

APRIL 2020

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Shikoku awakens

e-sports incentives
grow on Jap firms

ITAP 2019 deepens
learning

How to pack a
useful goody bag



BUILDING IN A LOCAL ANGLE

Predictable teambuilding activities begone, for corporate bonding time now heavily features localised and experiential activities along with a movement towards CSR

22 – 24 Sep 2020

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at CentralWorld
Bangkok, Thailand

IT&CM Asia
Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings

CTW
Asia-Pacific
Corporate Travel World



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The good, bad, ugly of the C-crisis



Karen Yue
Group Editor

At the time of writing, Covid-19 is still spreading – beyond Asia where it has already upset daily life, slowed businesses and threatened jobs, and into Europe. Stakeholders in the travel and tourism as well as meetings industries are still trying to make sense of the impact of the outbreak on their business, as airlines continue to cut flights, more travel restrictions are set, and tradeshow deliberate their continuity plans.

The Covid-19 outbreak has brought out a lot of good, bad and ugly in people, and their responses have no doubt impacted the travel, tourism and meetings businesses.

Ugly – panic is feeding racism and xenophobia, resulting in stories of verbal and physical attacks on Chinese and Asians around the world. The fear of being targeted at home or abroad is weakening travel sentiments as much as the worry of infection.

Bad – the spread of sensational and fake news around the outbreak continues to influence travel decisions, strangling travel and tourism businesses and all others linked to it like retail, F&B and transportation.

But wait, there is good too, and I've saved the best for last. Even as travel and tourism companies struggle to stay afloat, many have found it in their heart to support the external community and their own people.

Shangri-La Hotel, Wuhan prepared and delivered over 1,000 meals every day to strained local healthcare workers, while Royal Caribbean Cruises and Fosun Holdings, which owns hospitality firms like Thomas Cook China and Club Med, donated medical supplies to the Chinese government and Chinese medical institutions respectively.

As job security flounders, leaders have stepped in to take care of their folks. Wyndham Hotels & Resorts Singapore has programmes to ensure its staff continue to feel busy and secure about their employment, while the CEO of Bespoke Travel Company, with operations in Beijing and Shanghai, worked to find alternative sources of income for her team.

Love is also all around in Thailand. Local MICE stakeholders, who no doubt are facing difficulties themselves because of event cancellations and postponements, have offered to financially support the national CVB in its destination promotion campaigns.

While it is easy to define this outbreak by the havoc it wrecked on people, we can choose to remember it by the positive human stories that were spun as a result.



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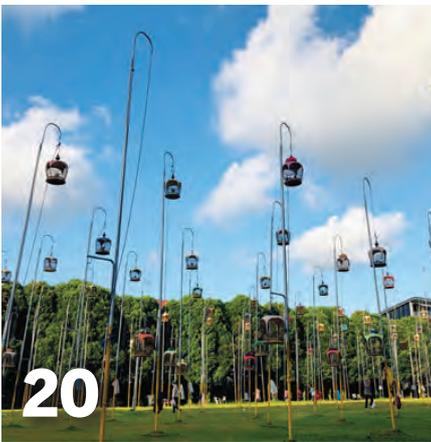
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SHERATON GRAND MACAO / THE ST. REGIS MACAO

Macao: Mighty Marvelous

A Special Administrative Region of China at the Pearl River Delta, Macao continues to punch above its weight in the MICE arena. Its accessibility, exceptional facilities and East-meets-West culture continue to impress event planners.

Global appeal

Getting to Macao is as easy as its international airport is served by 34 airlines. The new Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao bridge and the one-hour ferry service from Hong Kong International Airport, itself served by well over 100 airlines, give visitors even more options. Macao's appeal for international events is further enhanced by the fact that passport holders from more than 70 countries and territories enjoy visa-free entry.

Cultural melting pot

Macao's Portuguese-Chinese heritage is reflected in its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site full of historical attractions and fascinating traditions. Macao is also a UNESCO "Creative City of Gastronomy" noted for its vibrant food culture.

Planners have always recognised Macao's capacity for large-scale events, thanks to its many world-class resorts with ample room inventories and specialist MICE services. This is especially true at Cotai Strip, where business and leisure are equally well catered for. Here, hotels such as Sheraton Grand Macao (4,001 rooms) and The St. Regis Macao (400 rooms) offer a stunning array of guestrooms, restaurants, meeting and function rooms, banquet venues, and value-for-money packages. These hotels are all within walking distance of one another, connected by shopping malls and world-class entertainment and recreational facilities.

Entrepreneurs' Organization: 2,000 under one roof

Sheraton Grand Macao was chosen by Entrepreneurs' Organization for their first Global Leadership Conference in 2019. The event attracted 2,000 delegates from all over the world, who attended a plenary and more than 30 breakout sessions. Attendees enjoyed creatively conceived lunches, banquets, cocktails and dinners over three action-packed days – all under one roof. "We are a tough customer with very specific needs, but the Sheraton Grand Macao has a flexibility that is unparalleled," commented Carrie Santos, CEO Entrepreneurs' Organization.

MetLife Korea: Personalised service for 240

MetLife Korea picked The St. Regis Macao again to host its annual reward and recognition conference. The organiser designed a two-day fun and food inspired incentive programme for the company's 240 top performers, which included a variety of team building activities, a poolside Portuguese barbecue buffet dinner and team recognition awards lunch. The client was especially pleased with the hotel's 24-hour butler service and unstinting support from its professional event specialists. Nicole Jiyong Lee from MetLife Insurance Company of Korea said: "I could guarantee this could be one of the longest lasting memories that I'll be hosting the event with."



The 400-room St. Regis Macao (foreground) is connected to Sheraton Grand Macao

MEETING OFFER



More Than Just Meetings

Stay Period: February 3, 2020 to December 31, 2020
 "More Than Just Meetings" is available until May 31 2020

Benefits for selection

- 5% off on the master bill
- 1 complimentary room for every 25 rooms booked
- 1 complimentary room upgrade to next category for every 25 rooms booked
- Up to 50% off on selected in-house entertainment
- 15% off on gondola rides and 50% off on Eiffel Tower experience

Book more and get more

- 1 benefit for 25-100 rooms daily booked
- 2 benefits for 101-150 rooms booked on minimum of one of the nights
- 3 benefits for 151-200 rooms booked on minimum of one of the nights
- 4 benefits for over 200 rooms booked on minimum of one of the nights

Additional benefits

- 50% off Cotai Water Jet ferry tickets
 - 20% off in-house audio visual equipment rental
 - Deluxe Privileges booklet to all event delegates
- *Terms & Conditions apply

For more information about **Sheraton Grand Macao**, please contact our event specialist by e-mail: sales.macao@sheraton.com or +853 8113 0700. For more information about **The St. Regis Macao**, please contact our event specialist at: sales.macao@stregis.com or +853 8113 3800.

SHERATON GRAND MACAO, COTAI STRIP

THE ST. REGIS MACAO, COTAI STRIP

Estrada do Istmo. s/n, Cotai, Macao SAR, P.R. China
Sheratongrandmacao.com Stregismacao.com



The 4,001-room Sheraton Grand Macao, the largest Sheraton in the world, offers over 14,121 m² of meeting space

ONE MINUTE with IT&CM Events

IT&CM Asia **CTW**
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2020 EVENT HIGHLIGHTS
 22 - 24 September 2020 | Bangkok, Thailand

EXCITING NEW LAUNCHES

DRESS DOWN FOR INSPIRATION NEW



Experience a thematic knowledge festival with parallel concurrent tracks on meaningful themes helmed by trendsetters in the industry.

GLOBAL CVB LEADERS DIALOGUE NEW

Fostering C-level conversations amongst destination leaders to facilitate peer knowledge exchange, information sharing and collaboration.

BUYER PROCUREMENT SHOWCASE NEW

MICE, Association and Corporate buyers share their procurement requirements with relevant and interested destination and supplier leads.

ALLIED PREFERRED-BUYER PARTNERS NEW

Exhibitors and partners are welcomed to invite their preferred buyers to enjoy full hosting benefits* on us! APBPs are rewarded with attractive perks.
*Terms and conditions apply

EARLY BIRD BUYERS SCHEME NEW



Applicable to all buyers who confirm participation by end April. Also stand a chance to be featured in our publicity features to enhance your presence during the show.

BUSINESS & BRAND ACTIVATION

BRAND SHOWCASE PRESENTATIONS

Destination and corporate brands share their latest highlights and developments, first-hand with MICE and association buyers, and media.

MEET THE CORPORATES



IT&CM exhibitors meet CTW's corporate buyers in this efficient platform conducted in a speed-dating format with opportunities for introductions and exchanges.

EXHIBITION WALKABOUT

Association buyers and media visit destination and brand pavilions during an hour-long guided walkabout. Perfect for quick introductions and meet-and-greets.

LEARNING & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

ASIAN MICE CRUISE CONFERENCE

Produced by TTGmice's award-winning editorial team, this is the only conference of its kind dedicated to the region's MICE Cruise industry.

ASSOCIATION DAY FORUM



Helmed by Association professionals for Association professionals, this ever-popular forum curates the current talking points in Association management with interactive discussions.

ASEAN MICE FORUM

Advancing ASEAN's latest MICE development and insights on an international scale through conversation between the region's key partners and the global community.

NETWORKING & EVENT EXPERIENCE

SAY HI TO EVERYONE

A first reveal of attendees during this interactive ice-breaker. Get to know who's who before exhibition days begin and be on the look-out for delegate profiles you want to meet.

STICKY AWARDS LUNCHEON

Be in the running as one of the show's most memorable participants at this prize presentation lunch.

www.itcma.com | www.corporatetravelworld.com/apac

CONNECT

TOP 5 HEADLINES THIS MONTH



▲ From left: Representatives from Hannover Fairs Asia-Pacific, Singapore Tourism Board and SingEx Exhibitions announce their partnership; Luxperia spotlights South-east Asia SME operators



Deutsche Messe deepens investment in Asia
 Deutsche Messe, one of the world's leading exhibition organisers, has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Singapore Tourism Board to establish an Asian headquarters in the city-state, and to develop and anchor new events in Singapore.

APAC destinations high on casualty list as global travel confidence dips
 Event houses in Asia-Pacific are reporting cancellations or postponements of outbound events throughout 1H2020 as corporates suspend non-essential travel and travel confidence plunge over the Covid-19 outbreak. Industry players are hopeful of a rebound in 2H2020.

Indonesia state and ministerial meetings to stay home
 Indonesian president Joko Widodo has requested that his ministries and state institutions to keep their meetings on home ground, especially the badly-hit tourism cities of Bali, Batam and Manado, to boost the economy and cushion the fallout from the Covid-19 outbreak.

Vietnam DMC rounds up SME operators to craft creative itineraries
 The Ho Chi Minh City-headquartered Luxperia, a DMC focusing on luxurious experiences, is aiming to disrupt the market by building up a collection of boutique operators – experts in business

WHAT'S HAPPENING



May 12-14
IMEX Frankfurt
Frankfurt, Germany

April 22-23
MEETINGS NZ
Auckland, New Zealand



Q&A



events, adventure and culinary tourism – from across South-east Asia to curate innovative itineraries that tap into their wealth of ground knowledge.

KINTEX Convention Center ready to grow

KINTEX Convention Center has announced plans to develop a third exhibition hall, with work expected to begin in September 2021 towards an opening date in 2024. In its current state, the venue is the largest international exhibition and convention venue in South Korea. It offers a total exhibition space of 107,910m². The new hall will provide a combined space of 70,000m².



▲ KINTEX Convention Center gets green light for third exhibition hall

China's extended Chinese New Year break, imposed because of the Covid-19 outbreak, ended on February 9. Liu Ping, founder and CEO of China Star, and SITE international board director, relates how life still has to go on amid a bad situation.

SNAPSHOTS



▲ February 11

Singapore's industry heads (Keith Tan pictured) gathered today to provide updates on protection and recovery measures amid the Covid-19 outbreak. The MICE sector has also reiterated its commitment to work towards a swift recovery once this blows over.



▲ February 17

TTG's Adelaine Ng with AIME hosted buyers exploring Mornington Peninsula's Green Olive at Red Hill farm and winery. Some 20 experiences are on offer, including sausage making and cooking classes with ingredients grown on location.



April 19-22
Arabian Travel Market
Dubai



▲ February 12

Major MICE agents turned up for Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau's trade gathering and support updates this afternoon in Singapore, in a show of continued support for the destination and the concept of meeting during challenging times.



▲ February 26

All smiles at this meeting! TTG's Mimi Hudoyo and Tiara Maharani have joined ICCA Indonesia Committee's Raty Ning (extreme left) and Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali's Saraswati Subadio (extreme right) at today's ICCA Indonesia Forum 2020.

It's game on for Japanese incentives

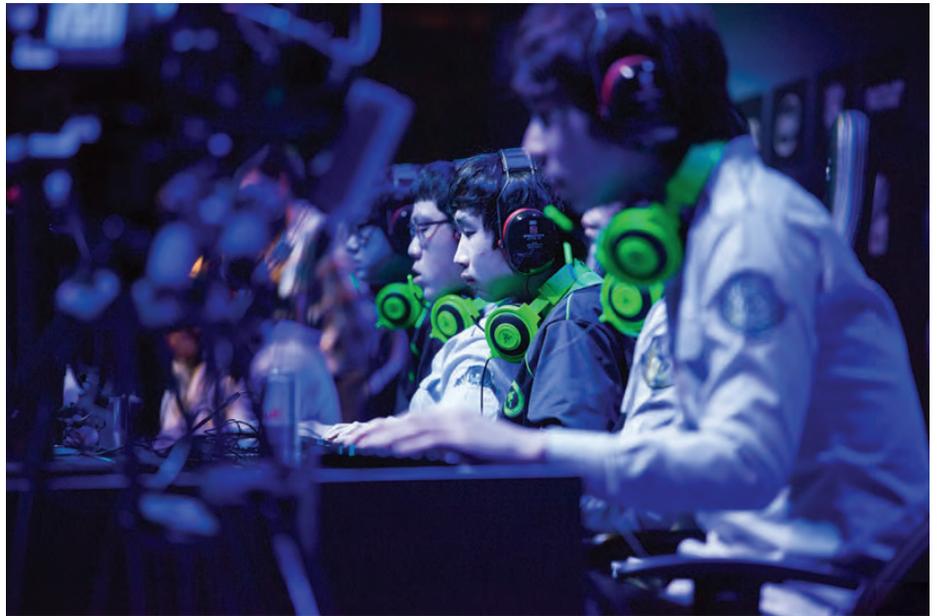
Japanese startups and companies in tech industries are moving away from the all-familiar incentive travel programmes to incentive events in a bid to cater to the changing needs of their younger staff.

E-sports tournaments, in particular, are growing in popularity as a staff perk and teambuilding tool, as the e-sports market continues to expand and gain a stronger foothold in Japan.

In January, telecommunications giant NTT West held the finals of an interactive e-soccer gaming tournament called Winning Eleven in Osaka for about 200 of its employees and their family members. The large-scale event, which was shown on big screens, was the ultimate stage of an incentive initiative launched in September. It involved qualifying rounds hosted online for 60,000 staff across western Japan, from Shizuoka to Okinawa.

Masato Kanegawa, an information officer in the PR section of NTT West, told *TTGmice* that the company chose the online event approach because of the difficulty in getting staff across diverse ages, occupations and office locations to convene in a single destination for recreation.

“By holding e-sports events, we hope to revitalise the organisation and boost commu-



nication among all staff,” he said. “We believe they are effective for companies like ours that cover a wide geographical area.”

Hitachi Systems is also adopting e-incentive events. The IT service provider has established an e-sports club to promote staff interaction and unity.

With few differences in hosting a traditional business event and an e-sports event, hotels and conference centres in Japan are already well placed to accommodate the new demand.

While Miki Ikawa, event coordinator at Tokyo Midtown Hall & Conference, was unable to disclose the number of enquiries received about hosting such events, she said Tokyo Midtown's Hall A is well equipped for large-

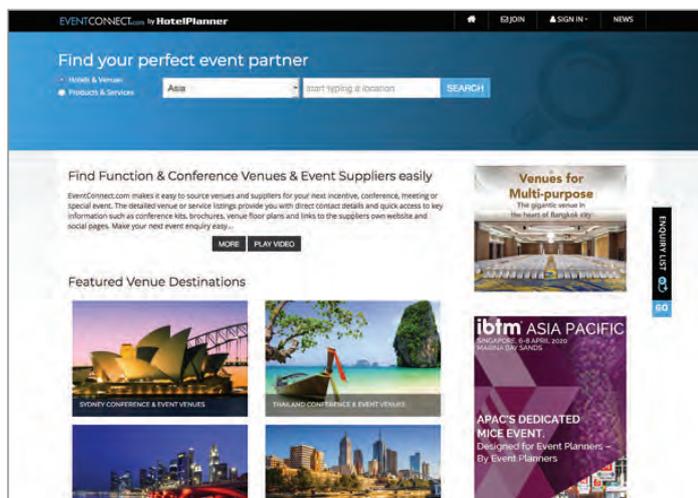
scale e-sports and gaming events. It features a high-end sound system, screens and is completely soundproof.

The trade expects demand for e-sports and gaming events among business groups to increase ahead of Tokyo's hosting of the Intel World Open, the first major global video game tournament, in late-July this year.

National qualifiers to establish the top four players in each of the 12 participating countries have begun in March, and will lead up to a two-day event in Tokyo before the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympic Games.

The Intel World Open is supported by the International Olympic Committee. – **Kathryn Wortley**

HotelPlanner acquires EventConnect.com; expands reach into Asia-Pacific



Global online hotel reservations services HotelPlanner has acquired Australia-based online venue marketplace EventConnect.com for a seven-figure sum.

EventConnect.com is where destinations, hotels, venues and event suppliers from across Asia-Pacific showcase their meetings and events capabilities while promoting their latest news and offers.

Within the larger infrastructure of HotelPlanner, EventConnect.com will increase the number of countries in South-east Asia that are represented on the platform.

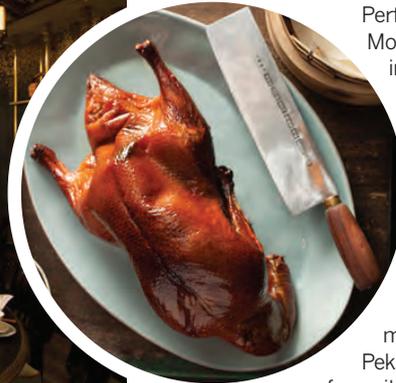
This news comes on the heels of HotelPlanner's continued expansion into the Oceania and Asia-Pacific region with the company's new Singapore office and newly-launched sites Hotelplanner.sg, Hotelplanner.com.sg, and Meetings.com.sg.

It currently has six offices around the globe, and HotelPlanner's move to grow the company's visibility beyond Singapore and Hong Kong underscores the importance of the Asian market to the group meetings and events industry.

In October last year, Hotel Planner also acquired online venue marketplace [Venuexplorer](http://Venuexplorer.com) Singapore (See *Focus* feature, page 10).



It doesn't get more Mott-dern than this



Mott 32, which pays homage to 32 Mott Street in New York, where the city's first Chinese convenience store opened in 1891, is renowned for its modern approach to Chinese cuisine.

Its latest outpost opened in Singapore's Marina Bay Sands. The 149-seat dining destination features a stylish interior that draws from industrial New York design, classical Chinese décor and elements of Singapore's rich foliage and flora.

Perfect for parties for guests that need impressing, Mott 32 Singapore offers several intimate-sized dining spaces. The Orangery (left), for instance, can seat 16 guests. Full venue hire is also possible, and a minimum F&B spend applies.

Helming the kitchen of Mott 32 Singapore is Hong Kong-born executive chef Chan Wai Keung, who has over 35 years of culinary experience.

Mott 32 Singapore will serve iconic dishes from the original Mott 32 menu, such as the barbecue Pluma Iberico pork glazed with yellow mountain honey, and the apple wood-roasted Peking duck with Mott 32's Signature Cut. Other menu

favourites include handmade Cantonese dim sum.

Aside from an extensive wine list, Mott 32's mixologists have created cocktails inspired by Asian ingredients and culture, three of which are exclusive to Singapore.

Suwon gets first Courtyard by Marriott



Marriott International has opened the first Courtyard by Marriott in Suwon, South Korea, part of the new MICE Complex within Suwon Gwanggyo New Town.

The newly-opened Courtyard by Marriott Suwon offers 288 rooms, ranging from the lead-in 28m² Premiers to the 84m² Lake Park Suite.

Meeting amenities include the 70-seater Executive Lounge featuring views of Gwanggyo Lake Park, the Lake Park Ballroom which can take up to 300 pax theatre-style, as well as three multipurpose boardrooms for 16 pax each theatre-style.

There is also a fitness centre, laundry room, and two F&B options including the Suwon Kitchen which serves an international menu and has four private dining rooms.

For guest's convenience, the hotel is connected with the Suwon Convention Center, Gwanggyo Lake Park, Galleria Department Store, and Aquarium.

InterContinental debuts in Phuket

IHG has opened the InterContinental Phuket Resort on Kamala Beach.

The beachfront resort on the western coast of Phuket features 221 rooms and villas with panoramic views of the Andaman Sea. Club guests will be able to access the second-floor lounge complete with its own private sundeck and infinity pool.

Event planners may avail the five meeting spaces, which includes a ballroom good for 200 pax banquet-style.

F&B options are numerous, ranging from the modern Thai *Jaras* and international cuisine restaurant Pinto. There is also a beach bar and lounge, as well as a Sawan Beans and Leaves Bar serving handpicked teas from Chiang Mai and single-origin roasted coffee from local farmers.

Other resort facilities include five swimming pools, a fitness centre, tennis court, Planet Trekkers Kids Club, and a spa with eight treatment rooms and a full-service nail salon.



Pullman heats up hotel scene in Rotorua

Accor has brought the first international five-star hotel to New Zealand's Bay of Plenty region, in the form of Pullman Rotorua.

The new-build offers 130 rooms across five categories, some of which offer panoramic views of the city and lake area.

Meeting planners will be able to avail the four event spaces – the largest of which is 155m² and can hold up to 120 people theatre-style – and a boardroom which doubles up as a private dining area.

Aside from the Barrel & Co Bar and Grill, other amenities on-site include an executive lounge, bar, and gym.



Klang welcomes first international five-star hotel

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has opened the upscale Wyndham Acmar Klang, located a 30-minute drive from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Managed by Wyndham's international hotel management arm, the five-star property will have 488 rooms. Meeting amenities include a business centre, and a total of 11 meeting rooms equipped with state-of-the-art audiovisual systems.

The Grand Ballroom, as the largest venue on-site, is able to accommodate up to 2,200 guests for seminars and dinner functions, and comes furnished with LED screens and grand chandeliers.

Other facilities include an outdoor pool, spa, fitness centre, and four F&B venues ranging from a Chinese restaurant serving dim sum to a deli offering coffee, pastries and cakes. Families of business travellers will also be able to make use of a local shuttle service, babysitting services, or the kids' club.

AAT Kings launches bushfire relief tours

AAT Kings has rolled out a selection of not-for-profit day tours and short breaks across New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, designed to provide immediate support to tourism communities that have been affected by recent bushfires.

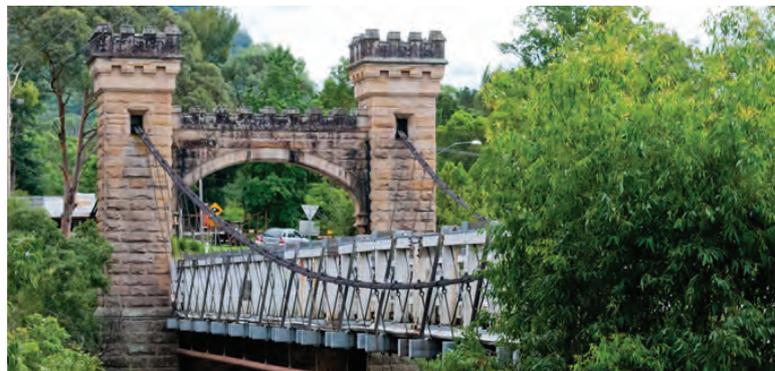
Launched in collaboration with Empty Esky and regional tourism businesses in Australia, the Bushfires Relief Giveback Experiences have been developed respectfully and in conjunction with local communities, and all trips are 100 per cent not-for-profit for AAT Kings.

During the trips, AAT Kings will bring guests and their empty Eskies – an Australian brand of portable coolers – to visit local markets, cafes and stores, where they will have free time to wander through the town, chat with the local shopkeepers and fill their Eskies with locally-made products.

The itinerary includes a trip to Kangaroo Valley and morning tea at a local café, before heading to Nowra Farmers Market, where guests can taste and buy local produce and fill up their #emptyesky, with every cent going directly to the farmers.

Guests will also get to meet some of the locals who will tell stories of recovery post-bushfires, and share firsthand how best to help these destinations.

Matthew Cameron-Smith, managing director for AAT Kings, said: "We've worked with local businesses to bring much-needed benefit through the tourism economy directly back to restaurants, cafes, farm-



ers' markets and local stores, to start providing immediate support to the regions that need it the most."

Erin Boutros, co-founder of Empty Esky, commented: "Since the Empty Esky campaign launched, we have witnessed first-hand how powerful the Australian spirit is. The 'Empty Esky' trips will lead the way in effectively supporting bushfire affected towns as they recover."

Bookings can be made at aatkings.com/bushfire-recovery, or via an agent.



The test of time

The demand for passionate guides with a modicum of good service is growing even greater, as tours centred on niche themes like architecture, gastronomy, local businesses and fading industries gain popularity as elements within pre- and post-event or meeting programmes. These new concepts, however, are not addressed in the Singapore Tourism Board's guiding examination, which is mandatory for guiding certification in Singapore.

TY Suen, founder & CEO of Monster Day Tours and UBE Singapore, expressed: "The (tourism) school only teaches guides about the standard attractions, history and culture. It's good, but 5,000

guides can do this type of tour. We have programmes that not all guides can do."

Monster Day Tours specialises in cultural walks, and UBE Singapore caters to the country's burgeoning events segment with business-focused tours such as the Silicon Valley of Singapore Insider Tour, which dives into innovation parks one-north and JTC Launchpad.

Instead, the onus of training falls onto the tour operators, who must bear the resources of developing new hires into field experts. For instance, each guide taken in by Oriental Travel and Tours must undergo at least two training sessions per itinerary, including observation and trial runs.

Xperience Singapore provides a comprehensive brief detailing its tours, including key points that guides must address during each tour.

The rigorous process has bottlenecked supply, with DMC Diethelm Travel (Singapore) failing to secure popular tours due to a lack of trained guides. Judy Lum, its director, shared: "I have gotten very good reviews for Wok n' Stroll's Michelin food tour, but it is not easy to make a booking because they only have three guides available."

Emphasis on service

While Singapore's new breed of tour operators are willing to bear the responsibility of training, they are urging the creation of a curriculum that recognises Singapore's changing tourism landscape and current tour formats, as well as a sharper focus on service and accountability.

Suen said: "I think the school should place more emphasis on character building and conduct, not just on content and knowledge, which guides can come out and learn."

Looking for change, the trade has banded together to push growth in this area. The National Association of Travel Agents Singapore (NATAS) is developing a series of travel-specific service quality courses with the Singapore Management University's technology college.

Guiding woes

As experiential tours cement their standing in a business event programme, the glaring need for accountable, knowledgeable and passionate tour guides is swelling, operators tell **Pamela Chow**

On a hot and humid midday in March, a tour guide leads a pack of visitors to Singapore's famous Merlion Park. He rattles off a template description of the fabled sculpture, then herds the visitors towards a nearby jetty, enticing them to fork out a fare for a "scenic cruise" under the noon glare.

Unknown to these visitors, the ride is more enjoyable in the cool evening; and for every person who boards the boat, the guide pockets a handsome commission. He stays on shore after sending the group off on a tour without a story.

"These guides care about making money, not about providing good service to the client. I've been on tours where, the moment the tour guide gets on the bus, it's about selling key chains and demanding tips – and he doesn't even get off the bus (with the group at the attractions)," said Stanley Foo, founder and managing director, Oriental Travel and Tours.

This way of guiding may have gone unquestioned for the last ten or more years, but it is no longer satisfactory for today's well-heeled travellers, who have carried their demands for personalised service and authentic experiences into the corporate space.

Foo expressed: "We are targeting a very niche market, not big group tours. We need someone who is very passionate and concerned about the welfare of the guests."

Yet, Singapore's guiding market is still dominated by lacklustre guides, opined Foo who estimated that they make up 95 per cent of the talent pool, and the remaining few are coveted by the country's growing number of tour providers. Of the thousands of guides in the market, Oriental Travel and Tours' roster comprises less than ten.



"The industry is changing so quickly now, and I think the (tourism) school can be updated much more because a lot of the material is outdated."

TY Suen
 Founder & CEO
 Monster Day Tours and UBE Singapore

Unique venues hot up



Specialised event organisations are making more unique venues available through acquisitions and partnerships, highlighting a growing demand for such venues. By [Karen Yue](#)

The recent integration of non-traditional venue sourcing platforms into larger specialised meetings organisations is underscoring a growing demand for unique venues among corporate clients and the business value of providing such options.

In October 2019, HotelPlanner, a global provider of online hotel reservations services for group event planners, acquired online venue marketplace Venuexplorer. The latter specialises in a variety of event venues – presently more than 100 in Singapore but with plans to expand that to 300 by end-2020, from conventional spaces such as conference centres to non-traditional spaces such as the F1 Karting Circuit.

Following that, in January this year, Aventri partnered US venue specialist VenueBook to bring the latter's direct booking technology and database of 1,500 non-traditional venues onto the former's enterprise event management software platform.

Although Aventri's latest move brings greater venue variety to only its network in the US, it answers a rising interest in unique venues, which Brad Langley, vice president, channel and partner management, said is present worldwide, including in the Asia-Pacific region.

Langley explained: "The venue is one of the most important drivers for attendance and attendee satisfaction. Attendees today are looking for unique cultural experiences, and planners are finding that non-conventional venues are a great way to deliver on this promise."

Christopher Lee, co-founder of Venuexplorer, noted that demand for unique venues among corporate clients has risen by 30 per cent year-on-year, driven by the need to maintain an "element of surprise" in their events, something that

▲ WingsOverAsia's Hangar66 is among the many unconventional venues in Singapore available on Venuexplorer

▼ Langley: keen to grow database of unique venues in Asia-Pacific



repeated use of the usual hotel function rooms fail to do.

Langley believes that this trend is "good news for event professionals" in Asia-Pacific, where there are "stellar non-traditional venues".

In *Aventri's 100 Top Event Venues in APAC*, a guide published in January to capture the top-rated 10 meeting and event cities in the region, venues such as restaurants; art galleries; museums; bars and lounges; historic landmarks; speedboats and sailboats for group excursions; renovated mansions; theatres; as well as spaces in botanic gardens, parks, aquariums, towers, zoos and more came up tops.

Destinations playing it up

This year's Asia Pacific Incentives Meetings Event (AIME) opened with a VIP gala dinner at the historical State Library Victoria, where the Ian Potter Queen's Hall had its usual silence broken by a lively dinner party.

AIME, which is owned by the Melbourne Convention Bureau, has always been a vehicle for the city to show off some of her most unconventional venues through the trade-show's well subscribed social events.

Some of the more savvy CVBs have worked the promotion of unique venues into their destination marketing campaigns, as a means to stand out in Asia-Pacific's competitive events marketplace.

Korea Tourism Organization launched the Korea Unique Venues collection in 2017 with 20 select venues, which it then trimmed down to just 11 before boosting the list further in November 2019 with 19 more.

Last year, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau debuted the Tokyo Unique Venues service desk, making the city's slew of unique venues easily accessible to event planners.

Drawing a specific segment

Both Langley and Lee agreed that unique venues tended to attract events with shorter duration, such as product launches, corporate networking parties, seminars/workshops, and gala dinners.

Langley found that planners looking to host "meetings within meetings" tended to gravitate towards unique venues.

He explained: "Let's say you want to entertain customers during a large international conference at a convention centre. Hosting a meeting at a unique venue nearby is a great way to deepen connections and provide a richer and fuller cultural experience."

Stiffer competition among venues

Traditional venue providers are already feeling the heat from the growing market presence of unique venues.

And it appears that the customer will walk away triumphant from the battle, as traditional venue providers defend their territory with flexible event packages and facility renovations to offer improved look and feel, shared Lee.

In Langley's view, however, traditional and nontraditional venues can work hand-in-hand to provide the event organiser a mix of spaces that suit a diverse programme.

"The fact is, when thousands of attendees converge on a city for large-scale events, you may want to change things up with smaller, supporting events. From concerts and wine tastings to dinners with key clients at iconic restaurants, unique venues help you deliver the unexpected," he emphasised.



Built to purpose

Improving on the 2018 inaugural show, ITAP 2019 boasts deeper, more approachable seller-buyer engagements, discovers [Karen Yue](#)

Hot idea

Create opportunities for low-pressure buyer/seller interactions when the subject of a trade event is challenging to comprehend

Brief

The second edition of Industrial Transformation Asia-Pacific (ITAP) carried on the Learning Journey concept of the inaugural edition in 2018, persisting in its objective to ramp up Industry 4.0 (I4.0) adoption across Asia-Pacific so as to help companies in the manufacturing and related industries overcome low labour productivity.

Whereas the 2018 edition focused on introducing digital revolution to visitors, the 2019 edition intended to push companies into action.

Highlights

Realising that the concept of I4.0 can be “overwhelming” for visitors new to digital transformation, the organisers created new zones – Collaboration Lab, Learning Lab and Robotics Experiential Zone – to close the gap between exhibitors and visitors, and encourage interaction that will bust myths surrounding innovation.

James Boey, executive director, SingEx Exhibitions, said: “We realised that many

visitors to ITAP 2018 ended up wondering how all the various components and technologies they saw at the show would fit into their business or their factory. They thought that adopting them would be a five-million-dollar investment.

“We wanted to break that mindset and show them that there is innovation that can fit their budget. To do that, we knew we had to make ITAP 2019 very open with its learning approach. We didn’t want our visitors to stay away from the big booths and pick up a brochure to study later on.”

Boey explained that with Collaboration Lab, organisations like Microsoft and Emerson came together to co-create by test bedding and retrofitting solutions, and “told their stories on how users could innovate in bite-size”.

At the Learning Lab, live demonstrations on the capabilities and applications of autonomous solutions in the intralogistics environment were presented.

The Robotics Experiential Zone, curated with Singapore Industrial Automation Association, featured robotics displays and interactive exhibits, and provided opportunities for “people to see, build their own robots, ask questions, and learn”.

Another worthy highlight of ITAP 2019 is its approach to making digital transformation more palatable for workers and supervisors who worry that their employer’s automation would cost them their job.

“While innovation must come from the top, we recognise that it is also important to engage the middle-level and lower-level workers. Hence we worked with the National Trades Union Congress to engage union workers and reached out to all the trade associations,” explained Boey.

Guided tours for each industry specialisation was curated. For instance, there was a track just for F&B workers.

“We made it easy for the workers to digest, to convince them that they can work alongside automation, and to encourage them to see the value of upskilling themselves,” he added.

Challenges

While the new interactive zones brought attendees closer to exhibitors, Boey said they also competed for attendees’ limited time on the showfloor.

“We need to improve on this, perhaps by creating a Disneyland concept where we recommend different line-up of activities that are suitable for three hours at the show and for full days across three days,” reflected Boey.

Convincing people from across Asia-Pacific to fly to Singapore for the event was also a challenge, recalled Boey.

“Most people are reluctant to reinvent the wheel – to innovate their business – if it works,” he said.

To build attendance, Boey’s team spent five months in key regional markets, such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar and Indonesia, to “sing about the value proposition of ITAP, emphasising that ITAP is not yet another manufacturing show, that it has rich learning and networking opportunities, it inspires new solutions, and identifies trends that will impact businesses that do not change”.

To get participants from emerging South-east Asia markets, ITAP 2019 worked with Singapore Airlines to offer an all-in-one package that came with a conference pass, lodging, flight and food, priced under S\$1,000.

By the end of the show, attendance records showed a presence of 3,255 unique foreign attendees – 18 per cent of total attendees and a 67 per cent increase from the 2018 edition. There were also 200 hosted buyers from the region.



Event
Industrial Transformation Asia-Pacific 2019

Organisers
SingEx Exhibitions and Deutsche Messe

Venue
Singapore EXPO & MAX Atria

Dates
October 22 to 24, 2019

Attendance
23,000 people from 77 countries

Linking up across oceans



The Teochew International Federation convened in Auckland for its 20th edition, providing delegates with trade and business opportunities. By [Rachel AJ Lee](#)

Hot idea

House delegates close to the convention centre to ease their commute and provide them with more time to do business

Brief

The biennial Convention of the Teochew International Federation unites people of Teochew descent from 110 organisations globally. The get-together allows local business executives and entrepreneurs to network and build relationships with international delegates, promoting collaboration across trade, culture and social welfare.

Zhi Chen, vice chairman of the 20th Convention and vice chairman of the Chao Shan General Association of New Zealand, said: "The convention is a chance to not just celebrate the friendship of the Teochew global community, but an opportunity to look at the host country and see whether there's a chance to do business there."

Chen added that hosting the convention in Auckland provided "a good chance to promote New Zealand to the world".

Currently, there are more than 80 million people identifying as Teochew – originating from the east of Guangdong Province – some 30 million of whom live outside China.

Highlights

Delegates were welcomed on the first night with a banquet at SkyCity Convention Centre. Entertainment was an international showcase, from Japanese and Korean drumming, to Russian, Middle Eastern and Latin American dances, before presentations by the Chao Shan orchestra and Wushu group.

The next day's opening ceremony took place on a stage decorated with a giant Maori *pou* (statue) complete with a traditional Maori *powhiri* (welcoming ceremony) and cultural performance.

Four different forums then followed: one on Teochew culture; another for the medical academic community; a youth forum, and an economic development and investment trading forum.

During the forums, New Zealand's opportunities for trade and business were highlighted with strong political support. For instance, VIP attendees at the convention included New Zealand's trade and export minister, minister of ethnic communities, and minister for employment, as well as Auckland mayor Phil Goff, former prime minister John Key, and the Chinese Ambassador to New Zealand.

The evening functions were also leveraged to present the best of New Zealand – through food. Delegates feasted on lobster the first night, and *paua* (abalone) the second.

In addition, the convention precinct was festooned with flags representing the conference, with the SkyTower flashing red and blue at night – the colours of the convention.

Chen said the event was very successful "We have already had enquiries about new business from the education, tourism and health products sectors. The benefits are already happening," he said.

Challenges

The large influx of visitors who spoke limited English was supported by a crew of 300 enthusiastic local volunteers. Volunteers met VIPs at Auckland International Airport to take them through biosecurity and customs, and booths were set up in conference hotels to help guests with their check-in and provide destination information.

During the conference, a translation system run by artificial intelligence was also deployed, and "while it wasn't perfect", Chen believes it was a commendable effort on SkyCity's part.

The Chao Shan General Association worked closely with Tourism New Zealand, to obtain its support when bidding. Through the Conference Assistance Programme and working with Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development, the association also helped develop a bid document translated into the Teochew dialect.

FAST FACTS

Event

The 20th Convention of the Teochew International Federation

Organiser

Chao Shan General Association of New Zealand

Venue

SkyCity Convention Centre

Date

September 21-23, 2019

Attendance

1,500 international delegates, 500 accompanying visitors, and 1,200 local attendees

Building in a local angle

Predictable teambuilding activities begone, for corporate bonding time now heavily features localised and experiential activities along with a movement towards CSR.

Adelaine Ng, Marrissa Carruthers, Pamela Chow and Rachel AJ Lee report

The modern traveller's penchant for authentic local experiences has conveyed into the business events scene, leading teambuilding operators and event specialists to see a growing demand for team-bonding ideas that provide participants with a taste of the destination.

David Fotheringham, director of Singapore-based Asia Ability, said the opportunity to experience the destination during corporate playtime was especially necessary since event schedules today are too "packed with critical business elements".

He said: "Delegates can leave thinking, 'where was this event again?'"

With this in mind, Asia Ability has curated a collection of localised teambuilding activities, such as the indoor Dragon Squad, in which corporate teams build their own Chinese dragons and choreograph a dragon dance; as well as Go Team Singapore Heritage, a GPS-tagged treasure hunt through the cultural enclaves of Chinatown, Kampong Glam and Little India.



Cindy Lie, executive director, Indonesia-based Infinity Holiday, has observed the same growing preference for destination-focused teambuilding sessions.

She recently organised a meeting/incentive trip to Bangkok for an Indonesian insurance company, which featured a teambuilding activity that was built around the concept of living like a local. Delegates got to visited a local market to buy ingredients to make *som tam* (green papaya salad); travelled by public transport such as the BTS; and learnt muay Thai from a professional.

Karen Livermore, director of sales and events with ID Events Australia, typically builds teambuilding activities around iconic Australian locations. In Sydney, treasure hunts on boats, sailing regattas and other water activities with competitive teams and an educational component are conducted around the famed harbour.

Kristie Turner, director of operations and sales at Uniq Concepts Australia, noted that cultural activities are also high on clients' priority list. "When people think of Australia, they generally think of a few things: Sydney Harbour (Bridge and Opera House), the Great Barrier Reef, and Uluru (Ayers Rock). We try, where possible, to always include these in our teambuilding programmes as an immersive experience, with an element of indigenous culture," said Turner.

Ora-uan Mahapol, MICE manager of ICS Travel Group, observed that such teambuilding programmes are trending in line with the growing popularity of transformational travel, where people seek opportunities to "stretch, learn and grow, as

well as get to know the culture, lifestyle and people of the country they are visiting".

And Vietnam is well placed in South-east Asia to cater to this desire. Its varied landscapes and rich heritage allow planners to create unique and immersive teambuilding activities.

Ora-uan said: "There are so many local cultures, plus the scenery and terrain alters dramatically throughout the country."

ICS recently led a corporate group to a locally-run speciality coffee farm in Dalat, where part of the teambuilding activity was to learn the entire process of Vietnamese coffee production, including how to be a barista.

Hoa Binh Group's deputy director general Jackie Han, said Vietnam's diversity makes it an increasingly popular destination for cultural teambuilding for organisations across South-east Asia.

He remarked: "The diversity means we can easily tailor itineraries to meet demands."

IN CREATIVITY WE TRUST

To enable the creation of a truly local teambuilding experience, corporate clients have become more willing to leave the planning process in the hands of destination specialists.

Ora-uan told *TTGmice* that she gets full control of the programming right from the start.

"Even clients that start by having very specific requirements usually change their itineraries quite dramatically once they realise the full scope of what we can offer," she said.



Should client have their own itineraries in mind, Asia DMC's Cambodia country manager Vanthirith Prak said his team would consult closely with clients on the feasibility and operational procedures.

"It often takes a little talking to explain, but that's normal. It is often during such explanations that the clients' eyes grow wider – and with that an expansion of time and budget," added Peter Weibel, regional director of MICE for Tour East.

However, Livermore and Turner emphasised that clients will not compromise teambuilding objectives just to make room for creativity. It is common for the more flexible of clients to propose several broad requirements for event agencies to work with, such as specifying a must-do activity with indigenous children.

COMING TOGETHER FOR GOOD

Beyond connecting with the destination, teambuilding participants are expecting a more fulfilling experience that can only be obtained through meaningful projects that benefit the local community.

Asia DMC's Prak said enquiries for teambuilding activities with opportunities to support communities are up. He shared that an IT company recently took time off to build a stilted house for an impoverished family in Siem Reap.

"Teambuilding is not always

"Teambuilding is not always the main goal, as we have seen several corporates that include team bonding as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility campaigns."

Vanthirith Prak

Cambodia country manager,
Asia DMC

“The diversity (in Vietnam’s destinations and culture) means we can easily tailor itineraries to meet demands.”

Jackie Han

Deputy director general,
Hoa Binh Group Vietnam

the main goal, as we have seen several corporates that include team bonding as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility campaigns,” Prak added.

ID Events Australia’s Livermore agreed, sharing that she has noticed how companies are moving “towards philanthropic activities where people have the ability to say they’ve given back to the community”.

Such activities can include building bikes for a children’s charity, or creating indigenous paintings using bottle caps, with the artwork being present to a charity or indigenous group after.

Companies are also taking into consideration current affairs when choosing their teambuilding and CSR programmes.

Turner said: “We’ve had an increase in requests to include projects that involve benefit for those impacted by the recent bushfires (in Australia).”



▲ Wellness-focused teambuilding programmes are expected to trend in the near future

INTO THE FUTURE

So what’s next on the horizon for teambuilding programmes?

Specialists are putting their dollar on nature-based and wellness-focused activities, such as meditation sessions in temples and agricultural farming programmes.

Requests for teambuilding ideas utilising technology, such as gamification, are emerging, said Prak.

Some Japanese companies have started to organise e-sports – gaming competitions – to encourage interaction among their millennial staff.

Japanese telecommunications giant NTT West hosted an interactive e-soccer gaming tournament for its employees and their family members. Some 60,000 staff across western Japan, from Shizuoka to Okinawa, participated in it.

Taking the same route, Hitachi Systems established an e-sports club to promote staff interaction and unity.

On the other hand, Asia Ability’s Fotheringham told *TTGmice* that is an opportunity for teambuilding trends to shift back to traditional problem-solving games, albeit with a fresh spin.

Asia Ability is playing up trading games for corporate groups, where participants are split into teams that represent trading partners in 18th-century Singapore, namely the British, Dutch, Portuguese, Chinese, Indians and Malays. These ‘traders’ must strike deals to make a profit from goods such as sandalwood and mother of pearl, under the watch of a designated ‘Sir Stamford Raffles’ – the British statesman who founded modern Singapore.



“(The growth in local, experiential teambuilding ideas) goes hand-in-hand with the general (travel) trends towards unique and authentic experiences.”

Peter Weibel

Regional director of MICE,
Tour East



A splash of local flavour

Experiencing the destination while building team spirit can be easy. *TTGmice* reporters show you how with this selection



Localing Private Tours Melbourne, Australia

Experience an Aboriginal twist to Australian footy. The Marngrook Indigenous Football Workshop will have delegates construct their version of the eponymous ball – known as Australia’s first football, it was originally made out of possum skin and used by Aboriginal groups in Victoria.

Delegates will learn the *marngrook*’s history from an indigenous guide, join a football class, then play a footy game at the hallowed Melbourne Cricket Ground. They will finish the day with a Wildlife After Dark experience with the owner of Moonlit Sanctuary Wildlife Park, where they can get up close with some of Australia’s most beloved animals. There are opportunities to feed kangaroos, cuddle and take selfies with koalas, or take dingos for a walk.

Capacity Up to 50

Contact chris@localingtours.com

Phnom Krom Eco Resort, Cambodia

This community-based recreational resort sits on a 100-hectare site nestled at the foot of Phnom Krom hill near Siem Reap.

A dedicated events team is on hand to curate teambuilding activities that offer a glimpse of rural Cambodian life.

A range of skills-based activities can be compiled for groups, such as riding ox carts, fishing Cambodian-style, helping local farmers plant or harvest crops (depending on the season), and boating on one of the four lakes the sprawling site straddles.

There is also the option of camping overnight on the resort’s grounds to experience Cambodia in the wild.

Capacity 30 to 1,000

Contact sales@empressangkor.com



Synergy Production – Travel & Events Business, Indonesia

The Jakarta-headquartered company has devised a teambuilding programme which explores Bogor – a town about an hour’s drive from Jakarta – with the help of an *angkot*, the prolific minivans that locals depend for their daily commute.

The programme starts with hopping on the Jakarta-Bogor commuter line, a popular rail transport option between the two cities. Upon arrival in Bogor, participants are divided into groups, assigned one *angkot* per group and given a sum of money. They are then asked to join a Facebook page dedicated to the event on which instructions are given.

Tasks include tracking down and tasting local dishes, visit attractions in the area, and reaching the finish line during a stipulated timeframe.

Aside from learning how to work together, bargaining skills are also tested as the more money left at the end of the tasks, the better chances the team has of winning.

Capacity 30 to 500

Contact eddy@synergyproduction.net

Atelier Tsuzuki, Japan

Soba – or buckwheat noodles – is one of Shikoku’s famed specialities, and deep in the valleys of Tokushima’s rugged mountains sits a quiet studio run by Tsuzuki-san, an elderly soba master who supplies the noodles to restaurants and hotels across the region. Classes taught by Tsuzuki-san are peaceful, fun and challenging at the same time.

Here, participants are guided through the multi-step soba-making process, from grinding soba grains with a traditional hand-powered mill to soaking the noodles in a cold bath. The workshop is followed by a meal of vegetable tempura, cold dishes, and free-flow soba. Tsuzuki-san then brings the session to



a heart-stirring end with a short performance of her award-winning folk singing.

Capacity Two to 15

Contact iyajiman.com / (81) 883 88 5625

Borneo Trails Tours & Travel, Malaysia

This activity takes delegates to eastern Sabah to experience the native Rungus tribe's rustic way of life.

To get there, groups take a scenic, three-hour drive from Kota Kinabalu to Kudat, arriving by early evening.

A treasure hunt – revolving around the destination and local culture of the Rungus – is first on the agenda, followed by a dinner accompanied by cultural performances and storytelling. Delegates will then retire into traditional wooden longhouses for the night.

Early the next morning, the group is divided into teams, all bound for the forest. Several teams are assigned to look for firewood, while the others will pick wild edibles. The two teams will then converge to build a fire, cook a meal out of the various ingredients sourced from the jungle. Later in the day, participants will also learn how to weave traditional baskets known as *rinago*, as well as beaded necklaces, all of which are souvenirs that they can take home.

Capacity Four to 15

Contact bernadette@borneotrails.com



Im-Active Travel and Business Events, the Philippines

This tour agency in Pasay City offers a teambuilding programme in Bohol that can cover a range of activities depending on the planner's objectives.

Possible itineraries include a driving competition around Bohol's Chocolate Hills; handmaking souvenirs like wallets, bags, and mats guided by raffia loom weavers; harvesting cacao to make hot chocolate; and learning from artisans to concoct coconut jam.

Mini competitions, while learning Filipino dances like *tinikling* and *pandanggo*, can spice up the itinerary.

A visit to nipa palm groves can also be arranged, where participants will learn how nipa leaves are used to create thatched roofing for local houses, turn the palm fruit into a sweet *kaong* for a fruit salad, as well as make vinegar and local wine from nipa sap called *lambanog*.

Capacity Six to 100

Contact im.activeteam@gmail.com

Xperience Singapore Events & Travel

A popular team sport in Singapore with roots tracing as far back as 2,500 years, dragonboat racing offers an exhilarating experience that fosters coordination and teamwork against the unique backdrop of the Singapore skyline.



In this two-hour session, groups will learn from an expert trainer how to paddle and balance a 10-seater practice boat, and observe a steersman in action.

Teams will then row down Marina Reservoir with views of the Singapore Flyer, Marina Bay Sands, Gardens by the Bay and the Marina Barrage. The session also includes an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of "The Nursery", a storage space for the dragon heads and tails that adorn the competition boats.

Capacity Four to 300

Contact contact@xperiencedmc.com

HiveSters, Thailand

HiveSters, along with its sister project, Local Thai Kitchen (a social enterprise preserving disappearing Thai food culture through sustainable tourism), believes that food is capable of connecting people. It runs a few teambuilding programmes centred around Thai cuisine, where groups can taste new items, learn to cook dishes, or be challenged in gamified, fun face-offs.

Groups can hunt for delicious local food in the community and experience cooking with local masters – think aunties and grannies in local communities – in the Foodie Treasure Hunt. Or choose Cooking Battle, where teams compete against each other to prepare Thai dishes with the help of step-by-step recipes, and aim to earn the highest score from local masters. There's also a Food Blind Tasting activity, where more adventurous groups are blindfolded and have to figure out what they are eating. The group with the most correct answers wins!

Capacity Foodie Treasure Hunt (10 to 180); Food blind tasting battle (10 to 100); Cooking battle (four to 30)

Contact bookme@hivesters.com





Shikoku awakens

Anticipating a spike in visitors arriving for the Olympic Games, the island of Shikoku is clamouring for planners to notice its unique event spaces and quaint surrounds too, writes [Pamela Chow](#)

A sleepy mountainous island south of Hiroshima, Shikoku is looking to the upcoming Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in May to bring in a stream of events and meetings, with its tourism board and stakeholders gearing up to raise awareness of the island's many charms.

This comes as the nearing Games are expected to drive up crowd density and hotel prices in Tokyo, a concern that may potentially turn business away from Japan altogether, expressed Tadashi Kaneko, executive vice president, Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO).

▲ Kikugetsu Tei teahouse in Ritsurin Garden

To mitigate this impact, JNTO is focusing on promoting local gems in outlying regions through a *100 Experiences in Japan* book. One of such hidden destinations is Shikoku, which comprises four prefectures: Ehime, Kochi, Kagawa and Tokushima.

Rolling out the welcome mat

Kagawa Prefecture's Takamatsu is one of Shikoku's main cities that have carved out space for hosting business events and exhibitions.

Located along the Seto Inland Sea, Takamatsu has come to be known for its maritime transportation

industry. The city offers planners the Sunport Takamatsu convention centre, which houses a main hall with 1,500 seats, two small halls, 12 meeting rooms, as well as an exhibition space. Recent notable events held here include the 27th National Ambulance-crew Symposium in January 2019 for more than 6,000 pax; the 2018 joint 14th iCACGP Symposium and 15th IGAC Science Conference; and the G7 ICT Ministers' Meeting in 2016.

Conventional venues are not the only locations of interest in Takamatsu, as the city is populated with historical and cultural facilities available for event use. These include Hiunkaku, the second house of the 12th feudal lord of Takamatsu; outdoor museum and Kabuki theatre Shikoku-Mura at the foot of Mt Yashima; and the scenic Ritsurin Garden, where the conserved Sanuki Guest House and Kikugetsu-tei Teahouse are available for conference and meeting bookings.

The Sanuki Guest House, also known as the Commerce and Industry Promotion Hall, hosted the G7 Summit's luncheon.

Kagawa Prefectural Government and the Takamatsu City Convention and Visitors Bureau provides financial assistance worth up to 10,000,000 yen (US\$91,108) to support incoming conventions and other events.

A good mix of business and leisure

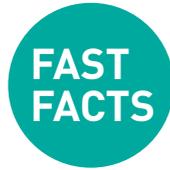
Meanwhile, the city of Kochi is hoping to leverage its strength as a holiday destination to build up its business event appeal.

Taichiro Oogi, staff, department of inbound tourism, Kochi Visitors & Convention Association, lamented: "We do not have enough facilities, and we have not had any big and international business events yet. Kochi has always been a leisure destination."

However, Kochi's leisure appeal makes it ideal as a pre- and post-event destination for corporate groups. Kochi Visitors & Convention Association has collaborated with Singapore-based ABCDE Fitness on a marathoner package that includes flights, accommodation at the new Mont Bell Mountain Lodge, warm-up sessions with a local running group, passes for the Kochi Ryoma Marathon in February 2020, private tours and workshops, and a dinner party with local residents.

Such creative collaborations are essential to attract visitors today, opined Takanori Asai, deputy director, Kochi Representative Office in Singapore.

He expressed: "It has become really hard to promote a destination through



981

Total number of guestrooms offered by six hotels in Takamatsu City

300 billion yen

The value of economic impact contributed by the business events industry, equivalent to US\$2.7 billion, that Japan is targeting to achieve in 2020

493

The percentage increase in business visitors from Vietnam to Japan between 2018 and 2019, since the opening of a JNTO office in Vietnam in 2018



▲ Kagawa International Hall, the main venue of the G7 ICT Ministers' Meeting in Takamatsu, Kagawa

traditional means, so we've had to come up with new ways to promote Kochi."

In addition, Taichiro believes that the city would require more promotional efforts and information exchange on the business events front, as well as venue development, before it is able to truly flourish as a business destination.

Thriving connections

Travel to Shikoku is set to become even more accessible, with China Airlines' flights between Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport and Takamatsu Airport recently coming online, and a new highway connecting Kochi Regional Airport and Kochi City currently being constructed.

Meanwhile, for companies with a more relaxed travel policy, or corporate travellers who wish to extend their stay in Japan, one option is a programme offered by All Nippon Airways (ANA) and Japanese accommodation provider Address. For a flat monthly fee, this partnership offers applicants unlimited nights in Address properties, which are refurbished homes across Japan, as well as two sets of discounted ANA domestic flight tickets every month.



A destination with heart

Pamela Chow discovers how Singapore is redefining business events through forays into its distinctive heartlands

Business events continue to hold significant weight in Singapore's tourism balance.

In 2018, the country welcomed more than 2.9 million business visitors, which accounted for S\$4.7 billion (US\$3.4 billion) in tourism receipts. With more business travellers seeking increasingly personalised and customised experiences, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has launched the In Singapore Incentives & Rewards (INSPIRE) programme.

Aimed at small- to mid-sized corporate groups, INSPIRE offers a selection of 63 complimentary incentive

experiences designed as accompaniments to the main programme. Previously offered to corporate groups in South-east Asia and other selected regions, INSPIRE has been extended to markets such as the Americas, North Asia and Oceania.

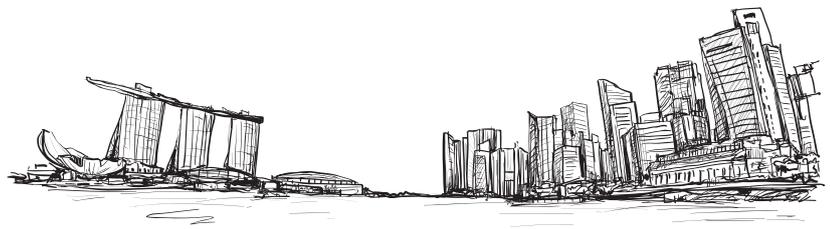
The specially curated programme for corporate groups features four categories. Besides Singapore's dining, entertainment, and nightlife, which the city-state is known for, groups can explore its constantly evolving, tailored attraction-based experiences. The two other categories that groups can opt for are thematic tours and learning experiences; as well as distinctive teambuilding activities.

An example of the experiences offered under the category of tailored attraction-based experiences is the making of bespoke cocktails at the UNESCO World Heritage site, Botanic Gardens; a tour around one-north, Singapore's Silicon Valley; or attend a private, after-hours Garden Rhapsody show at Gardens by the Bay.

INSPIRE is open to corporate groups travelling to Singapore between now and December 31, 2021, with a minimum of 20 foreign event attendees staying for at least three days in Singapore.

Edward Koh, executive director, conventions, meetings & incentive travel, Singapore Tourism Board, said: "The INSPIRE programme will assist meeting planners in organising activities for their meeting groups. Our value proposition of mixing business with leisure means the ability to conduct serious business, while providing access to leisure activities."

▲ **Oriental Travel & Tours** takes visitors into **Ang Mo Kio**, where they can interact with a bird-singing group and meet a bird-cage maker



Hitting the heartlands

Adding to the crop of unique corporate experiences are guided tours into Singapore's heartlands. Offered by local operators and hotels alike, these increasingly popular tours may seem out of tune with the city's gleaming, all-business image.

Oriental Travel and Tours offers tours that take groups through the peaceful residential blocks of Ang Mo Kio to meet a bird-singing club, a bird cage-maker, and to view a mock-up of a local home. Another operator, Tribe Tours, has launched a photography tour focusing on Singapore's prolific government flats.

Jasmine Tan, co-founder, Oriental Travel and Tours, said: "Our clients are mainly from Europe and America, and they are looking for something different to do beyond attractions like the Merlion and Sentosa, especially those who have visited Singapore more than three times. There are many pockets in the island that they can explore."

This opportunity is not lost on the local hospitality sector, which has similarly responded by offering heartland experiences to customers, which include their business guests.

Six Senses Maxwell has partnered with Jane's Singapore Tours to offer excursions to locales such as MacRitchie, Botanic Gardens and Tiong Bahru. Meanwhile, guests of Ramada by Wyndham Singapore at Zhongshan Park have the option of picking up a guide to Balestier, which provides a trail through the historic residential district to discover monuments, landmark buildings and vanishing trades.

Getting the inside scoop

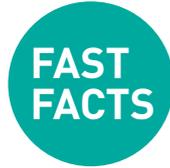
Corporate groups on the hunt for activities with a more business focus are also in luck, as the rise of "localised" tours has sparked a niche group of such products, geared towards innovators and entrepreneurs.

Last year, tour operator Woopa Group launched a new brand, UBE Singapore, to cater to the city's burgeoning events industry. UBE debuted with the Silicon Valley of Singapore Insider Tour, where participants can gain insight into thriving businesses in Singapore's innovation parks, One-North and JTC Launchpad, and sit in for exclusive sharing sessions by founders of successful enterprises.

TY Suen, founder & CEO of Woopa Group, describes UBE Singapore as the "pioneer" of business innovation and start-up tours in Singapore.

"We aim to offer unique localised experiences (where groups can interact with) creative start-ups and businesses from key industries."

TY Suen
Founder & CEO, Woopa Group



S\$166

Equivalent to US\$119, the ARR for mid-tier hotels in Singapore from January to June 2019

63

The number of complimentary experiential activities offered to qualifying MICE groups under STB's INSPIRE programme

20,000

The number of attendees expected for the Lions Clubs International Convention 2020, which is set to be Singapore's largest association congress



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.

"We aim to offer unique localised experiences (where groups can interact with) creative start-ups and businesses from key industries," said Suen.

What lies ahead

Moving into 2020 and beyond, given a robust pipeline, the business events industry is likely to continue to shine.

Over the two-year period of 2020 and 2021, Singapore will host software company SAP's Field Kick-Off Meeting, as well as – for the first time – the International Trademark Association's 142nd Annual Meeting, which is expected to attract 8,000 participants.

Next year, Singapore will welcome the Asia-Pacific Life Insurance Congress and Million Dollar Round Table Global Conference.

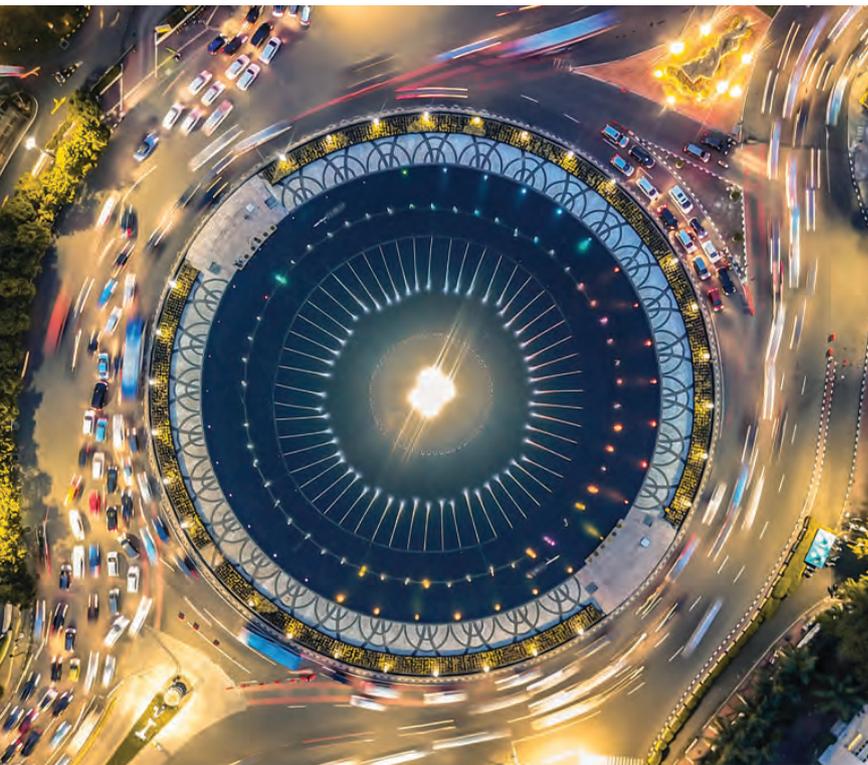
However, the Covid-19 outbreak that erupted in January has given event businesses in Singapore "a very rough start" to 2020, said Aloysius Arlando, president, Singapore Association of Convention & Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (SACEOS).

Numerous global and regional events, such as the Sweden-Southeast Asia Business Summit and the Aviation Festival Asia, have placed their bookings on hold or postponed events. As such, Arlando believes 2H2020 will see a "bunching up" of postponed events, many have been rescheduled to May and July.

Industry stakeholders are also expect Singapore's events industry to make a comeback in 2H2020, after the spread of Covid-19 is stemmed, and international meetings and events resume regular programming.

Capital transformation

Jakarta may soon lose her crown as capital city, but she is continuing to preen her event offerings. By **Mimi Hudoyo**



Aqam Hizal Muis/istock

Jakarta's development is more than ever in the spotlight. The city is fighting to stay competitive in the business events industry, following president Joko Widodo's decision to move the capital to East Kalimantan come 2024.

Announced in August 2019, the decision may mean that many government events – which contribute significantly to Jakarta's business events industry – could be shifted to Kalimantan.

A month after the president's announcement, tourism and hotel consulting firm Howarth HTL released a report that attempted to estimate the impact of the move on hotel room night demand (RND) in Jakarta.

One of the scenarios laid out in the report projected a 25 per cent loss in hotel RND from government- and business-related events to Kalimantan. This would mean a loss of 528,000 room nights a year for Jakarta hotels, as well as 1.2 trillion rupiah (US\$87.6 million) in annual revenue. Figures were arrived at based on the 2018 performance of the Jakarta hotel industry.

Nevertheless, Cucu Kurnia, head of the Jakarta re-

▲ An aerial view of the Hotel Indonesia (HI) roundabout in the heart of metropolitan Jakarta, which is now connected to Lebak Bulus in southern Jakarta by MRT

gional tourism and culture office, remains optimistic about Jakarta's status as a destination for events.

He asserted that promoting business events in the city remains "the right thing" to do going forward, as the city has all the facilities and amenities, in terms of venues, hotels, transportation links and attractions, as well as "top-notch professionals".

He reckoned that Jakarta can look to attract meetings, conventions and exhibitions, and less so, groups on incentive programmes.

Getting around

One major challenge for business event organisers in Jakarta is the city's notorious traffic. The city government has stepped in to address this by introducing more transport links in recent years.

The Jakarta MRT, introduced in 2019, has been lauded by locals and visitors. According to MRT Jakarta, the company overseeing the Jakarta MRT, 24.6 million riders, or about 95,060 riders per day, have taken the train throughout the year, since its official opening on March 24 last year.

Currently, Jakarta MRT serves 13 stations stretching from Lebak Bulus in southern Jakarta to Hotel Indonesia roundabout (Bunderan HI) at the centre of metropolitan Jakarta.

This marks merely a 15.7km stretch of the transportation's first line, which will eventually extend from Bunderan HI to Kota Tua or *old city*, then to West Ancol in the north, connecting the northern and southern ends of Jakarta.

Completion of the stretch between Bunderan HI and Kota Tua is slated for end-2024, while the entire line is expected to be completed come 2027.

Meanwhile, the Jakarta Light Rapid Transit (LRT) has officially begun operations since December last year, having held public trials between June and November. The LRT will eventually connect Jakarta with the surrounding Bogor, Depok and Bekasi (known collectively as the Jabodebek) area.

Getting integrated

According to Panca Sarungu, chairman of public-private partnership Kuningan MICE Alliance, the scarcity of land in Jakarta and its expensive cost has motivated industry players to build venues in malls, offices or in F&B spaces, as well as set up boutique venues.

One such example in southern Jakarta is the The Kasablanka Hall. Located on the third floor of Kota Kasablanka, one of Jakarta's busiest shopping centres, the venue



can seat 2,000 guests. There are also smaller meeting rooms on the same floor as well as a VIP room and a medic room elsewhere in the mall.

The Sopo Del Office Tower project in the CBD of Mega Kuningan – also in southern Jakarta – offers various event venues, a hotel and shops. There are three functions rooms and a grand ballroom, which can accommodate up to 700 guests in theatre-style seating.

New in central Jakarta is Hutan Kota by Plataran, which is billed as “a long awaited central park of Jakarta”. Besides being home to 3.2ha of lush greenery, the unique venue, which can host a total of 2,000 guests, boasts corporate dining spaces, an open performance deck, a pet playground, and prayer rooms.

Event planners looking for boutique venues in central Jakarta can seek out LAVVA at Plaza Senayan shopping complex. The entertainment space houses a lounge with a standing room of 300 and seating room of 160, as well as a whisky bar and KTV suites.

Going international

As Jakarta continues the push to reinvent itself and improve its business events offerings, it comes as no surprise that some industry players hold a positive view of the city’s future.

Panca, who is also CEO of RajaMICE, an event organiser based in nearby West Java, is optimistic that Jakarta’s future as a business events destination is bright, thanks to facilities and accessibility.

While Jakarta “might lose some of its market”, acknowledged Panca, he reckoned that the city would “continue to attract business events, including big government meetings”.

Having said that, Panca encouraged local players to decrease their reliance on business travel and government events, and move toward attracting regional and even international corporate gatherings.

With this focus on private events, he stressed that it is all the more important for Jakarta to improve its infrastructure and set up a convention bureau that will head up marketing and promotional activities.

In fact, *TTGmice* understands that the city government has set the gears in motion for such a bureau. A plan to establish the regional Tourism Promotion Board, which will oversee both leisure and business events, is awaiting the approval of Jakarta governor, Anies Baswedan.

Hosea Andreas Runkat, chairman, Indonesia Exhibition Companies Association (IECA), has seen

“What we need going forward is for the city government to allot the majority of promotional budget – say 70 per cent – for business events and the rest for leisure.”

Hosea Andreas Runkat

Chairman,
Indonesia Exhibition Companies Association

FAST FACTS

20

The percentage contribution of business events to Jakarta’s direct revenue from tourism, which totalled 6.1 trillion rupiah (US\$449 million)

13

The number of stations that the new Jakarta MRT train line currently serves, on a route stretching from Lebak Bulus in the south to the iconic Hotel Indonesia roundabout

24.6

In million, the number of passengers who took the Jakarta MRT service since it began operations in March 2019, till December 31, 2019



Southeast Asia
feel the warmth

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.



▲ Tiga Dari, one of three dining venues at Hutan Kota by Plataran, which is billed as “a long awaited central park of Jakarta”

a shift in the regional tourism and culture office’s agenda towards business events. He remarked that the office is “actively opening dialogues with the industry” and are slated to attend related tradeshows after being absent for about five years.

“What we need going forward is for the city government to allot the majority of promotional budget – say 70 per cent – for business events and the rest for leisure, and not the other way around,” emphasised Andreas.

Capital city or not, Jakarta continues to undergo development in terms of transportation, and international hotel brands are still planting its flags in the city.

It seems as though Jakarta’s status as Indonesia’s forefront business events destination is here to stay.



Jack Hong/shutterstock

All palates welcome

Prudence Lui susses out how Macau is leveraging on its centuries-old history in gastronomy to attract incentive travel organisers

Macau knows where its strength lies. Even before the city was crowned one of UNESCO's Creative Cities of Gastronomy two years ago, the city had been promoting its food culture, developed over hundreds of years, as a lure for both holidaymakers and business event groups.

The unique Macanese cuisine has its roots in Portuguese cuisine and was shaped by a blend of ingredients and cooking techniques from Malaysia, India, and even Africa, as well as the local Chinese population.

According to UNESCO, Macau, once part of the Silk Road, is testament to one of the earliest and longest-lasting trading relationships between the east and the west.

It comes as no surprise then, that the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has been leveraging on the city's conferment by UNESCO to promote Macanese cuisine to incentive travel planners, under the *Incentive Travel Stimulation Program*.

The programme offers groups – that meet certain

▲ Colourful shophouses in Taipa Village house some of Macau's most authentic gastronomy delights

size requirements and are staying for a minimum of two days in Macau – experiences such as a half-day historic tour of the city, or a cultural performance of up to 30 minutes.

Last year, the tourism office partnered with Macau events management company smallWORLD to offer four incentive travel groups from Hong Kong an experience of baking Macau's iconic Portuguese egg tarts, under the guidance of a professional chef.

Latent market

Beyond bringing local cuisine to incentive travellers, the government has been working to put the city on the international gastronomy map by attending food fairs and entering gourmet awards.

Despite this, Bruno Simões, director, smallWORLD, said that challenges in securing group reservations at restaurants are preventing more industry players from featuring Macanese cuisine in corporate event programmes.

He told *TTGmice* that restaurant operators are

already occupied with catering to the city's army of tourists – total arrivals came in at 39.4 million in 2019 – and are struggling with the shortage and high cost of manpower.

Nevertheless, rather than viewing these as limitations, Simões said that there is an “opportunity” here to tailor gastronomic packages for corporate groups.

Simões and his team have crafted a Macau gourmet discovery activity, part-treasure hunt and part-cultural education. It is offered to a wide range of groups with 10 to 500 people.

As participants need to work together in smaller groups to solve challenges that bring them through Macau's alleyways and taste local specialities, the programme makes for a choice teambuilding activity. smallWORLD also offers groups the choice to go on an Asian or Western trail.

Covid-19 outbreak notwithstanding, smallWORLD is determined to keep pushing out more food-related programmes for corporate clients. A street food tour and a workshop that introduces participants to tea tasting are in the pipeline, revealed Simões.

Hotels step up to the dining table

Some Macau hoteliers are recognising the opportunity to charm incentive groups through their belly, and are modelled their offerings accordingly.

According to Takami Koga, director of sales with JW Marriott Hotel Macau and The Ritz-Carlton, Macau, gastronomy has become a key consideration for meeting and conference organisers when it comes to choosing venues.

As such, both hotels have been incorporating Macau's rich culinary heritage into their business events packages.

“This is the city's competitive advantage; it gives events that dash of culture and character, reminding planners why Macau is a choice destination for successful events,” commented Koga.

Besides seeking to acquaint event attendees with local cuisine, the two hotels take into account the diverse dietary requirements and preferences of an international delegation. Food allergies, religious needs, and using gluten-free, organic and sustainable ingredients are all factored in when catering for events, noted Koga.

Koga's team recently surprised a wine company with customised menus that featured dishes paired with the company's own wine products.

▶ JW Marriott Hotel Macau takes care of diverse dietary requirements



While Macanese cuisine is a big draw for many corporate clients, JW Marriott Hotel Macau and The Ritz-Carlton, Macau also strive to offer home-away-from-home dining experiences.

“Once, we hosted a corporate group from Beijing, and we served *da lu* noodle, a comfort food found in the Chinese capital. Our Korean guests were offered marinated Korean side dishes and *soju*, which are off-the-menu items,” shared Koga.

The Taipa niche

One of Macau's most well-known gourmet destinations, Taipa Village served as the official cultural partner of Asia's 50 Best Restaurants awards in 2018 and 2019. The heritage-rich destination provides an interesting juxtaposition to the neighbouring Cotai Strip, which is known for its glitzy casino resorts.

Here, travellers can find traditional shophouses, quaint, cobbled streets, niche shops, and of course, innovative dining outlets offering a range of cuisines, from traditional Portuguese and Spanish delicacies to modern Italian cuisine.

One player in Taipa Village that is targeting corporate groups is modern Spanish tapas bar and restaurant, Barcelona. Since its opening in September last year, the dining establishment has played host to several smaller-scale events such as corporate gatherings and wine tastings.

While each floor of Barcelona has a distinctive theme, what stands out immediately is the rooftop bar. Ideal for welcome receptions, product launches and private celebrations with up to 30 guests, the rooftop bar charms guests with a beautiful view of Taipa Village.

A short walk from Barcelona is another corporate dining venue, Bella Taipa, a four-storey Italian restaurant with a seating capacity of 30. Planners can choose from a range of traditional Italian dishes and reinventions of such dishes with a modern touch.

As Macau's tourism sector recovers from the effects of Covid-19 on inbound travel and events, new and established food experiences may work well to rebuild planners' interest in the destination.



◀ Barcelona bar and restaurant specialises in Spanish tapas, and charms planners with themed spaces that are great for corporate gatherings

What's in a goody bag?

The intrinsic value of promotional bags usually fades once the event or conference is over. [Huone Singapore](#) lists five alternatives to help companies up their business gifting game



An idea? A purifying plant. In 1989, NASA discovered that certain houseplants could absorb harmful chemicals we breathe. Plants can be delivered to your client's office for everyone to take the next day. No need to carry them around, and you'll be doing something for the well-being of the attendees. Plants can also increase productivity levels, as they enhance memory and concentration.

- 2. Give an enhanced spa experience** Continuing on the well-being theme, have you considered giving spa vouchers? Who doesn't want a free massage or facial? It will be a very much appreciated gift.
- 3. Some culture, perhaps?** People value cultural activities more than ever. There are cultural centres that offer a variety of classes, from piano to samba and everything in between. Or offer tickets to concerts, ballet or theatre performances, or movies. You choose, according to the budget.
- 4. Charity work** Most companies have social responsibility initiatives. Some have specific charity organisation they make donations to, and you can donate to that organisation, too! Or, let the participants choose their charity and tell them you'll make a donation in their name. Or join in one of their initiatives, because often, it relates to the company's value and culture, and by doing so, you show that you care.
- 5. Last but not least: don't give. Use the budget for a surprise activity** Organise an extra activity for your attendees. How about having a magician over? How about a comedian or a poet, reading some event-appropriate verses? Or organise a cocktail school? You should let participants know that there will not be a goodie bag, but that you are confident the other arrangement will be more memorable than the set of cheap cufflinks or pink hairbrush with your company logo on it.

Be bold and wise. When planning your next event, get to know your attendees and what they would appreciate. It might require some extra work, but just try to remember how absurd it is to give or receive a bag full of things you are never going to use!

Huone Singapore is an all-in-one events solutions provider featuring 11 thematic meeting rooms, inspired by scenes of old Clarke Quay to sceneries in Finland, that aims to challenge traditional meetings spaces with creative concepts.

Ever said or heard: 'Where shall I put it?' 'Don't even need to look inside; I know already what's in there'; 'I'll just leave it here.' 'Where's the rubbish bin?' Are there good alternatives to giveaways at all?

Another event, another goodie bag. Companies are still reticent in trying to break free from this tradition, the tradition that dates back to the 19th century, when companies started handing out small business gifts, especially during the Christmas period, to partners and clients alike. However, it was not until the 1990s that the production and distribution of marketing materials became more aggressive.

Magnets, pens, notebooks are handed out, becoming common company-branded products. Even plastic water bottles are branded now. As eco-sustainability gains ground, it is hard to believe that there is still an overproduction of goodie bags, swag bags and business gifts.

European Union member states recently reached an agreement on gradually banning single-use plastic items by 2021, while Australia and Taiwan here in Asia-Pacific are working towards similar goals at their own pace. Hence, it is vital for companies to start thinking about alternatives that would be appreciated by delegates and would put your company on the forefront of this 'radical' change.

Here are five ideas for alternatives to goodie bags:

- 1. Go green!** Ideas are always budget-related. If you need to give something, give something that can do some good.

The importance of education

MICE Matters has set up a foundation, the bulk of which will go towards bursaries for local students at polytechnics. Its director, Melvyn Nonis, shares with [Rachel AJ Lee](#) the motivation behind the investment



Finding young talents in the tourism and hospitality industry is a challenging task, and especially so for the business events sector, for it is certainly not the most glamorous nor the most well-paid line to be in.

That is why education is of utmost importance, and is the main motivation for MICE Matters to set up a fund worth S\$250,000 (US\$179,887) on its 15th anniversary. Called the MICE Matters Outreach Foundation, the bulk of the money will be put towards bursaries for local students at polytechnics taking up courses in travel and hospitality.

MICE Matters director, Melvyn Nonis, stressed: "We are in dire need of good people in the industry. If you don't have people, you can't do the business. They also really need to have passion and interest (to stay in the MICE industry)."

It is fortunate then that business events have been gradually introduced into the travel and hospitality syllabus in polytechnics over the years.

"When Mitch (MICE Matters' co-director, Michelle Seet) and I look back all these years, we realised we just lived year-by-year and basically rocked and rolled our way through it,"

mused Nonis. But he felt it would be different for students who graduate with knowledge in business events, as they would have a "good foundation and headstart", as well as a "clear career path".

When asked why he had chosen to offer bursaries and not scholarships, Nonis said: "A difference between scholarships and bursaries is that you have to be really smart to get a scholarship. However, bursaries will be provided to a student with financial difficulties. This will allow us to help more students in need."

Nonis also stressed that efforts to support education will not stop there. Upon graduation, he hopes that these students would be willing and able to join MICE Matters for an internship. Mentorship and on-the-job-training would gift graduates with all the necessary tools to develop further.

When asked what triggered the establishment of the foundation, Nonis said: "I think we got a little bit emotional and sentimental, and wanted to do something different to celebrate our 15 years in the industry."

In fact, Community

▲ MICE Matters presenting its corporate donation to CFS

▼ Melvyn Nonis



Foundation of Singapore's (CFS) CEO Catherine Loh shared with *TTGmice* that this is the first donor-advised fund that has been established for a company in the travel and hospitality sector. Also, S\$250,000 is a relatively generous donation from a company with just 20 people.

"CFS (partners more than 400 charity organisations in Singapore, and) has the ability to help MICE Matters craft their philanthropic strategy and maximise the impact of their charitable fund," Loh pointed out.

While the bulk of MICE Matters Outreach Foundation's funds will go towards bursaries, a portion will also support various charities that individual team members hold dear, such as Children's Cancer Foundation or an animal welfare society.

"Think of CFS as a bank with S\$250,000. You give them the money and you tell them exactly how the money should be dispersed, or CFS can advise which charities may need the funds more (than others) at any point in time," said Nonis.

He added that they will soon have the first round of discussions with people from both CFS and Singapore Polytechnic, to discuss the amount needed for bursaries.

Nonis strongly believes that the business events sector is here to stay and will remain relevant for a long time to come. And even though the sector recently took a hit from the ongoing Covid-19 situation, he believes that business events will continue to develop, and will be able to easily pick up where it's left off once the virus is contained or eradicated.

"The learning curve is steep, and the industry can be complex, but the strategy is always to be event-centric, and give clients a reason to keep coming back to you.

Even as technology is becoming more rampant, face-to-face is still very important in the business (hence the need for more young blood)," he concluded.

Catch up: Doris Lam

From high pressure moments to priceless friendships, the general manager of Momentous Asia Travel & Events lists out what she loves about business events

How did you get into this industry?

I was a fresh graduate when I first applied for a position in the tourism section with Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA; now known as Hong Kong Tourism Board). Instead, I was offered an executive post at the convention bureau, where I had to promote Hong Kong as a major event destination. The job provided me with hands-on opportunities, working at the front line of various industry events. These experiences broadened my understanding of how events were organised. The vivacity of this experience led me to China Travel Service's (CTS) MICE team later on.

Today, I work for a small company, learning to multitask and handle a complete event cycle from sales and planning to support and execution.

What is the highlight of your career thus far?

At CTS, I was assigned to accompany high-profile VIPs to

Beijing for the duration of the Olympic Games in 2008. The pressure was intense, as I single-handedly dealt with all the liaison works, while tackling unexpected problems. I've also had the opportunity to help organise the Lions International Convention in 1992 and the inaugural F1 Chinese Grand Prix in Shanghai in 2004.

What do you love and hate most about the job?

Nothing beats the dynamic and ever-changing business environment, and the opportunity to travel overseas. The culture shock forced me to grow up fast because I had to travel on my own. But aside from trips being eye-opening, it's the priceless friendships that were made during those trips.

The downside is the longer working hours, especially when the world is so connected now. In the past, emails were checked only in the office but we are now on standby round the clock, no thanks to the various means of communication channels like social media.

How do you motivate yourself daily?

Finding your passion is important. I joined Momentous a decade ago and I still am able to learn new things everyday because it is different from what I did previously.

Any hidden talents?

I previously did ballet in school but couldn't afford the time after entering the event industry. Recently, I started to pick up dancing again, but Latin, for about three hours a week.

Work wise, I am actually an accredited tourist guide. Should my tour guides encounter any unexpected emergencies, I am always on standby to keep operations seamless.

What do you think are the most pressing challenges in Hong Kong's MICE industry?

The high turnover rate of younger staff, and shortage of venue space in the city.

- Prudence Lui



Appointments



Claudia Sagripanti



Jeane Lim



Nils Rothbarth



Jim Sharpe

Publishers Australia – the trade association representing B2B and B2C publishers – and managed the events of the Australian Data-Driven Marketing Association.

Nils Rothbarth

Park Inn by Radisson North Edsa has appointed Rothbarth as its first manager. He joins from Fairmont Zimbali Lodge and Resort, South Africa where he spent three years in the same capacity.

Jeane Lim

Lim is now the general manager of Grand Park City Hall following her move from Parkroyal Collection Pickering.

Jim Sharpe

Sharpe has taken over Oni Chukwu as CEO of Aventri.

John Drummond

Drummond has been promoted to general manager of Inter-Continental Grand Stanford Hong Kong. He was previously the hotel's resident manager, a post he has held 2010.

Thomas Schmitt-Glaeser

Schmitt-Glaeser is now both the general manager of The Sukhothai Shanghai and vice president for The Sukhothai Hotels & Resorts. Aside from overseeing The Sukhothai Shanghai, he will also spearhead the brand expansion of the group.

Akio Izumi

The Novotel Okinawa Naha has made seasoned hotelier Izumi its director of sales & marketing.

Allen Khoo

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts has welcomed Khoo as resident manager of Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore. He has more than 13 years of experience with Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts across Malaysia, China and Taiwan.

Claudia Sagripanti

The Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia has appointed Sagripanti as chief executive. She was the CEO of

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