strong cooperation with the German Convention Bureau and its representative based in Beijing, as China is our most important business market in Asia. We are planning promotional activities such as participating in a roadshow, as well as public relations about Leipzig as a conference and MICE destination via newsletters and WeChat.”

WHAT’S HOT



Marcus Gloger

Discover Porsche in Leipzig

A treat for top performers and automotive enthusiasts, the Discover Porsche in Leipzig package takes participants from factory to racetrack. Participants follow the Porsche Panamera and Porsche Macan in a factory tour, learn about the brand’s history before sitting down to a three-course menu at the in-house restaurant. The highlight is a Porsche driving experience on the on-road circuit and an offroad track, with each participant accompanied by a professional instructor.

IntercityHotel

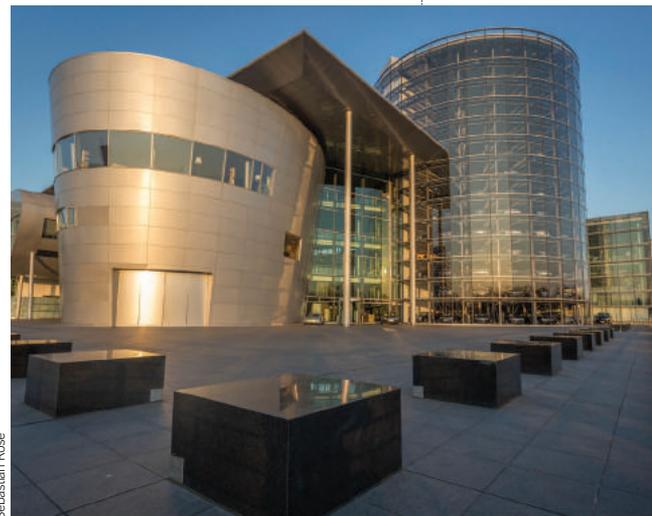
Corporates and planners with a penchant for sustainability can look forward to a city of eco-friendly offerings in Leipzig, including IntercityHotel. The roof of this property, located in the city centre, has been home to six bee colonies since spring 2018, and thanks to this, hotel guests can enjoy in-house organic honey at breakfast.

Volkswagen’s Gläserne Manufaktur (Transparent Factory)

Automobile enthusiasts can make a pitstop at this futuristic plant in Dresden, where Volkswagen builds the e-Golf car. Participants can take a guided factory tour – offered in 14 languages – accompanying the e-Golf as it makes its way along the production lines to completion, while learning the principles behind the Transparent Factory.

Winery Wackerbarth Castle

This historical site in the Radebeul vineyards outside Dresden houses Europe’s first “adventure vineyard” in a Baroque castle and garden complex, famous since the time of Augustus the Strong.



Sebastian Rose

Groups can organise lavish banquets within its regal halls, or take a day tour of the estate that provides insights into sparkling wine production, 850 years of Saxon winemaking traditions and the special techniques involved. In the Rüttekeller, participants will learn about the process of traditional bottle fermentation, and sample the products immediately in a tasting session.

Clockwork Town Glashütte

Locally heralded as the home of time, Glashütte is a town where high-quality timepieces have been manufactured since the 19th century. Visitors can enjoy a virtual reality show illustrating the long tradition of mechanical watchmaking at the Deutsches Uhrenmuseum (German Clock Museum) and take a guided tour of the workshops in this small town to witness watchmakers at work.

From top: Winery at Wackerbarth Castle in Radebeul; Volkswagen’s Transparent Factory



Schmidt

Making new tech work well

AIQ softens its resistance to new technology at RetailEX ASEAN by investing in pre-show communications and providing onsite demonstrations, writes **Karen Yue**

Event brief

Jointly organised by the Thai Retailers Association, Clarion Events and IMPACT Exhibition Management, and with the support of the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, RetailEX ASEAN is an annual event that caters to retailers and brands focusing on the South-east Asian market. For the 2018 edition in September, the event was built on the theme, Transforming the ASEAN Retail Landscape.

Event owner Clarion Events wanted RetailEX ASEAN to go paperless and be environmentally-friendly, as well as allow exhibitors and sponsors to enjoy strong customer acquisition. It engaged Singapore-based computer vision solutions company, AIQ, to develop an event app that would satisfy the two objectives.

The eventual RetailEX ASEAN app, created by AIQ and powered by Artificial Intelligence, allowed attendees to interact with Video and Image Recognition Technology to connect with onsite exhibitors. With the same technology, attendees were able to explore retail possibilities, expectations, behaviour and opportunities in the ever-evolving South-east Asian community.

Challenges

As it was the first time that AIQ was implementing its technology in Bangkok, Thailand, the company's main challenge was dealing with logistical preparations.

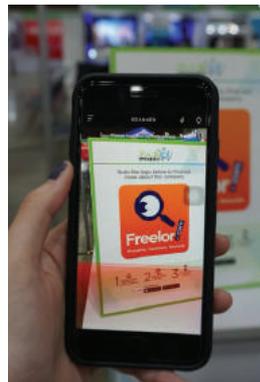
As well, according to AIQ CEO Marcus S Tan, AIQ's Video and Image Recognition Technology is still being regarded as a disruptive technology that requires time for new users to adopt.

"It was a challenge to convince exhibitors that AIQ's technology is able to cut down on (printing needs and costs)," Tan recalled.

"All in all, information needed from exhibitors and organisers were not readily provided as many of them needed time to get to know and understand our technology, as well as comprehend the reason behind the information request," he said.

Solutions

Foreseeing the challenges that AIQ might encounter before and during RetailEX ASEAN, the team worked very closely with Clarion Events to craft an EDM about the mobile app and



Event

RetailEX ASEAN 2018

Event owner

Clarion Events

Venue

IMPACT Exhibition and Convention Center, Bangkok, Thailand

Date

September 19-21, 2018

Number of participants

3,600 industry players and more than 100 speakers

technology. This was sent to all event participants, calling on them to download and interact with the app ahead of the event.

With the convenience of AIQ's technology, RetailEX ASEAN also managed to tap on gamification to allow their customers to scan and register for an on-site contest. It was a quick and seamless process of gathering participation for the contest. Reminders to download and interact with the RetailEX ASEAN app were made via voice announcement in both English and Thai throughout the event.

AIQ also had a booth at the event to showcase its Video and Image Recognition Technology, as well as to reinforce the technology that RetailEX ASEAN app offers. Bearing in

mind that locals attending the exhibition may require language translation, AIQ also hired two Thai translators who stationed themselves at the booth throughout the event to clarify any doubts raised by visitors.

Tan also explained AIQ's solution in a presentation and provided live demonstrations of how the technology works.

Key takeaways

Tan opined that it was important to work with the organiser to push the adoption of the technology at the event. For instance, posting on social media platforms to encourage participants to download the app before attending the event and educating participants about the technology.

"The understanding of AIQ's technology is very important, hence the work of publicising and educating participants needs to be done in the local language of communication as well. This will help reduce the likelihood of facing communication breakdowns," he said.

Tan also found that it was crucial to work closely with clients, so as to help them achieve their objectives with the use of AIQ's technology.

"There is a need to communicate to them about the benefits of our technology; from kickstarting a pro-green initiative, to allowing for a multichannel, seamless connectivity across events and other brand touch points as well as cost savings. Overall, the integration of these processes make for a brand experience that is 100 per cent interactive and unforgettable," Tan surmised.

"An event that showcases the future of retail innovation should inherently be an adopter of cutting-edge technology such as Video and Image Recognition Technology. Partnering with AIQ enables RetailEX ASEAN 2018 to deliver a whole new dimension of value and experience when it comes to visitor and exhibitor engagement. It's a win-win for our exhibitors, sponsors and most importantly, our visitors."

Julia Kwan, event director, Clarion Events

Catch up

Alicia Yeo

Celebrating 24 years of planning events for tesa tape Asia Pacific this year, this manager for office & travel management thinks her job is easily misunderstood

What do your friends think you do for a living?

They think my job is very relaxing, that I'm always travelling around the world to inspect and stay in luxury hotels and resorts, be pampered and talk to people.

How far is that from the truth?

If only that's half the truth! As an event planner, there are thousands of things to watch out for, such as being prepared for unexpected happenings, ensuring meeting room temperature is at a comfortable level, accommodating female attendees

in guestrooms not far from the lift lobby, watching the drinks tab while ensuring everyone has a good time, etc.

An event planner has to be precise and methodical and yet possess an imaginative mind, to create events that will mesmerise participants for years to come. Preparing and sticking to the budget is an art to be learnt. One must also enjoy socialising to stay in this industry.

What do you love most about your job?

I love going to new places and meeting people, learning about the history of the

destination, and the local way of life and culture. My job gives me that privilege.

Having studied so many destinations for your events, which is your favourite and why?

China, for her rich history and most importantly, the fact that she's the motherland of my ancestors.

China is mystical and every visit is a new adventure for me. I wish to explore all of China.

I have been to Xi'an twice and still want to go back. It is intriguing to walk the steps and paths of ancient emperors and empresses, and to imagine myself living in that era.

Right now, my eye is on Urumqi which I plan to visit late 2019, after the completion of my studies.

What's your pet peeve during fam trips?

Most hosts tend to cram too many hotel and site inspections into a day which isn't beneficial. After seeing two hotels and two venues, nothing more will be ab-



sorbed and that defeats the purpose of fam trips.

As well, a daily debrief and feedback session over dinner when everyone is relaxed would be more useful to the host than asking for feedback after the entire trip.

Hosts like to ask for dollar commitment after the fam trip which I feel is inappropriate. The purpose of fam trips is to showcase the best of the destination and venues, not to secure a business commitment from participants.

Do you see yourself in a different job?

I would like to impart my

knowledge to newcomers in the travel/MICE industry, such as by having interns shadow me or tutoring in polytechnics which is my retirement plan.

You are taking a degree course in International Hospitality & Tourism Management. Why?

This 18-month course is for self-actualisation. I feel I need new ideas and to know what people are learning now. My studies are sponsored by my company, and I am very lucky to have a very supportive boss and employer. - Karen Yue

Appointments



Alejandro Bernabé

Alejandro Bernabé

Alejandro Bernabé now helms Four Seasons Hotel Seoul as general manager. He was most recently the group director of AVANI Hotels and Resorts in Thailand and was later promoted to the brand's vice president operations.

Darren Ware

Darren Ware is now the general manager of Carlton Hotel Singapore.



Darren Ware

He was previously

at Carlton City Hotel Singapore in the same capacity.

Franck Huang

Franck Huang is now head of development, China for the Rosewood Hotel Group. He brings with him 15 years' experience in the luxury hospitality industry and was most recently vice president of development China at Marriott.



Gregory Gubiani

Gregory Gubiani

The French national is the new general manager of The Westin Kuala Lumpur. Prior to his move, Gubiani helmed the Aloft Kuala Lumpur Sentral.

Jerôme Denis Stubert

Pullman Bangkok King Power has appointed Jérôme Denis Stubert as general manager. He has over 35 years' experience within the



Nancy Chan

hospitality industry.

Nancy Chan

Nancy Chan has joined Uniplan Hong Kong as managing director. She is in charge of Uniplan's business development in Hong Kong and the South China region.

Sanjay Seth

BCD Meetings & Events (BCD M&E) has appointed Sanjay Seth as its new managing



TP Long

director, Asia Pacific. He will focus on developing local teams and offering expanded services to BCD M&E's customers.

TP Long

Encore Melaka has appointed TP Long as general manager. In his new role, Long will oversee strategic business growth and overall operations such as ticketing sales and global market expansion.

Ken Myohdai

Japan's business events future is bright, says the founder of Sakura International Inc, who has been in the events industry since 1980. By **Julian Ryall**

Let's talk about the biggest event to impact Japan's tourism business this year and next: the 2019 Rugby World Cup and the 2020 Summer Olympics. What do they mean for business events?

It is still too early at this stage to identify the opportunities or problems that will come out of sporting events because so much of the potential work is still in the proposal stages or is open for bidding. We will not get a clearer picture of how the 2019 Rugby World Cup will affect our business until probably next spring.

The 2020 Summer Olympics will focus more on Tokyo. How will it affect events coming into the city?

Tokyo Big Sight will be shut down and reserved for use as the main press centre and broadcasting centre during the Games. It is a boon for us, as we are the official contractors for Tokyo Big Sight, and are assisting in the fitting out of the facility for the Games. That's a very important contract.

For the (events) industry in general, this presents difficulties because organisers have had to reschedule events and move them to other locations, which has a knock-on effect on suppliers, hotels and everyone else.

But we must remember that this is not something that has cropped up in the last couple of weeks. Organisers have had a couple of years to change dates and make alternative plans. It is likely that some companies will be affected, but they are resilient. I'm confident they will recover.

Japan's business events sector is growing. Is that a result of these global sporting events?

There are a number of reasons, and it isn't just because of the sporting events.

We have seen a tourism boom, and new hotels are popping up all over the country. The Japanese tourism authorities, specifically those responsible for growing business events, are far more proactive about overseas marketing. Business event buyers around the world now see Japan as a very appealing place to be.

When I first started out in the industry, Japan was quite closed off and it was



“There is no getting around that fact (that Japan is expensive) but anyone who does an event here always gets more delegates than anticipated.”

hard for people on the outside to come here. That has changed dramatically.

Do you fear a post-Games downturn once the global spotlight shifts elsewhere?

Not at all. The higher profile Japan is getting as a result of these sporting events is never a bad thing. We are extremely optimistic about the next five or six years, not just what is coming in the next two years.

What types of industries are most promising for Japan's business events sector now?

One big growth area is defence and security, as the Japanese government is investing heavily in its own defence, which has led to a rise in related events. The medical sector continues to be strong, and professional congress organisers are coming directly to us to set up events. Also, we are seeing events linked to cryptocurrency, blockchain technology, fintech and the same.

The rise in cryptocurrency events is interesting. Is it because Japan is perceived as a leader in technology?

Cryptocurrency events are taking place all over the world now, but because Japan is a relatively under-developed market in this field, overseas organisers see opportunities in Japan. They want to come here and conduct an event. We have done a lot of such events in the last two years.

What sort of business events might be big next?

It's always hard to predict, but we are expecting more in the e-sports space. As a general rule, as soon as a new industry emerges, someone launches a tradeshow very quickly. Just look at the drone industry; there are shows everywhere now and they have only been around for five years or so. E-sports is already here, but it's something that we want to target as a company because it's a growing sector and has – we believe – the potential to win us a lot of work.

Sakura International has been in business events for 40 years. How do you stay competitive?

We have competitors in Japan, but I don't think anyone else is quite as focused as we are on the international market. Our model is very much based on having offices in Osaka and Tokyo, while covering the entire country. Another key difference is that we have international staff, all of whom speak at least two languages. This allows us to provide comprehensive service to our international clients.

How do you keep clients coming back to you and Japan?

That's the difficult part. There are many destinations for events but if we do a good job, the client will return.

The one thing we always hear from anyone who comes to Japan is that it's not a cheap destination for events. There's no getting around that fact but anyone who does an event here always gets more delegates than anticipated. More delegates means more income, which means the organisers are happy.

What does the future hold for Sakura International?

Our first target is an IPO in 2020, which will give us the financial platform to grow the business quickly and effectively. We want to invest in more people and set up in more overseas cities to expand our overseas network.

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Village Hotel at Sentosa

Energetic, fun, and vibrant – the family-friendly Village Hotel at Sentosa offers an experiential stay for families, as well as leisure and meeting groups. The hotel offers 606 cosy guest rooms themed with sun-washed hues of nature by the sea. The Family Rooms are ideal for guests travelling with children. These Family Rooms come with two rooms, two bathrooms and can comfortably cater to a family of four. The pool deck in the hotel has four themed pools as well as activities from beach games to face painting ensuring that everyone has a fun-filled day.

The Barracks Hotel

Housed in a conserved colonial building, The Barracks Hotel is an exclusive heritage hideaway and is a window to the rich history of Sentosa. Its 40 well appointed guest rooms and suites are simply striking. Exquisite service and the attention to detail for every pampering creature comfort are paramount.

Visit www.StayFarEast.com/Sentosa to find out more.

