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Brisbane gets hotter for Asian incentives

Massive hardware changes for Singapore

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Meals during business events are accomplishing more than filling hungry bellies. These days, they are a networking catalyst, a way for delegates to contribute to sustainable goals, and an opportunity to experience the destination



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The way to the heart

For our cover feature this issue – *Food for the soul* (pages 13-19), we put the focus on food to understand what delegates today hunger for at business events.

And our reporters discovered that the way people approach food in their everyday life is being extended to the way they regard mealtimes at business events.

People today are increasingly practicing mindful dining – eating right (for good health), eating well (for joy) and with consideration for the environment. And they expect the same when dining at business events.

No longer are mealtimes at events just an activity to fill attendees' belly. Instead, mealtimes are an opportunity for event planners to fulfil more of their objectives, be it to facilitate business discussions, to reinforce corporate branding and messaging, or to meet CSR goals.

As well, mealtimes can – and should – be regarded as the necessary ingredient to ensure event objectives are met. Imagine trying in vain to get the attention of an audience crashing out from a sugar high after an unhealthy lunch or coffee break!

In order to satisfy these expectations of event dining, F&B specialists and event planners are thinking out of the box for ideas to engage the palate, belly, mind and soul of attendees – which in turn elevates the complete event experience.

And once an attendee feels that his/her dining experience has been well taken care of, in addition to all the other important aspects of the event experience, the event planner will have done his job of having found the way to the attendee's heart.



Spaces re-imagined at **RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA**

Asia's ultimate leisure destination has proven to be the premier M.I.C.E. destination, offering an extensive choice of versatile venues both indoors and outdoors, for mega conventions and exhibitions to formal receptions and customised themed events.

As an affirmation of its leadership in delivering outstanding MICE events, RWS clinched the award for Best Meetings/Incentives Organiser at the recent Singapore Tourism Awards 2019.

With its outstanding repertoire of world-class venues, unique hotels and extraordinary entertainment options, Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) delivers incredible experiences for groups of every size and budget.



From functional to glamorous

Whisking guests away into a dreamy stupor of phantasmagorical fashion happenings, the Hard Rock Hotel which hosted the prestigious Singapore International Fashion Week this year showcased its capabilities to go from functional to glamorous.

Pulling out all the stops for an impressive catwalk, the Coliseum floor was carpeted completely for a soft, luxurious touch. Special arrangements were made to ensure VIPs were dropped off directly at the hotel lobby for a convenient walk to the Coliseum, while canapes were prepared by renowned French restaurant Potel et Chabot.

The stunning unique backdrop provided a wide array of picture-perfect photographic opportunities, ideal for this glamorous showcase of current trends and cutting edge looks.



An immersive exhibition experience

The Maritime Experiential Museum also displayed its magnificent ability to transform into an immersive exhibition space when popular Japanese manga ONE PIECE held its first-ever exhibition there.

This high seas adventure manga capitalised on the explorer theme in the museum, allowing visitors to journey into the colourful and whimsical world of ONE PIECE. The manga came alive through four distinct zones, each covering a unique aspect of the illustrator Eiichiro Oda's work.

Visitors were able to indulge in full-coloured original illustrations, and even stepped into the illustrator's mind through the VR experiential zone.



Flexible event spaces

The Resorts World Convention Centre's ability to convert into multiple flexible spaces was one of the considerations in which IBM Cloud Fast Start Conference 2019 chose to hold its event earlier this year.

With a dazzling array of state of the art meeting facilities, the ballroom was segregated into an exclusive conference and exhibition area. This created a smooth and seamless experience for delegates transiting between the programmes.

Together with the team of certified meeting professionals, Resorts World Sentosa offers the ideal venue choice for business or leisure, from international conventions to themed social events, promising an unforgettable experience like no other venue can provide.

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Whether day or night, Resorts World Sentosa is at your service to make your event an unforgettable experience. Crowned the Best Meetings / Incentive Organiser at the 2019 Singapore Tourism Awards, be assured that your event will be in the professional hands of our experienced team. Complementing our MICE facilities are five world-class attractions, six unique theme hotels, a collection of award-winning dining experiences and Asia's flagship ESPA at Resorts World Sentosa. As the Best Integrated Resort in Asia, RWS is your next bi-leisure destination for work and play. Come experience the difference.



5 world-class attractions



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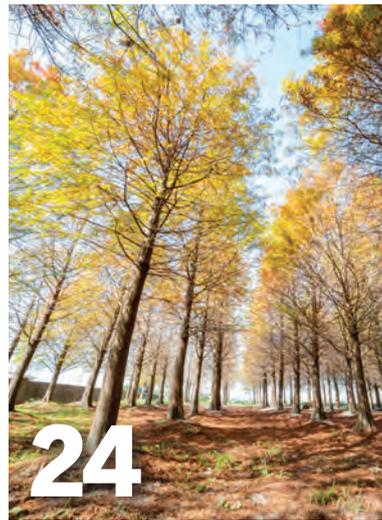
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COVER STORY

13 Food for the soul

Meals during business events are accomplishing more than filling hungry bellies. These days, they are a networking catalyst, a way for delegates to contribute to sustainable goals, and an opportunity to experience the destination. By Rachel AJ Lee, Adelaine Ng and S Puvaneswary

COUNTRY REPORTS

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Singapore is on the cusp of massive hardware change with developments that promise to bring a multitude of new event venues and possibilities. By Pamela Chow

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Development plans for Brisbane are elevating the city's reputation among Asian incentive programme decision makers, writes Adelaine Ng

24 Taiwan // Small towns take the big lead

Taiwan turns on its small town charms to entice corporate travellers to spend more time on the peninsula, writes Pamela Chow

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FIJI THE PICTURE-PERFECT DESTINATION FOR UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES

With its 333 islands, beautiful coastlines and pristine reefs, Fiji sets the stage for unrivalled experiences, promising exclusive rewards for meetings and incentives. Located in the heart of the South Pacific, Fiji is an extraordinary location for delegates with its wide array of accommodation and meeting facilities ranging from its international five-star hotels and resorts to the private booking of a whole island. Guests will be thrilled with the wide plethora of experiences awaiting them on this idyllic paradise.

A splash of fun

Dream diving destination

Home to flamboyant coral reefs which boast a diversity of habitat and marine life, Fiji is a dream paradise for divers looking to explore the intriguing underwater environment.

Kayaking and rafting

Navigate through the tranquil aqua-blue waters on a kayak or an inflatable raft. From the open seas, enjoy the luscious green mahogany plantation and native forests alongside stunning waterfalls. This is where some of the most picturesque parts of Fiji can be found.

Jet ski across the islands

Experience the thrill of speeding over the crystal clear waters and reefs of islands on the back of a jet ski. Coupled with multiple shots of adrenaline rush, this is a unique and fun perspective which promises to be unforgettable.

Culture and heritage

The authentic village life

Step into the Fiji Culture Village to experience the local customs, lifestyle and warm hospitality of Fiji. Bringing ancient Fiji alive, the village features an extravaganza of melodious singing and dancing including the traditional kava ceremony and spectacular meke performance. Take a tour of the typical village homes and watch as they prepare "Lovo" food cooked underground, and showcase Fiji's diverse rich culture from lighting a fire, carving, pottery making, coconut bure, tapa making and weaving.

A taste of Fiji

Enjoy a tasty introduction to traditional Fijian cuisine as the culinary experience whisks guests away on a mouth-watering journey of Fiji's rich cultural history. Cooks will share their traditional cooking techniques with menus boasting of Fijian flavours, allowing visitors to cook and enjoy the finest local dishes.

Outdoor adventures

Hike through nature

Fiji is home to some spectacular treks and trails. Take a hike deep into the lush natural rainforests, while marveling at the beauty of the surrounding native plants and wildlife. Be sure to scale up to the mountain peaks for breathtaking panorama views.

Take an exhilarating ride

Charge through the forests on a quad bike where participants will drive round hills over dirt tracks, up and down slopes, through water splashes whilst enjoying the amazing views of the pristine islands.



Mark Snyder

Contact Tourism Fiji to find out more about the wide range of support for MICE activities.

Tourism Fiji's Southeast Asia Regional Office • Email: cong@aviareps.com or ceng@aviareps.com • <https://www.fiji.travel/sg>

■ Snapshots

@ttgmice



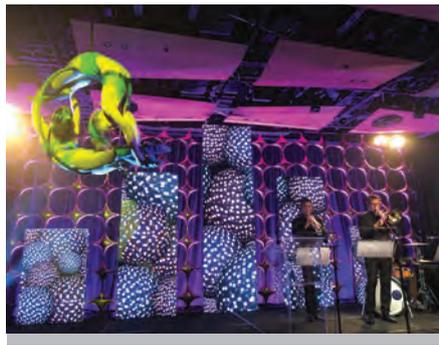
Korea Tourism Organization brings its MICE roadshow to Singapore today, presenting new and evergreen favourites for corporate events. May 10



Throwback to the five days of fun and laughter during TTG Asia Media's teambuilding trip to Mauritius! We hope to be back someday! May 17



TTGmice's Adelaine Ng rides a Harley Davidson with MICE planners from India, Japan and China as part of BESydney's 50th Anniversary Mega Famil. May 27



New Zealand's CINZ MEETINGS 2019 kicks off today at ASB Showgrounds. Performers from The Dust Palace put on a stunning show at last night's welcome function at Aotea Centre. May 29

■ Q&A

Benjamin Lephilbert, managing director of LightBlue Environmental Consulting, talks about his zero food wastage movement and how he is teaching younger generations to tackle this global issue.



American Express Global Business Travel's latest meal expense whitepaper, *Savings for Cravings*, has found that Australia and the UK have the equal highest meal allowances for breakfast (US\$33); France and Spain have the equal highest lunch allowances (US\$55); while the UK has the highest dinner allowance (US\$86).



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What's happening



July 25-26
Singapore MICE Forum
Singapore



August 28-29
IBTM China
Beijing, China



September 24-26
IT&CM Asia and CTW Asia Pacific
Bangkok, Thailand



Taiwan:

Dive into the heart of Asia

Sun Moon Lake

Taiwan is altogether beautiful, modern, vibrant and historic. Offering a staggeringly diverse wealth of stunning natural wonders, cultural heritage, amazing gastronomy and world-class infrastructure, Taiwan rises as an attractive destination for meetings, incentives and events in Asia.

According to online hospitality service platform Airbnb, Taiwan is one of 2019's most popular destinations worth visiting, with more and more Airbnb users including the country in their booking wish lists.



Nantou County

A WARM WELCOME

Recognised by customers of Booking.com, one of the globe's largest e-commerce travel companies, as the fifth most friendly country in the world, an endearing Taiwan trait is the overwhelming friendliness of the locals there. Visitors are bound to encounter acts of generosity and kindness throughout their time in Taiwan, a ubiquitous phenomenon across the island.

As an extension of its friendliness, the island also offers a flexible visa policy and visa-free entry to numerous countries, enabling convenient entry especially for large corporate groups from all over the world.

MUSLIM-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Taiwan is well-recognised in its ability to forge a Muslim-friendly environment, emerging as the third most attractive country on the Global Muslim Travel Index 2019.

The number of Muslim-friendly accommodations has been increasing in tandem with annual Muslim festivals staged. The total number of halal-certified manufacturers, restaurants, and hotels in Taiwan has reached more than 1,000. There are also more Muslim-dedicated prayer rooms, courtesy prayer mats, Mecca direction signs, and purification facilities set up in new locations. Muslim prayer rooms are also available in many meeting and event facilities island-wide.

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

As the island strives towards a sustainable future, meeting venues are going green



Nangang International Exhibition Center, Hall 2

and a wide range of environmentally-friendly policies have been implemented.

In one of the farthest-reaching bans on plastic in the world, Taiwan is imposing a blanket ban on single-use plastic bags, straws, and cups, aiming for all single-use plastics to be phased out by 2030.

AN IDEAL MEETING DESTINATION

With its unrivalled array of venues, attractions and unique hospitality, Taiwan serves as the perfect destination to host international and regional meetings, incentive travel and events, promising a fulfilling and unforgettable experience.

Find out more about Taiwan here:

MEETTAIWAN.COM



Taiwan's MICE Promotion Program

Organized by Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA & Taiwan External Trade Development Council
Ad. by Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA



We
love

Living it large on a super yacht

The ultimate event venue could be on the water. The newly launched YOT Club is the world's first custom built Super Yacht Entertainment space designed as a luxurious experience for up to 400 guests in the Gold Coast or Brisbane.

Facilities include an eight-meter wide multi-function stage with a state-of-the-art sound system and special effects lighting. There's also an LED screen available on request and a fully customisable seating floor plan.

Spread across two levels, each floor has a full service cocktail bar. A commercial kitchen onboard ensures top notch nosh even for elaborate banquets for 200 guests.

YOT Club also has an exclusive VIP Green Room decked in green and gold located inside the forward centre hull and only

accessible through a secure private entrance. As the ultimate private oasis, it can service up to 20 guests with a bespoke cocktail bar and specially designed menu.

While most of the yacht is undercover, guests can venture into the outer deck seating, almost close enough to touch the water, or enjoy 360-degree panoramic views from the top level.

Gourmet dining is also a highlight with chefs preparing fresh creations that can be as relaxed or formal as required.

A whole new look

Brisbane Marriott Hotel, which turns 21 this year, has emerged from an A\$20 million (US\$14 million) revitalisation that saw an extensive redesign of its 267 guestrooms and suites, Executive Lounge, two floors of event space and its signature restaurant.

The works took place alongside the revitalisation of the hotel's neighbouring Riverside Precinct.

Malaysian-based Duoz Design incorporated the hotel's unique natural and historic surroundings into the new design, and used ambient lighting that are reminiscent of a balmy Brisbane evening, as well as neutral tones that recall the surrounding nature.

Guestrooms are fitted with the latest technology, including ASSO ABLOY Orion system, which controls each room's lighting and air conditioning.

The hotel's signature restaurant, Motion Dining, has been redesigned to include an array of dining offerings and experiences.

Planners will appreciate the hotel's selection of 12 flexible spaces which comes supported by an expert event team.

Enhanced event solutions at Orchard Hotel

Singapore's Orchard Hotel has completed its multimillion-dollar renovation, spanning 260 guestrooms, the lobby, two dining establishments, and 11 conference and function spaces.

The project, which was officially unveiled on May 16, refreshes the 40 year-old property and touts a "360 degree guest experience".

On the business events front, the hotel now boasts one of Singapore's largest pillar-free grand ballrooms at more than 900m². It comes equipped with two floor-to-ceiling LED walls – a first in Singapore.

General manager Jean-Philippe Jacopin said the ballroom allows the flexibility for clients to build large structures or configure spaces to suit their needs.

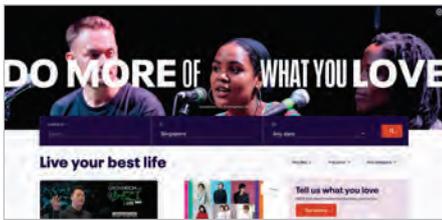
The conference centre has also been redesigned with five intimate meeting rooms and upgraded facilities.

Additionally, planners now have numerous catering options from the hotel's four restaurants – Hua Ting Restaurant, The Orchard Cafe, Mon Bijou and Bar Intermezzo – as well as a Halal-certified kitchen.

Other upgrades include autonomous room service and chef associate robots; new dining spaces; a contemporary clock tower; and 260 refurbished guestrooms each equipped with a Handy smartphone and six USB ports.

The hotel refresh comes just as Orchard Road gears up for a major transformation and customer demands are changing.





Eventbrite launches in Hong Kong

Eventbrite, a global ticketing and event technology platform, has added Hong Kong to its global presence and brought with it a raft of new features designed to empower local event creators.

The localised platform at eventbrite.hk will be one of the first in Asia to benefit from Eventbrite's Publish To Facebook feature – an integration allowing event-goers to purchase tickets directly through Facebook – alongside payment processing in Hong Kong dollars, curated local content and seamless native checkout.

The company's launch in Hong Kong is further bolstered by a landmark partnership between Eventbrite and Louis Vuitton Hong Kong, which saw Eventbrite power ticket sales for Louis Vuitton's recent Objets Nomades showcase at Tai Kwun.

The launch is the latest move in Eventbrite's Asian expansion, following the company's debut in Singapore in February.

In a press statement, Eventbrite reported that more than 2.2 million tickets have been processed in Hong Kong since the platform's inception. The company has observed strong organic growth in health and wellness, food and wine, and music events in Hong Kong, and a generally growing local events industry that is supported by a committed community of event creators.

Eventbrite believes that its opportunity in Hong Kong is fuelled by the city's growing appetite for live experiences.



Alila SCBD takes it further with two new venues

Following its opening in February, the luxury Alila SCBD Jakarta has unveiled in May two spaces – the Artisan Bar and Event Gallery – which are available for corporate bookings.

Situated at ground level next to the lobby, the Artisan Bar has been designed as a gathering space for the artisan community. Spanning 512m², the Artisan Bar offers a high-ceiling, and is furnished in a modern, minimalist fashion.

Events held in this venue allow guests to admire the many pieces of curated artworks from across Indonesia that adorn walls and niches, celebrating the artistic heritage of regions and indigenous cultures such as South Sulawesi, East Java, and Kalimantan's Dayak tribe.

Meanwhile, the Event Gallery on the third floor of the Alila SCBD welcomes larger functions. The U-shaped gallery spans 714m² and can accommodate around 765 guests cocktail-style. It can be divided into two smaller spaces.

The Event Gallery is connected to the outdoor Catwalk Pool and terrace, offering a spill-out area surrounded by skyline views.

The Westin Desaru Coast Resort opens for business

The 275-key Westin Desaru Coast Resort on the southern tip of the Malaysian Peninsula in Johor has welcomed its first guests.

Guests can expect Westin room signatures such as the Heavenly Bed and Sleep Well Lavender Balm, as well as several F&B options including all-day dining Seasonal Tastes; Italian restaurant Prego; a beach bar; and the Mix Lounge on the lobby.

For events, the hotel offers the Desaru Coast Conference Centre which it manages. The venue has 1,252m² of fully-equipped event space with the capacity to host almost 1,400 guests. The showpiece of the conference centre is a grand ballroom, which can be divided into four smaller event and pre-function spaces. There are also outdoor venues by the beach.

Corporate event attendees have the opportunity to rest and relax too, with recreational facilities such as the Heavenly Spa by Westin, complete with hydrothermal pools, and RunWestin programme, led by the resort's Run Concierge and Westin Gear Lending with New Balance.

The Westin Desaru Coast Resort is part of the Desaru Coast development, an integrated holiday and event destination featuring an adventure waterpark and two championship-level golf courses, among other things.



Caravelle Saigon unveils new guestrooms

The iconic Caravelle Saigon, which celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, has completed renovations of its guestrooms after nine months of work.

The refreshed guestrooms in the Opera Wing on floors eight to 12 now sport up-

dated finishings, spacious walk-in vanities, bathrooms with imported marble, oversized soundproof windows that offer unparalleled city views including the historic Opera House, a 49" Samsung flat screen TV, and complimentary Wi-Fi.

A venue up in the clouds

Jewel, the mixed-used development at Singapore's Changi Airport, has been making waves across the globe with its photogen-

ic 40-metre high indoor waterfall – said to be the world's tallest – and massive hive of lifestyle facilities.

For planners, Jewel presents yet another gem: Cloud9 Piazza, a naturally-lit area that can host gatherings of 200 to 500 people.

Located on Jewel's topmost floor, Cloud9 Piazza welcomes aviation-related, community and experiential events. Its first function was the Changi Airline Awards on April 25. It went on to host The Moodie Davitt Report 2019 Duty Calls Charity Dinner on May 11.



In the pipeline



Busan entertainment venues

Busan International Art Center, Busan Opera House and Busan Lotte Town Complex are scheduled to open come 2022 in the South Korean port city as the answer to rising tourist demand for fresh arts and entertainment facilities. These hardware are also expected to support the destination's busy calendar of business events.



Ethiad Airways

Ethiad Airways has unveiled a major economy transformation programme, starting with the cabin upgrade and refurbishment of 23 narrow-body Airbus A320 and A321 aircraft. The retrofit programme, which includes new personalised wireless streaming entertainment to smartphone and tablet devices, is scheduled for completion in August this year.

Philippines makes move on two major 2021 conferences

By Rosa Ocampo

The Philippines government has announced that it will be making bids to host the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) General Assembly, and WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) Global Summit, both scheduled for 2021.

Tourism secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat declared that the country is “ready”.

She added that the country is “bullish in the pursuit” of hosting the two major events, after having successfully hosted Routes Asia 2018 and this year’s PATA Annual Summit, both held in Cebu City.

UNWTO’s General Assembly, the most important global meeting of senior tourism officials and high level private sector representatives, is held every two years. It will be hosted by the Russian Federation this year, while previously it was held in Chengdu, China in 2017.

Meanwhile, the annual WTTC Global

Summit was held in Seville, Spain recently in April while last year’s was in Argentina.

The business event sector is being considered a “new initiative” for the Philippines government, and the 2019 work programme of the Department

of Tourism and its marketing arm, Tourism Promotions Board, has indicated intentions to bid for “big ticket events”.

Aside from the WTTC Global Summit and UNWTO General Assembly, the country is also keen on other major events such as other UNESCO Creative Cities Network Annual Conferences.

Last year, the country launched its first-ever MICE roadmap, in a bid to reclaim the destination’s place as a business events powerhouse.



Panorama of Cebu City, where Routes Asia 2018 and PATA Annual Summit 2019 were held

M'sia's departure levy a disadvantage for inbound incentives

Malaysia's Air Passenger Departure Levy, scheduled to come into force this month or after, will not benefit the inbound business events sector, as DMCs fear that it will make it more difficult to compete with regional destinations for business.

Arokia Das Anthony, director, Luxury Tours Malaysia, said: “We are already at a disadvantage to Thailand and Singapore as both are regional hubs with better flight connectivity.”

He added that most of his inbound business events are from China and India, both of which are “price sensitive markets”.

Adam Kamal, general manager, Tour East Malaysia, expects the new tax to “affect the decision of business event organisers when choosing a destination”.

Kamal said in addition to the departure levy, there is also a tourism tax that Malaysia has enforced. Previously, the travel industry believed that once the levy is implemented, the tourism tax will be abolished. “However, that is not the case. Now there will be an additional charge involved, and that will be the deal breaker,” he pointed out.

To entice incentive groups to still choose Malaysia once the new tax is in place, Uzaidi Udanis, general manager of Eyes Holidays, said his company would have to “add more value in the form of activities”.

He compared the situation to Singapore, indicating that the city state was “expensive”, but incentive organisers were willing to travel there as there are many activities to do throughout the day.

The Air Passenger Departure Levy to be imposed on departing passengers to overseas destinations, are on the basis of a two-tier rate structure. It starts at RM20 (US\$4.80) per departing passenger to ASEAN member countries, and RM40 per departing passenger to all other international destinations. – S Puvanewary

TCEB taps foreign chambers for growth

Thailand has signed an MoU with the Foreign Chamber Alliance (FCA; representing Australia, Germany, US and UK) to push the development of the country's MICE business in longhaul markets.

Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya, president of Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), said: “(The) FCA has more than 20,000 members that include businessmen, investors, entrepreneurs from business, industrial and service sectors, such as Minor Hotels Group, AccorHotels Group, Marriott Hotels Group, convention centres business, as well as oil, mining, pharmaceutical, automobile and other industries.”

Calling these “high potential business groups”, Chiruit believes they will help propel the national economy as they have already been included among the S-curve targeted industries that the Thai government is eyeing, in line with its 4.0 policy.

With this MoU, the framework for MICE development will comprise five areas of operation, including exchanges of statistics and events, business development, market promotion, business research, and personnel development.

TCEB's next step is to discuss with FCA on the preparation of Phase I work plan.

– Suchat Sritama



It will soon cost more to depart from Malaysian airports

- Advertorial -

Busan elevates Singapore's market potential on back of new direct flight

By Karen Yue

The Singapore business event market has gained importance among Busan suppliers following SilkAir's May 1 commencement of four-times-weekly direct flights between the city-state and the coastal Korean city.

Prior to this, travellers from Singapore had to fly to Seoul for onward air connection to Busan, or journey on by bus or rapid train service.

According to Sehoon Choi, junior manager with Busan Tourism Organization's Convention Bureau, Singapore was never a key source market due to access limitation. Instead, Taiwan, Malaysia and Thailand were top Asian producers due to ease of access from these countries.

"There were 39,173 visitors from Singapore to Busan in 2018, which is about 16.8 per cent of total Singapore arrivals to South Korea," said Choi. "That was a 53 per cent increase over 2017 numbers. But with the new direct access provided by SilkAir, we expect a much stronger growth rate this year."

Choi referenced Malaysia as a case in point. "After a direct flight was launched (by AirAsia X) between Malaysia and Busan in 2013, arrivals rose steadily. Malaysia is now one of our main markets for incentive trips and corporate meetings."

He added that most events out of Singapore would be incentive programmes and corporate meetings due to the strong presence of MNCs in the city-state. How-

ever, Busan Tourism Organization is also keen to attract international conventions related to Busan's seven strategic industries such as marine, intelligent services and finance.

Singapore's appeal as a source market would improve further with Jeju Air's new direct Singapore-Busan service come July, noted Choi.

Also anticipating healthy demand from Singapore on the wings of SilkAir is Jin Hee Kim, sales manager, Crown Harbour Hotel Busan, who said: "We rarely get corporate groups from Singapore, but we believe SilkAir will change things."

James Kang, managing director with MEPS International, a Seoul-based DMC and PCO, said the SilkAir service would allow his agency to promote Busan as an entry point for a wider business event programme in South Korea, but noted that higher-end groups would still prefer to fly with main flag carriers.



Busan enjoys improved air access

In brief

Sabah CVB plans on hold

A reliable source within the Sabah Convention Bureau is correcting the misconception that the formation of the body has been terminated by the Sabah State Government, stating that the process has instead only been put on hold.

Since its inception in January 2018 until January this year, the source described the bureau as being "in-transition" while waiting for its endorsement from the state government. It is understood that staff from Sabah Tourism Board's MICE unit who were seconded to the future bureau have temporarily returned to the parent. They report to Noredah Othman, acting general manager at Sabah Tourism Board.

STB awards Herbalife's Amy Lim

Amy Lim, director of events, Asia Pacific at Herbalife Nutrition, was named Best Business Event Champion by the Singapore Tourism Board for her work in anchoring Herbalife Honors 2019, as well as Herbalife South East Asia Extravaganza, in Singapore five times over the past decade with over 10,000 attendees each time. She took home the Experience Excellence (MICE) award at this year's Singapore Tourism Awards 2019, which also recognised seven other business events specialists and organisations for their contribution to the city-state's MICE industry.



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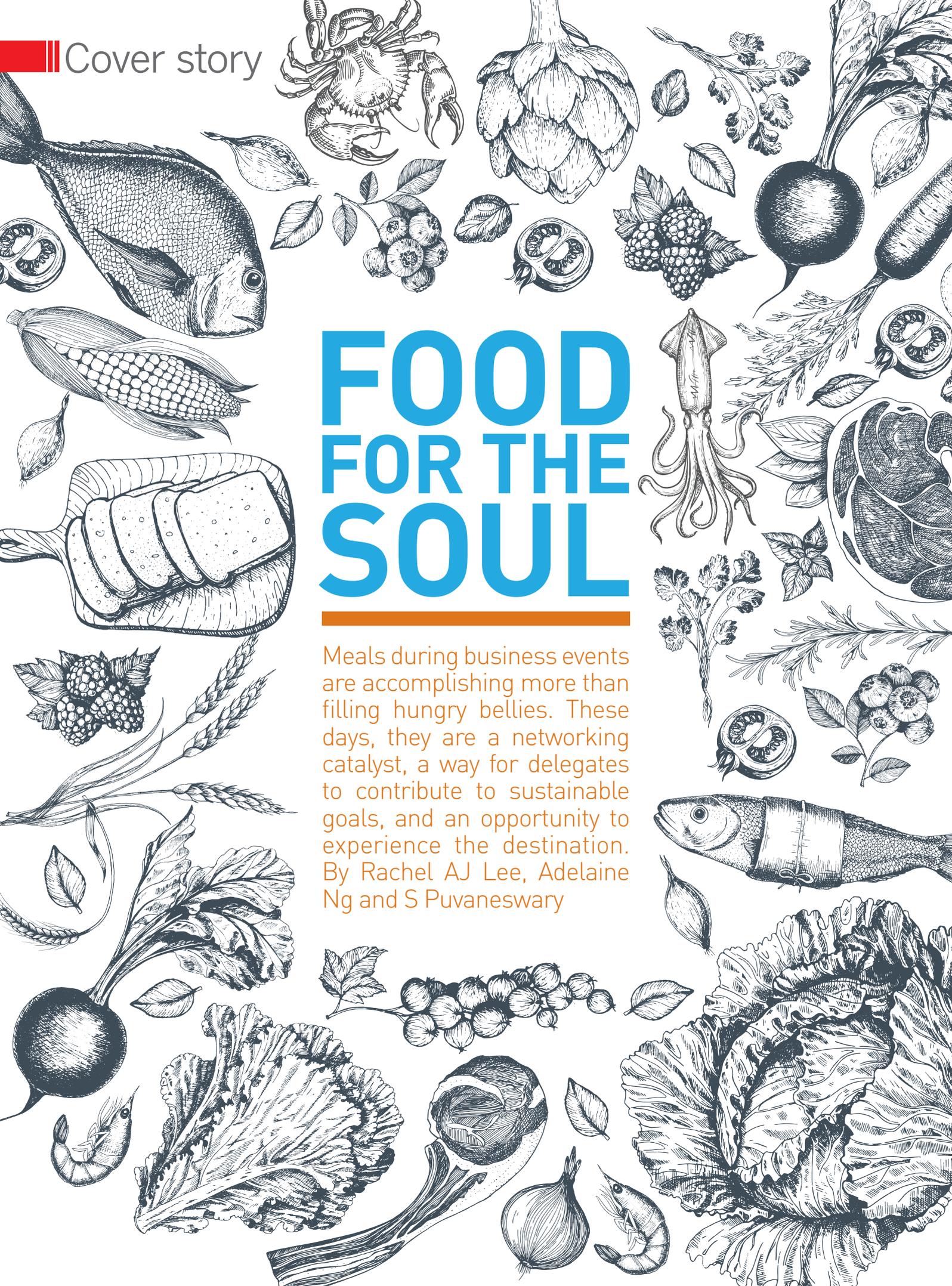


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FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Meals during business events are accomplishing more than filling hungry bellies. These days, they are a networking catalyst, a way for delegates to contribute to sustainable goals, and an opportunity to experience the destination. By Rachel AJ Lee, Adelaine Ng and S Puvaneswary



A heavier focus on more nourishing dishes, unique meeting spaces, and a spoonful of CSR commitment, are now among several F&B trends that event planners, venues and chefs have identified as the necessary ingredients in making a dining event successful.

Quest for healthy eating

The most noticeable trend in recent years – not just for the events industry – is the significant change in the way we consume food, as more and more people are becoming concerned about health and wellness.

“Over the years we’ve seen a lot more people with dietary restrictions or dietary requirements. In a 100 pax event, it’s very easy to see 20 to 30 per cent who have dietary preferences, and another 20 to 30 per cent who have dietary restrictions.

“Being an event planner you have to take both into consideration,” said CWT Meetings & Events (M&E), director meetings & events Singapore, Petrina Goh.

Mohd Kamaruddin Adnin, corporate executive chef, MAS Awana Services, concurred: “There have been more requests for healthy food over the last three years and this includes less sugar, less salt and less use of oil in food preparation.”

MAS Awana Services provides private catering throughout Malaysia, and counts Malaysia Airlines, Bank Rakyat and KPJ Healthcare among its clients.

Michelin-star chef Jérémy Gillon of Restaurant JAG in Singapore – which of-

fers private dining and a corporate event space – shared that more of his diners are asking for lighter and more plant-based menus due to the raised awareness around healthier and cleaner eating.

“Requests for more vegetarian and vegan menus at Restaurant JAG also come from traditional meat-eaters who still want a luxurious meal, while taking a small break from meat or seafood. This gives us a chance to show that vegan or vegetarian menus can be luxurious and substantial,” Gillon noted.

And as a chef, Gillon relishes the challenge of transforming vegetables into a hero ingredient on a plate, for instance, his creation of a button mushroom ice-cream as a starter.

All these views are backed by IACC’s *2018 Meeting Room of the Future* report, where meeting planners around the globe have noted a significant increase in conference delegates expressing dietary and allergen requirements during event registration.

Food as interaction enablers

Another hot F&B trend has emerged on the back of increased importance placed on event networking opportunities. Event planners are now leaning towards more interactive and free-flowing dining arrangements.

Mike Lee, vice president of sales, Marina Bay Sands (MBS), said: “As networking plays a pivotal role in every meeting, we see a growing demand for easy grab-and-go snack items that are convenient



“We also continue to push boundaries and help clients raise the bar by creating ‘Earth-friendly’ menus featuring dishes made from products that are either organic-certified, Fair Trade or Rainforest Alliance-certified, responsibly produced or locally-sourced.”

Mike Lee
Vice president of sales,
Marina Bay Sands

for meeting delegates.”

As such, MBS’ MICE and banquet teams are offering pop-up cafes within function venues.

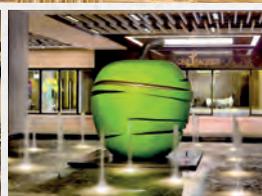
Goh shares the same observation. She said: “Increasingly, we see clients pushing away from traditional sit-down dinners or lunches, and one of the social functions will have networking taken into consideration.”

The desire for a more social dining setting appears stronger with events involving mostly millennials, noted Adam Kamal, general manager, Tour East Malaysia.

“(For such events), there are more requests for finger food or stand-up dinners which encourage delegates to mingle. This results in better networking opportunities as compared with sit-down dinners,” said Adam.



The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre's atrium was transformed into an attractive and interactive dining showcase for AIME delegates this year



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It's showtime with a bite

In addition, having an F&B theme or an eye-catching set-up with a sprinkle of showmanship, is becoming a hot thing to do at events.

Peter Haycroft, executive chef at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC), said: "Food experiences now need to be brought to life. Our EAT Stations are our way of bringing the outside in. When you visit the stations, suddenly you're not in a convention centre, you're transported to Chinatown or exploring the hidden gems of Melbourne's laneways."

During AIME – held at the MCEC earlier this year –, the venue executed a showcase that included an Asian hawker dumpling bar, a Bloody Mary hanging garden, and a raining charcuterie that "literally falls on your plate".

"(It's about) elevating food on platters to visually striking stands that people can interact with," said Haycroft.

Stewart Manson, general manager – hotel, F&B and convention centre at Crowne Plaza Alice Springs Lasseters, has also seen more requests for food stations and live action presentations.

"(The) number of events that traditionally would have had sit down dinners have now moved to market stall layouts with some 'theatre' included," Manson told *TTGmice*.

Live sushi preparation, barbecue stations and interactive dessert stations

are most popular, he noted, especially among business events that are less formal and more focused on networking opportunities.

Setting unique scenes

The growing hunger for dining innovation has impacted the choice of F&B venues, noted planners who said the usual hotel ballrooms are falling out of favour.

Jerry Sim, director of sales, Singapore-based catering specialist Purple Sage Group, shared that event delegates who visit Singapore usually "look for something different, and would prefer incorporating local touches in their food and event set-ups".

There is also a keenness for dining events at unique venues such as Gardens by the Bay.

According to CWT's Goh, some 10 to 15 per cent of clients look for unique spaces outside of hotels.

"They want to transform art galleries, container tanks and farms into event venues. It allows us a lot more flexibility to deal with their F&B requirements as well, because we're not restricted to the hotel kitchen," she pointed out.

Goh added that places like Open Farm Community and Kranji Farm Resort are hidden gems, as it is interesting for overseas delegates to discover that such green places exist in an urban city like Singapore.

"While corporate events cannot avoid

hotel ballrooms because of the need for breakout sessions and plenaries, the social function – such as off-site dinners – can be taken out of the hotel," she said.

Meanwhile, Arokia Das Anthony, director of Luxury Tours Malaysia, has observed an increase in requests for offsite events, where at least one dining event is held outside of a hotel. The shift is good, as this allows the Malaysian culture to shine, "be it (through) the food or the architecture of the venue", he said.

For MAS Awana Services' Mohd, he noticed that company retreats held off-site tended to stick with packed meals.

Tracing origins

A final F&B trend to have surfaced is the increased interest in the origins of the ingredients used in what event delegates are served. If there is an element of CSR in play, it is a bonus.

"People want to know where their produce comes from," said Haycroft. "(To that end) our 100 mile lunch menu is inspired by Melbourne. We source all major ingredients from local farms and markets within a 100-mile radius of MCEC."

Haycroft added that customers also value opportunities to contribute to socially responsible actions undertaken by event venues. For instance, event attendees dining at MCEC contribute to the venue's support of local food producers.



Singapore's Restaurant JAG is responding to the sustainable dining desire by partnering small batch producers and farmers to obtain the freshest ingredients for their menus.

No stranger to sustainable food sources, MBS's Harvest Menu has been offered to events for years. The programme uses fresh and high quality ingredients that are locally and regionally sourced.

"We also continue to push boundaries and help clients raise the bar by creating 'Earth-friendly' menus featuring dishes made from products that are either organic-certified, Fair Trade or Rainforest Alliance-certified, responsibly produced or locally-sourced," Lee added.

Purple Sage Group brings the farm-to-table concept through sustainable seafood (locally-farmed barramundi) and locally grown produce in its menus.

"This allows clients to enjoy food at its freshest and least modified state," Sim said.

The company also takes a step farther by eliminating disposables, and uses chinaware and fully compostable dining ware to minimise trash.

Regardless of the numerous trends that may exist, CWT's Goh said one must not overlook the taste of the food, as a delicious feast will leave the biggest impression on the attendee.

Unique venues for dining events are in (pictured from left) Kranji Farm Resort, Restaurant JAG and Open Farm Community's Mandala Herb Garden

"Delegates who visit Singapore usually look for something different, and would prefer incorporating local touches in their food, event set-ups."

Jerry Sim
Director of sales,
Purple Sage Group



Tasty ideas

Forget traditional banquet dinners, here are some innovative ideas to whet your appetite – from a home-cooked dinner to a tiny animated chef dancing on your plate



AUSTRALIA

SHOWTIME
EVENT GROUP

HONG KONG

M YACHTS

INDONESIA

NIRVANA
ROEMAH AIR

Trying to please the masses at a large-scale event no longer needs to be a daunting task, thanks to this inventive idea. Showtime Event Group (SEG) is in the midst of creating a special experience app designed to resolve problems where sometimes food options may be excellent but customers can't find what they're looking for, or they miss out on unique experiences because they simply weren't aware of their existence.

Delegates can receive the app in advance of an event and curate their own experience, for example selecting their choice of food or making time to sit and learn from a craft cheese or winemaker stationed in a corner.

Sweet or savoury? Meat or vegetable? Spice or mild? The options promise exciting possibilities where delegates can say goodbye to missed opportunities because the signage wasn't visible enough.

GREAT FOR: Large-scale events

CAPACITY: 500 to 5,000 pax

CONTACT:
events@seg.melbourne

Clink glasses and sample canapes during a get-together while cruising along Hong Kong's iconic Victoria Harbour, or savour a five-course dinner while sealing that corporate deal.

M Yachts' private charters are exclusive and offer complete privacy and personalisation, allowing for an intimate time onboard. Each luxury cruiser also comes with a team of highly trained service staff and chef.

Itineraries can be created by the company, or planned by the client. For instance, should the afternoon be balmy, a sumptuous seafood spread can be arranged on a bimini-covered sundeck. Event planners can also arrange for a picnic on an idyllic beach accessible only by boat.

GREAT FOR: Entertaining VIP clients, product launch parties, cocktail events, and corporate sit-down dinners

CAPACITY: Depending on the type and size of yacht chartered, it can comfortably accommodate between two to 40 pax. For larger parties, multiple yachts can be anchored together for a unique dining experience out at sea.

CONTACT:
anita@myachts.team

This F&B experience in Lombok has set tables floating on water, around five to 10 metres away from the beach. Participants pick up their food and drinks, regardless of whether it's snacks or a barbecued lunch, and bring it to the floating table to nosh on while standing in the cool water.

They can then work off the lunch by going swimming, canoeing, or snorkelling just a few metres away from the "dining area". Not only do guests enjoy their lunch break in a different way, event planners also do not have to worry about a post-lunch coma.

Event planners can also build a CSR element into this lunch event by combining it with a coral planting activity.

GREAT FOR: Post-meeting lunch, or part of a teambuilding activity

CAPACITY: 20 to 150 pax

CONTACT:
info@lombokandbeyond.com



MALAYSIA

ELEMENTS KUALA LUMPUR

Le Petit Chef – also known as The World’s Smallest Chef – is an innovative dining experience featuring a small, animated chef. The animation is projected onto diners’ plates with 3D project mapping technology, and proceeds to “cook” their dishes in front of their eyes. Guests will be treated to a delicious meal and a captivating show filled with sight and sound.

The menu is designed by Michelin-star chef, Jeff Ramsey, who is the youngest chef to be awarded by Michelin when he was serving at the Tapas Molecular Bar at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Tokyo.

Event planners can choose a four- or five-course meal. Corporate buyouts of the experience are possible with advance notice.

While Elements Kuala Lumpur is offering Le Petit Chef until the end of 2019, it is looking to extend this to 2020.

GREAT FOR: Off-site dinners for board of directors; VIP conference speakers; incentive groups; client dinners

CAPACITY: No more than 36 people per session. There are three 1.5-hour sessions from Mondays to Saturdays (18.00, 20.00 and 22.00). On Sundays, there is an additional session at 15.00.

CONTACT:
info@elements.my



SINGAPORE

SOULFUL GRAINS

Soulful Grains, hosted by Rita Danani – a marketing professional by day and cook by night – in a 1970s semi-detached house in the Telok Kurau neighbourhood is an experience offered through cultural food experience company Noshtrekker.

The dishes that Danani serves up are influenced by Indian and Malay flavours, and she provides a wellness and sustainability twist on local favourites. Diners can expect freshly home-baked bread enhanced with turmeric and curry leaves, as well as a healthier version of *nasi goreng* (fried rice).

Everything that comes from her kitchen is made from scratch, while all the ingredients she uses are sourced and grown by social enterprises in the region (such as Indonesia and Thailand), with speciality in plant-based foods, herbs and spices.

GREAT FOR: Incentives; intimate dinners for overseas VIPs; and groups interested in social enterprise, CSR, and wellness

CAPACITY: Four to eight pax

CONTACT:
reservations@noshtrekker.com



THAILAND

GONG COFFEE

This three-hour-long coffee workshop in Ranong is a fascinating experience for groups who are interested in coffee beans grown in Thailand.

A coffee master will be on hand to teach guests the entire process of how a cup of joe is created, from the hand-roasting to grinding and brewing. The coffee master will also make a cup of high-quality java to suit each person’s preference.

In addition to the coffee experience, the workshop venue is also on the same compound as Gong’s Resort, a guesthouse which offers lodging and great local food. Lunch before or after the workshop can be arranged on-site.

GREAT FOR: Incentives; groups interested in the coffee-making process and social enterprise

CAPACITY: One to 50 pax, but the smaller the group the better

CONTACT:
guru@blackricetravel.com



An artist's impression of the promenade along RWS's future waterfront lifestyle complex

Expansions on the horizon

Singapore is on the cusp of massive hardware change with a slate of developments that promises to bring a multitude of new event venues and possibilities. By [Pamela Chow](#)

Large-scale transformations across Singapore are set to boost the business events capacity and appeal of the island. The bulk of the announcements came in April, when Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) and Marina Bay Sands (MBS) proclaimed a total investment of S\$9 billion (US\$6.5 billion) in expansion plans, with each pumping in S\$4.5 billion.

These investments will be channelled into non-gaming facilities, and mark about two-thirds of the integrated resorts' (IR) initial S\$15 billion investment in 2006.

Under its expansion scheme coined "RWS 2.0", RWS will increase its gross floor area by about 50 per

cent. The additional 164,000m² will be largely achieved through intensification of existing land, and will include a waterfront lifestyle complex headlined by two new destination hotels.

Coupled with the expansion of the Central Zone, up to 1,100 more guestrooms will come online and there will be a "significant expansion" of RWS's business events capacity with which to "garner more top-tier events", announced RWS.

RWS 2.0 will also feature a raft of new entertainment and lifestyle launches. By end-2020, a pirate-themed "adventure dining playhouse" will replace the Resorts World Theatre. Coming down the

line are a public seafront attraction with free evening light shows, two new areas for Universal Studios Singapore, and the redevelopment of the S.E.A. Aquarium by three times its current size into the Singapore Oceanarium.

RWS's expansion will be delivered in phases, with new experiences opening every year from 2020. Completion is projected for 2025.

Tan Hee Teck, RWS CEO, said: "RWS will form an integral part of the future Greater Southern Waterfront and become a centrepiece of the transformative journey to enliven the southern corridor."

On the main island, MBS has plans to build a fourth tower de-

“Depending on developer interest, JLD could open up opportunities for BTMICE facilities, which may even include purpose-built spaces like a convention centre.”

Keith Tan
Chief executive,
Singapore Tourism Board



signed by the property’s original architect, Moshe Safdie. This new tower – which will rise on roughly eight acres of land – will include a 15,000-seat entertainment arena, a luxury hotel with some 1,000 keys and additional events spaces that will grow MBS’ business events capacity by about 30 to 40 per cent. MBS has not shared a timeline for completion.

Shortly after this announcement, Singapore’s Senior Minister of State for trade and industry and education, Chee Hong Tat, unveiled plans to develop the Jurong Lake District (JLD) in western Singapore into an integrated tourism development with attractions, hotels, retail and F&B offerings. Confirmed developments include an overhaul of the Science Centre Singapore by mid-2020, as well as the introduction of Singapore’s third national garden, measur-

ing 20ha.

The ministry has launched an Expression of Interest which will remain open until November this year.

Keith Tan, chief executive of the Singapore Tourism Board, said depending on developer interest, JLD could open up opportunities for business events, such as purpose-built spaces like a convention centre.

He added that with the “greater push towards bleisure”, this development may encourage visitors to extend their stay in Singapore by one to two nights as well as “create an ecosystem of seeing tools trialled

TALKING NUMBERS

10 per cent

The growth in business travel and MICE arrivals for Singapore between 2017 and 2018, reaching 2.7 million

S\$3.4 billion

Equivalent to US\$2.5 billion, this was the business travel and MICE tourism receipts year-to-date 3Q2018, a 10 per cent YOY increase from 2017

2,823

The projected hotel room count in the pipeline for 2019 and beyond



and tested live, making for a more compelling destination”.

Other broader tourism push for Singapore includes the redevelopment of greater Sentosa as part of the Greater Southern Waterfront, the cultivation of the sprawling Mandai ecotourism area which will include an eco-tourism resort run by Banyan Tree Holdings, and the rejuvenation of Orchard Road.

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

Clockwise from bottom left: Marina Bay Sands; artist's impression of Oceanarium; Orchard Road shopping belt



Incentive game changers

Development plans for Brisbane are elevating the city's reputation among Asian incentive programme decision makers, writes **Adelaine Ng**

Artist's impression of the future Queen's Wharf integrated resort in Brisbane



Yes, that's a soaring skydeck but it's not in Singapore; it's in Brisbane. Or at least it will be soon, as part of a massive development underway in the city to boost tourism and significantly up the ante as a destination for incentive programmes.

Brisbane has an impressive A\$15 billion-plus (US\$10.9 billion) currently in major projects either under construction or planned to 2026. This includes a new parallel runway at Brisbane Airport and a new International Cruise Ship Terminal by next year, and a much anticipated Queen's Wharf integrated resort which will change the city's skyline and give Australia's third biggest city a leisure and entertainment precinct worthy of incentive tourism prospects.

The airport redevelopment itself will cost A\$3.8 billion, with A\$1.3 billion going into the new runway which will double the airport's

capacity, drawing comparisons to Singapore's Changi Airport and Hong Kong Airport. Once completed next year, it will be lauded the best runway system in Australia.

"The parallel runway at the airport is really critical," said Juliet Alabaster, general manager of business events for Brisbane Marketing.

"The more aviation access we can get into the city, the more opportunity we have to attract incentive groups," she said.

In fact, optimism about the airport's developments and Brisbane's new offerings have already begun working its charm to secure additional flights, according to Brisbane Airport's executive general manager of aviation development and partnerships, Jim Parashos.

"It's (been) a key enabler for us to attract new services," he said.

"Particularly for key growth markets in Asia, where we can now serve long-range narrow body

aircraft like the A321neo. Even in the lead up to the new runway opening we've had most of our growth come in from Asia including Hainan Airlines from Shenzhen, Malaysia Airlines resuming its four-weekly service, Philippine Airlines starting non-stop flights, and in June the launch of Thai AirAsia X flights."

As for that skydeck, which will be the jewel in the crown when the Queen's Wharf integrated resort is finished in 2022, imagine a connected space of five- and six-star hotels, 50 bars and restaurants, a cross-river pedestrian bridge, boutique shopping, vast green spaces, casino, meeting spaces, theatre and nine restored heritage buildings.

The arc-shaped skydeck will offer 360-degree views of Brisbane river and the city, provide spaces for events, and is anticipated to be the destination's hot new selfie spot.

This is in addition to infrastructure developments in the next five

years including a tunnel rail line that will unlock bottlenecks in the city's transport network and a new rapid transit system called Brisbane Metro.

Already a lure for the events market is the recently completed Howard Smith Wharves which revitalised an 1880s-era site and now offers a five-star Art Series Hotel, an exhibition and events centre, craft brewery and 2.7 hectares of public space for markets and festivals.

There's also new hotel stock to whet planners' appetite.

Thirty new hotels will be delivered between 2014 and 2024, which is good news even for established accommodation like Brisbane Marriott, which has just celebrated 21 years and finished a major redevelopment earlier this year (see *Marketplace*, page 8).

"I think we've got some of the best new hotels in Australia which makes it so much easier for us to sell what Brisbane can offer to all customers," remarked general manager John Douglas.

So what turned Brisbane on its head? "Probably three years ago we really looked at our strategy as the CVB for the city and we hadn't been doing a lot in the incentive space. We didn't have the products and we were seen as a corporate town," said Alabaster.

Fast forward to hosting Tourism Australia's signature incentive event Dreamtime in 2017 with 100 international incentive buyers as guests, and Brisbane was "leapfrogged into consideration".

Douglas, Parashos and Alabaster also speak from the same page when it comes to the Asian market, confirming that it is front and centre of their marketing strategies. From Chinese language wayfinders at Brisbane Airport to Marriott's Chinese-friendly Liyiu programme, the city's key tourism stakeholders are fully on board with Brisbane Marketing's Asia-centric vision. And the efforts are paying off.

"Last financial year we only placed 14 financial bids," said Alabaster.

"For this year we're already up to 26. So I guess we're starting to see the fruits of our labour in terms of opportunities coming through those relationships that we are growing and building on. In terms of percentage, in the past our overall economic impact figure for the bureau would've been five per cent – small.

"This year it's moving towards 20

per cent of what we (anticipate winning) for the city," she continued, also noting that a lot of business events are booked independent of the bureau.

The developments have earned an approving nod from Tourism Australia's former managing director John O'Sullivan, who noted that Brisbane is making an impression in Asia.

"On my travels throughout Asia, (the Queen's Wharf development) is a project that has captured the imagination of many of our Asian partners," he said. "The expansion of Brisbane Airport with the second runway will give the city the potential to become the nation's gateway to Asia".

So towering business event possibilities for Brisbane? You might say they're sky-high.

TALKING NUMBERS

3

The number of years in a multi-million dollar partnership between Brisbane Airport and Brisbane Marketing to boost brand recognition to international audiences

A\$3.6 billion

The value of the Queen's Wharf project, equivalent to US\$2.5 billion. Scheduled for completion by 2022, the development will change the city's skyline and put Brisbane on the tourism map

A\$1,437 million

The tourism spend in Queensland by Chinese tourists at year ending December 2018, making it the city's top spenders



The revitalised Howard Smith Wharves offer many lifestyle attractions

DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH

1

A business case for a Brisbane Live entertainment area has been submitted to the state government. If approved, the A\$2 billion (US\$1.4 billion) precinct will reinvigorate the Roma Street rail yards in the Brisbane CBD to include a world-class 17,000-seat indoor arena, restaurants, bars and cinemas. It will enable short commutes or walks from the inner city to various entertainment venues in the area.

2

The Brisbane International Cruise Terminal will triple the size of the city's current cruise industry and facilitate the world's largest mega-cruise ships when the A\$158 million project is completed in 2020. Although the bureau's traditional focus is to fill hotel rooms, Brisbane Marketing have indicated the possibility of future talks where MICE events might fit.

3

Brisbane Airport is building a A\$300 million Auto Mall aimed at attracting global attention for its event, conference and experience offering. The 50ha precinct includes a test track and has been compared to the Yas Marina Circuit in Abu Dhabi. Located next to the International Terminal and scheduled for completion in 2021, the track will be available for a range of purposes including test drives and corporate events.

Small towns take the big lead

Taiwan turns on its small town charms to entice corporate travellers to spend more time on the peninsula, writes **Pamela Chow**



Serene autumn landscape in Miaoli's Yuanli Township, one of 30 rural towns being promoted by MEET Taiwan for corporate events

To woo more Asian corporate travellers, Taiwan has embarked on a campaign this year that highlights her traditional sites and small towns.

Under this campaign, a total of 30 rural towns have been shortlisted for showcase. These include Miaoli's Yuanli Township, which is home to grass-woven arts and crafts; Tainan's Yanshui District for its Beehive Fireworks Festival; Jiaoxi Township in Yilan for its hotspring hotels; and Hualien's Fenglin, which has been recognised by Cittaslow International as Taiwan's first Slow City.

Nina Lin, deputy executive director of MEET Taiwan, told *TTGmice* that as local experiences and "slow travel" take over the leisure space, they are also gaining popularity among business travellers.

"We hope that business travellers coming to Taiwan (for events) can extend their stay and explore our (rural districts). Some of our trade

partners provide curated one-day itineraries to event delegates. We hope that this campaign will help visitors experience more of Taiwan's cultures and local offerings," said Lin.

The arrival of this campaign is timely, as trade players have observed rising demand for incentive travel and teambuilding trips to destinations beyond Taiwan's familiar city areas.

Han Chang, representative of inbound tour operator Taiwan Tour, noted that there has been an increase in the number of requests for "relaxing" incentive trips, and these are often held in more rural areas such as Taitung and Hualien in eastern Taiwan.

These groups would engage in activities such as outdoor cycling, visits and interactions with aboriginal communities as well as sticky rice-making to experience the "original culture" of the country, he said.

Although footfalls are being

pushed to smaller townships in Taiwan, Chang said visitorship to the capital will not be dented.

He explained that a large portion of corporate groups – especially first- and second-time visitors – still expect to make a stop at Taipei when in the country, as it is a landmark of Taiwan.

"The last day or two could be spent in Taipei, be for shopping or to visit other venues in the capital city," said Chang.

Taiwan has remained a firm favourite for incentive programmes, particularly among companies from China and South-east Asia.

Lin shared that the number of corporate groups from South-east Asia has "increased ten-fold" since the 2016 launch of the New Southbound Policy, an initiative of the Taiwanese government to enhance cooperation and trade exchanges between Taiwan and 18 countries in South-east Asia, South Asia and Australasia.

When asked about the preferred activities in Taiwan of these markets, Lin said groups generally "demand for programmes with an element of creativity and destinations which can accommodate large groups".

However, finer differences between China and South-east Asia markets exist.

"For example, the Chinese have certain expectations about Taiwan, and may want to visit famous landmarks like Alishan (National Scenic Area in Southern Taiwan). South-east Asians prefer something fresh and unique, and are more open to trying innovative things like using technology in their teambuilding activities," Lin said.



TALKING NUMBERS

60

The number of countries that enjoy visa exemption for travel into Taiwan

2,362

The number of exhibition booths that can be accommodated in the newly opened Hall 2 of the Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center

NT\$500 million

The amount invested by the Taiwan External Trade Development Council in the overhaul of the Taipei World Trade Center Hall 1 and Taipei International Convention Center, equivalent to US\$15.9 million

■ Catch up

Petrina Goh

CWT Meetings & Events' Singapore director candidly shares how she accidentally fell down the events rabbit hole, and why she has stayed on in the wonderland since

How did you first enter the events industry?

Some people start off knowing what they want to do with their career, but I went in the reverse by finding out what I didn't like – which was to be in a deskbound job.

One of my family members introduced me to working part-time in a hotel, and I realised I really liked meeting people. I then realised that if I'm good at it and I like it, why not make a career out of it? I was subsequently introduced to an events agency (MCI Group) by an ex-colleague.

At every stage of my career I've been lucky to

have good mentors, and be able to learn from both my managers and peers.

What is the best part of your job?

The colleagues and the team that I work with. They are all very driven to learn new things and trends. I love being able to bounce off ideas and learn from my peers.

The other fun thing is that I get to travel so much. I was 21 when I started in events, and being able to travel around the world at that age – until now – has been a good part of my job. For me, travel doesn't lose its lustre. In fact, it makes me want to visit a country

at least twice, once for work and once for leisure. I get two very different perspectives when I revisit a country. I also use it to bookmark where I want to go next! For example, I want to go back to Switzerland, Ireland, and China.

Do you think you'll retire in this industry?

I definitely want to continue doing events. I think the industry is dynamic, and it never gets boring because every event is different, and every client I deal with is different. It is the chameleon-like nature of the job that I really love.

How do you motivate yourself daily?

My motto is: pursue greatness anyway. This is because in the events industry, work-

ing 15 to 20 hour days, and sometimes weekends, can be really tiring. The important thing is to look forward, and always try to outdo yourself.

What's the most memorable event you organised?

In Ireland, I organised a *Game of Thrones* experience – complete with the appearance of several actors – for delegates who were fans of the series.

The experience even made me, a non-fan, want to watch the series.

It was fun watching something I plan come to life. One thing I realised about being an event planner is having to be a little bit selfless, as you're planning a best experience for other people.



People come first, and that's how great events materialise. I get a great sense of satisfaction when I watch what I build comes to life.

What do people think you do for a living?

I don't think my friends and family have any idea what I do for a living! They think I travel very frequently for holidays, thanks to the fancy pictures with Hawaii hula boys and *Game of Thrones* actors (laughs). Some people also think I'm a tour operator!

Tell us something most people don't know about you.

I really love doing art – drawing and painting. But I'm not great at it (laughs). Most of the art I do is hidden in some cupboard somewhere because I think it's too shameful to show the world. But I try it anyway, (in reference to her daily motto) and because it's a good outlet for stress. – Rachel AJ Lee

■ Appointments



Darren Harding

Darren Harding
Darren Harding is Nicolo Chengdu's new executive chef. He holds over 20 years of culinary experience, spanning five-star hotels in Germany, Japan, the Philippines and Thailand.

Janet Chan
Shinta Mani Hotels has appointed Janet Chan as group director of sales & marketing, who will be based in Bangkok. She



Janet Chan

brings 20 years' experience to her role with an extensive background in luxury travel. She was last director of luxury sales North Asia for Accor's luxury brands.

Karan Berry
Karan Berry is now general manager of Mandarin Oriental, Taipei. The former head of The Ritz-Carlton Pacific Place, Jakarta, brings with him more than 22



Karan Berry

years of experience in the hospitality industry and hotel operations.

Martin Sirk
Global Association Hubs Partnerships has appointed former ICCA head Martin Sirk as its international advisor. He replaces Hervé Bosquet who has retired.

Peter Savoff
Peter Savoff has been named general manager



Peter Savoff

of Darwin Convention Centre, Australia. He has more than 25 years of experience in the hospitality sector, and joins the AEG Ogden family from Anthony John Property Group, where he managed the Emporium Hotel since its opening in 2007.

Prachaya Basset
Prachaya Basset is now the director of sales at The St Regis



Prachaya Basset

Bangkok. Basset brings with her more than 15 years of experience in the hospitality sector, joining from her most recent stint at Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok.

Tane Picken
Tane Picken is now general manager of Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore. He was previously general manager of Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort & Spa, Singapore.

TTG goes to Mauritius

It was a sunny getaway for the company's annual teambuilding and retreat, where everyone got as much – or as little – action as they fancied. Photos by *TTGmice*





South Korea beckons

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) brings to Singapore 37 local MICE suppliers to entice city state planners to bite. Photos by KTO and Karen Yue



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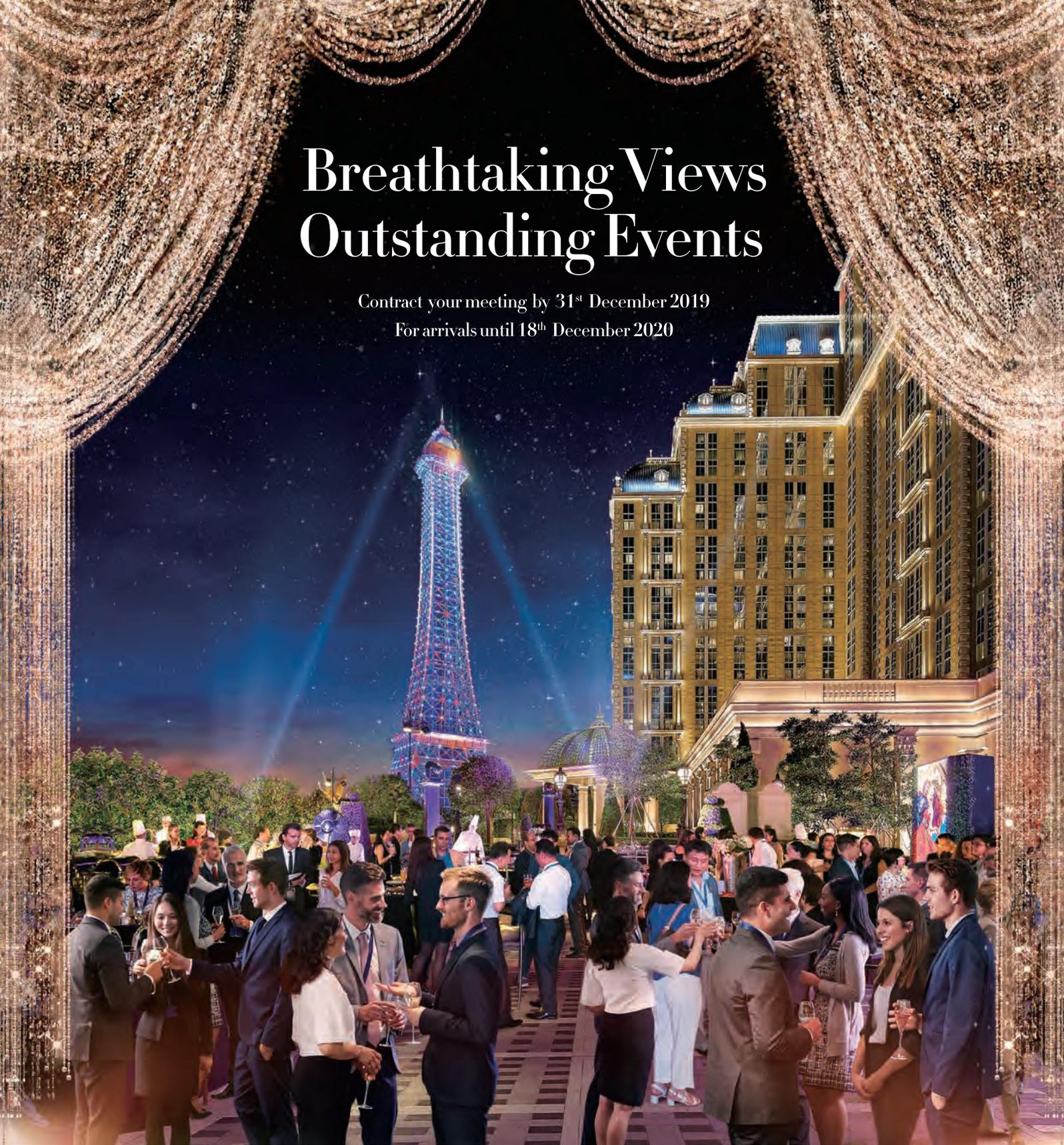
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