

October 2018

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# TTGmice

Asia-Pacific's intelligent business events resource

Thailand steps up the tempo  
for business events

Favourable winds ahead  
for Sarawak

Singapore paves new roads

## Events on the high seas

Still resistant to the idea of taking your next corporate incentive, meeting, or conference onboard a cruise ship? We lay out the benefits planners and delegates can gain from holding events on the high seas, the latest unique venues and experiences available onboard, and tips for great events







More Reasons to Smile for

**MICE in the**

*Philippines*





Nowhere else in the world would you find the warmth and hospitality that can rival that of the Filipino people. Transcending age, ethnic background and geographical location, the Filipinos are a race that are intrinsically friendly, with a heart for service that is renowned the world over. the Philippines and find out why it is more fun here!

This national trait complements the beauty that envelops the country from north to south. Rolling hills, majestic landscapes, diverse marine life, and white sand beaches are among the most popular sites of the Philippines. The province of Palawan has been recognized by international polls as among the best island destination in the world, and so has Boracay, a small paradise found in Aklan province.

Many are drawn to its shores from all over the world, and Filipinos are more than happy to make each visitor feel at home, without exception.

MICE events are certainly going to be exceptional in the Philippines. Five-star properties abound, equipped to bring a fine experience even to the most discerning business traveler. A number of state-of-the-art facilities that can be home to conferences, exhibitions, trade shows and concerts are found throughout the country. These, and an incredible culture with passion for service, propels the Philippines to become the next premier MICE destination in the region.

More than 7,000 islands are prepared to give you over 7,000 reasons to smile. Host your next MICE event in the Philippines and find out why it is more fun here!

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# Ready, get set, cruise!

The *TTGmice* team has just concluded its first Asian MICE Cruise Conference just as this issue was put to bed. The event, held on September 18 in Bangkok, alongside the annual IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific, was created to shine the spotlight on the many opportunities cruises bring to the business events community.

It is clear that cruise tourism is big business. Cruise Lines International Association, the world's largest cruise industry trade association, has predicted in its *2018 Cruise Industry Outlook* report that 27.2 million passengers globally are expected to cruise this year – up from 17.8 million nine years ago. And the growing passenger numbers mean something important. The report noted that in 2016, the 24.7 million global cruise passengers created more than a million full-time jobs, paid US\$41.1 billion in wages, and generated US\$126 billion in total economic output worldwide.

But what does it mean for the business events community? While there are no global studies yet on how business events are contributing to total cruise business or how cruises can contribute to business events performance, major cruise companies are taking a serious look at how they can make corporate groups a larger part of their business. This is particularly so in Asia.

At Genting Cruise Lines, which owns Dream Cruises, Star Cruises and Crystal Cruises, corporate events and charters are already a major piece of its business.

Royal Caribbean Cruises' Angie Stephen has observed that Asia's potential as a source market for corporate cruises is much stronger than in the west, where cruises were first established.

Princess Cruises, which has an established leisure clientele, has tuned up its courtship of Asian corporate groups and has reaped bookings for sailings to even faraway routes such as Alaska.

In an earlier conversation with cruise veteran Steve Bloss, founder of Worldwide Cruise Associations, he told me that Asian companies – particularly those in China – are savvy cruise bookers and are going for exotic routes. Cruise companies, he said, must acknowledge Asia as both an attractive playground for corporate cruises, as well as an important source market for global cruising.

The question now is, are Asian planners outside of China sufficiently aware of cruises as a product and an event partner they can consider for their future events? Cruise chiefs think there is still room for improvement here, and they are investing in planner education, ship tours and more.

*TTGmice* hopes that the Asian MICE Cruise Conference, to be an annual event going forward, will help to enforce this message. If you've missed the debut edition, our cover feature, *Events on the high seas* (pages 15-22), will bring you a little up to speed.

We are also working on placing videos of the conference sessions on *TTGmice.com*. Watch that space!



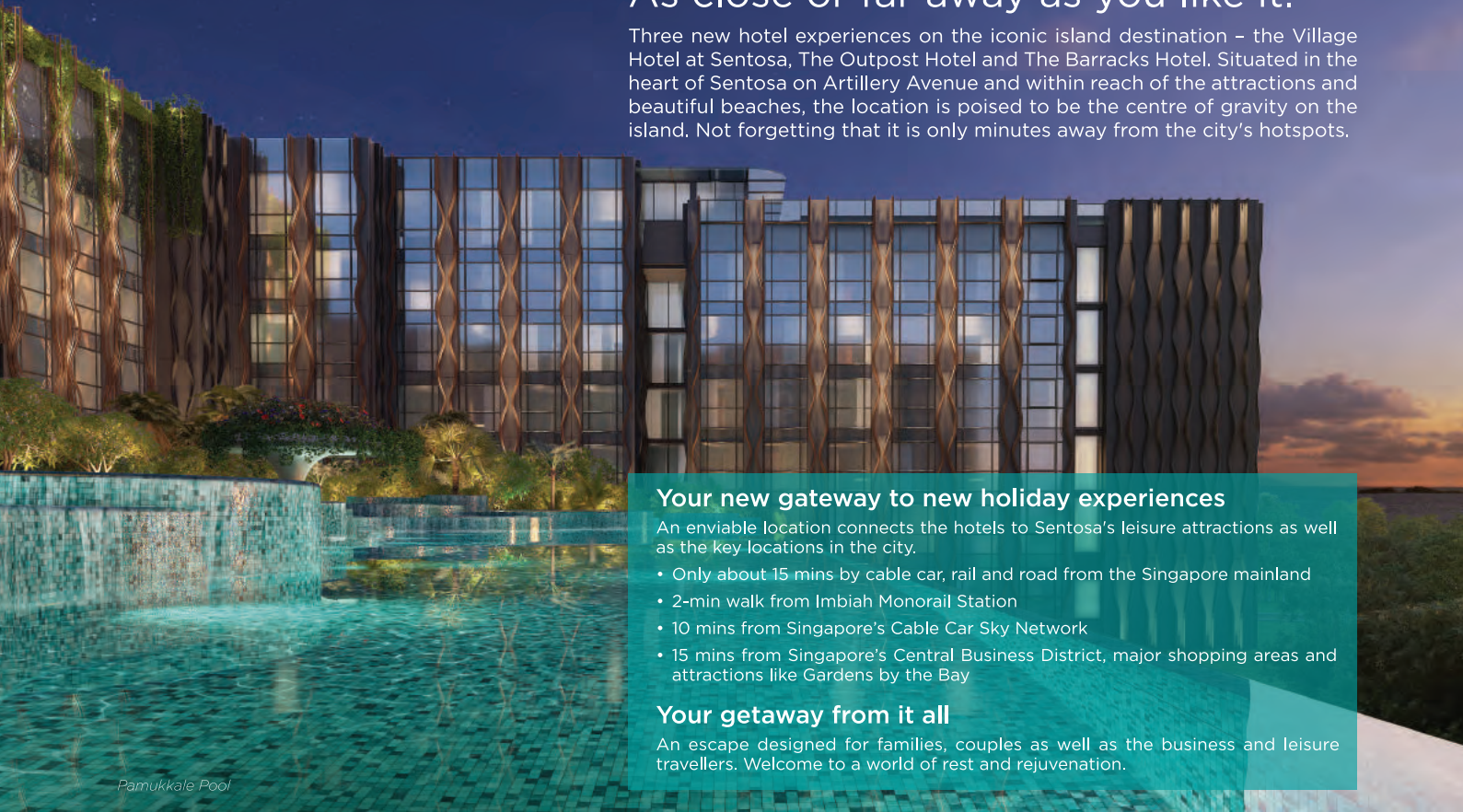
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# A New Gateway & Getaway in Sentosa opens in April 2019.

## As close or far away as you like it.

Three new hotel experiences on the iconic island destination – the Village Hotel at Sentosa, The Outpost Hotel and The Barracks Hotel. Situated in the heart of Sentosa on Artillery Avenue and within reach of the attractions and beautiful beaches, the location is poised to be the centre of gravity on the island. Not forgetting that it is only minutes away from the city's hotspots.



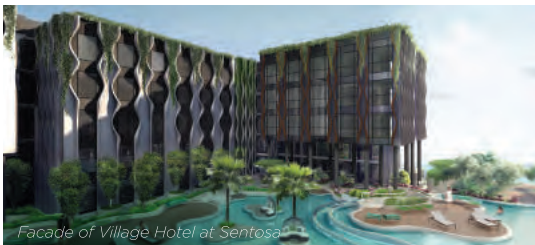
### Your new gateway to new holiday experiences

An enviable location connects the hotels to Sentosa's leisure attractions as well as the key locations in the city.

- Only about 15 mins by cable car, rail and road from the Singapore mainland
- 2-min walk from Imbiah Monorail Station
- 10 mins from Singapore's Cable Car Sky Network
- 15 mins from Singapore's Central Business District, major shopping areas and attractions like Gardens by the Bay

### Your getaway from it all

An escape designed for families, couples as well as the business and leisure travellers. Welcome to a world of rest and rejuvenation.

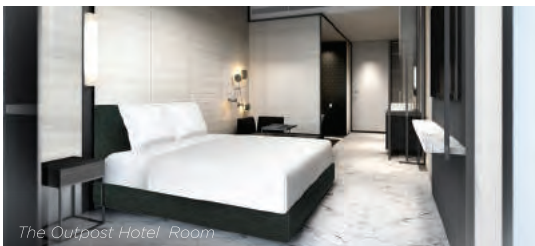


Facade of Village Hotel at Sentosa

### Village Hotel at Sentosa

Perfect for families and leisure or business groups, the 606-room hotel captures all that is fun and special about Sentosa's Sun, sand and sea. Decorated in ocean-hue, the hotel's modern architecture juxtaposes against the splendour of the heritage buildings.

Be amazed by an archipelago of four themed pool zones – Children's Play Pool, Lazy River Pool, Adventure Pool, and Pamukkale Pool. Bask in the thematic gardens and relax in its manicured surrounding. From intimate parties to large corporate events, there is always a space suitable, from the cosy solemnisation deck, the 480-people capacity at The Commune to the exclusive Revelry Hall. The possibilities are endless.



The Outpost Hotel Room

### The Outpost Hotel

Designed for discerning millennials and couples, this upscale hotel boasts 193 guest rooms with contemporary industrial chic aesthetics and clean crisp lines inspired by colonial black-and-white design. The exclusive rooftop pool and bar is great for cocktail sessions, candlelit dinners and intimate celebrations where you can feast your eyes on picturesque views of the sea and sunset. A unique Land Rover limousine service is at your beck and call to take you to adventures and back. Experience the exceptional every day.



Events Centre at Village Hotel at Sentosa

### The Barracks Hotel

Housed in a designated conserved building, you will be transported to its charming past. 40 luxurious guest rooms and suites endowed with exquisite service and attention to every detail await you. All rooms on the ground level allow for direct access to the private pool and jacuzzi. Where heritage comes to life.

Be the first to stay with us at the new gateway and getaway in Sentosa.  
Visit [www.StayFarEast.com/Sentosa](http://www.StayFarEast.com/Sentosa) to find out more.



*Images are artist's impression*





## COVER STORY

### 15 Events on the high seas

Still resistant to the idea of taking your next corporate incentive, meeting or conference onboard a cruise ship? We lay out the benefits planners and delegates can gain from events on the high seas, the latest unique venues and experiences available on some of Asia's best cruise ships, and a handful of tips that will help corporate groups make the most of their time onboard

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Improved transport options between mainland China and Hong Kong are helping to bolster the MICE segment in the latter, reports Prudence Lui

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## Snapshots

@ttgmice



Riding the digital transformation wave and bringing technology into business events, Sarawak Convention Bureau launched yesterday its 360 degree Interactive Virtual Reality Video.  
August 25



Sarawak Convention Bureau's Business Events Tribal Meet (triBE) opens with a traditional Sarawak dance performance.  
August 25



It was a wonderful evening spent with our friends from Noshrekker, who brought us a taste of Southern Highlands, New South Wales.  
August 24



We venture into Greenwood Fish Market's latest outpost in Dempsey. Beautifully-designed, the space is great for events, and can hold around 170 people seated.  
August 23

## Intelligence

Demand for inflight Wi-Fi is driving airline loyalty in Asia-Pacific, reported the fourth annual global Inflight Connectivity Survey published by Inmarsat in association with market research company Populus. Over three quarters of passengers would more likely rebook with an airline if high-quality inflight Wi-Fi is offered

## Q&A

Jack Yao, secretary general, China Council for the Promotion of International Trade Commercial Sub-council and vice president, Chinese Business Event Federation (CBEF), shares how the government and private sector are working together to accelerate development and professionalise the industry



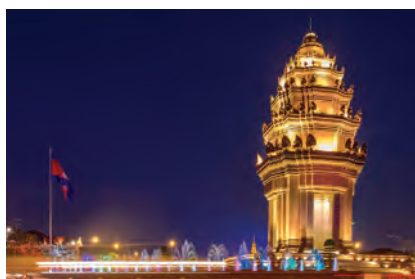
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## What's happening



**October 11-13**

Cambodia Travel Mart,  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia



**November 11-14**

ICCA Congress,  
Dubai, UAE



**November 27-29**

IBTM World,  
Barcelona, Spain



# Make The Right Decision at Asia Pacific's Best Integrated Resort

At Resorts World Sentosa Singapore, turn events into enviable experiences with venue choices including a New York street, a stunning panorama teeming with marine life, a maritime museum with thematic galleries, spacious ballrooms with world-class facilities and more.







**Universal Studios Singapore™ - New York Street**  
This covered street can be transformed into a venue for a banquet with character meet-and-greets, entertainment and rides!



**S.E.A. Aquarium – Ocean Gallery**  
Home to over 100,000 marine animals, the centrepiece of the Ocean Gallery can be turned into an event space with a view unlike any other.



**Adventure Cove Waterpark – Bluwater Bay**  
Private cabanas turned into a VIP area, a breezy beach ideal for guests to mingle, and four water slides can be made available.

**Our MICE Specialists will be glad to customise an unforgettable experience for you:**  
**[mice@rwsentosa.com](mailto:mice@rwsentosa.com) | +65 6577 9977**

**rwsentosa.com**

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## A fresh event space in the Garden City

Greenwood Fish Market in Dempsey Hill is the fourth and currently largest outlet in Greenwood's repertoire, and dining in this restaurant was akin to dining in a rich friend's home. The blue-painted space is tastefully decorated with ocean-inspired memorabilia, accentuating the wooden furniture and furnishings.

The spacious and light-filled restaurant allows for 80 indoor dining, 52 lounge seating and 40 al fresco dining – that faces a wall of verdant greenery, a rarity in the city state.

The event possibilities are endless for this 790m<sup>2</sup> flexible space, from a cocktail party to a seafood barbecue cookout after a teambuilding session. When asked if there was a minimum spend, Greenwood was unable to give any answer as the team is

open to playing host to any type of event or function.

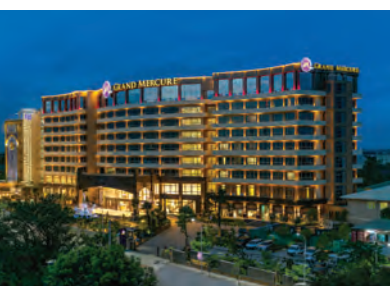
This particular outlet is also the brand's first multi-concept restaurant featuring Western, Japanese and Chinese selections. Seafood predominantly features on the extensive menu, and can be tweaked to one's liking. Desserts and bread are also baked in-house.

Aside from the dining space, there's also a retail area to stock up on wholesale seafood and meats, wines, and various imported ingredients. Part of the retail space is taken up by Fleurs & Buds, the in-house florist. The team is looking at organising flower arrangement or cooking classes in the future, which can form part of teambuilding events.

## Grand Mercure brand debuts in Myanmar

Grand Mercure has opened its first-ever hotel in Myanmar overlooking the famed Shwedagon Pagoda.

The Grand Mercure Yangon Golden Empire boasts 175 guestrooms and suites designed by local artist Pyar Dade, all of which featuring detailed hand-painted ceilings. Room sizes start from the 30m<sup>2</sup> superior rooms up to the 340m<sup>2</sup> two-bedroom suites.



Amenities on-site include a restaurant, deli, pool bar, two state-of-the-art ballrooms that can host up to 400 guests with a large pre-event function area, and seven meeting rooms.

Meanwhile, the wellness area comprises an outdoor swimming pool, children's pool, and a fitness centre. There is also a spa complete with open-air Jacuzzi, sauna and steam bath, while a nearby golf course completes the suite of leisure facilities.

## Ascott expands apart'hotels portfolio in Vietnam

The Ascott Limited (Ascott) has opened two properties in Vietnam – Citadines Blue Cove Danang and Citadines Regency Saigon.

Citadines Blue Cove Danang is Ascott's first property in Danang and its largest property globally. It is part of an integrated development that is located by the Han River along the Son Tra peninsula.

The property offers a mix of 548 studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, most of which overlook Danang Bay. Recreational facilities include a 24k gold-plated infinity pool, Jacuzzi, fitness centre, spa, and children's playroom. There is also a ballroom and meeting rooms.

Meanwhile, the Citadines Regency Saigon in Ho Chi Minh City's District 3 offers 229 keys from classic rooms to one-bedroom apartments, some of which are connected. Facilities include a swimming pool, fitness centre, children's wading pool, sauna room, café, restaurant and launderette. The serviced apartment is also within walking distance to tourist attractions such as the Reunification Palace, Notre Dame Cathedral and War Remnants Museum.



**Citadines  
Blue Cove Danang**





## There's now an events venue on Australia's Great Barrier Reef

The first dedicated events venue on the Great Barrier Reef has been launched in Cairns, Australia, offering events and functions in the middle of the Coral Sea.

Sunlover Funlover incorporates a high-speed catamaran and outer Great Barrier Reef pontoon which can be customised for any function. The unique offsite venue can cater for more than 300 guests, and operates all-year-round.

Entertainment options include starting the event with a comedian doing a live set, or learn about the reef from in-house marine experts, as the boat leaves Cairns and sails for 90 minutes to the Great Barrier Reef.

Once the boat anchors, activities such as snorkelling, glass-bottom boat tours, visiting the underwater observatory, and fish feeding can be arranged and are included in the fee, while extras such as diving and scenic helicopter rides can be added.

## Hot deals

### Hilton Singapore

Sporting a fully renovated meeting and event space, Hilton Singapore is incentivising meeting planners to hold their events at the hotel.

Every new booking made between now and December 31, 2018, with event materialisation by March 31, 2019, entitles meeting planners to at least two perks.

The list includes welcome breakfast on arrival; complimentary free flow of soft drinks for all delegates; complimentary whole fruits in a bowl throughout the meeting; or 15 per cent off audiovisual equipment.

The bonus perks are applicable for full-day meeting packages, inclusive of two coffee breaks and one lunch at a discounted price of S\$85 (US\$62; usual price at \$95)

per delegate. Price per guestroom starts from S\$260.

For residential meetings, meeting planners can enjoy even more benefits such as one complimentary room night for every 25 paid room nights (maximum of five complimentary nights); two complimentary upgrades to Executive room with lounge benefits for up to two guestrooms; and 20 per cent discount off total bill at all F&B outlets operated by Hilton Singapore, excluding Room Service.

In addition, new meeting or group bookings can enjoy double Event Planner Points, where they can get benefits faster through the Hilton Honors loyalty programme.

Email [sinhi.sal@hilton.com](mailto:sinhi.sal@hilton.com).



From left: Hilton Singapore's Grand Ballroom, Meet With Purpose set-up

## In the pipeline



### InterContinental Auckland

Opening in 2022, the flagship is located on the city's waterfront at 1 Queen Street, and will be part of the Commercial Bay mixed-use development. The precinct will also feature shopping and dining outlets, as well as a 39-level office tower. Around 90 per cent of the hotel's 244 guestrooms will offer water views, and facilities within the hotel will include F&B options, a gym, and meeting spaces.



### St Regis Melbourne

The St Regis Melbourne will rise in 2022 as the luxury brand's first in Australia on the corner of Spencer and Flinders Streets. The 33-storey Flinders Bank will house the St Regis Melbourne across levels two to 11 and include 168 guestrooms and suites, offering views of either the Yarra River or city skyline. The hotel will also feature a wellness centre with a 25m-long indoor swimming pool, spa, three F&B options, and a beauty salon.



### Mandarin Oriental, Phuket

Come 2022, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group will manage a new luxury resort on Phuket island in Thailand. Occupying 9.5ha of land in Laem Singh Bay, all the hotel's 105 rooms, including 37 pool villas, will provide views of the Andaman Sea. Other amenities include an all-day dining venue, speciality restaurant, bar, spa, fitness centre, kids' club, two outdoor swimming pools, as well as function facilities.

## United adds second daily flight between Singapore and San Francisco

United Airlines will introduce a second daily flight between Singapore and San Francisco effective October 27, 2018, citing "overwhelming response" since the service was launched in June 2016.

The additional flight will leave San Francisco at 10.55, arriving in Singapore at 20.15 (+1). From Singapore, flights depart at 22.20 for arrival in San Francisco at 20.55.

The existing flight UA1 departs San Francisco at 22.40 and arrives in Singapore at 08.00 (+2). From Singapore, UA2 leaves at 10.00 for arrival in San Francisco at 09.50.



# New stadium gives recovering Kamaishi hope for its MICE future

By Kathryn Wortley

The opening of Kamaishi Recovery Memorial Stadium in Iwate Prefecture on August 19 was seen as a beacon of hope for the tourism recovery of the Japanese port town which was devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011.

The stadium – the only newly-built facility of the 12 to be used for the Rugby World Cup (RWC) 2019 – will offer corporate hospitality packages and host business guests during the event, and its construction has shown the Japanese people how

**Shimada: happy to be part of the rebuilding**

a sporting event could help to drive business events and tourism revenue.

Since Kamaishi was named a RWC host in 2015, its motto has been “rebuilding through rugby”, and its population of 36,000 is preparing alongside officials to welcome sports fans, tourists and business guests. The port town is famous for rugby, steel and fishing. Some 30 per cent of homes and 60 per cent of businesses were damaged or destroyed during the 2011 natural disasters.

“We are excited to be part of the rejuvenation of Kamaishi and the Tohoku region,” said Tomo Shimada, head of marketing at STH Japan – a provider of sports hospitality and premium spectator experiences.

Though limited accommodation and public transport means the RWC corporate hospitality provider will not offer

its full range of packages, it is expecting good uptake of its newly launched corporate Premium Seats. These will include Category A seats, premium food and drink, official merchandise, and a souvenir. Moreover, about 10,000 seats will be added to the 6,000 pax capacity stadium ahead of the first RWC game in September 2019.

According to Shimada, the concept of sports hospitality was unknown to most Japanese people STH Japan surveyed as part of its market research in 2017. But awareness is growing due to industry efforts. As of August this year, 21 companies have been assigned as official travel agents for the RWC. Their offerings include corporate packages to Kamaishi with Premium Seats, teambuilding or incentive trips in the local area, and accommodation in neighbouring areas.

## KTO Singapore conducts event planning course for corporates

The Korea Tourism Organization Singapore office introduced an event planning course for in-house corporate event planners last month. Held on September 11, it armed participants with in-depth knowledge on the destination and event trends, as well as basic need-to-knows such as tour prices and meal plans.

Entitled Korea MICE Workshop Basic 101, the course was offered free to qualified corporate planners.

Caitrin Moh, senior MICE manager of the Korea Tourism Organization Singapore office, said the course was created in response to ongoing feedback from corporate clients that “South Korea is a boring and expensive country for business events”.

Moh explained: “Such perceptions are due to a lack of resources in the market for their reference (which forces them to) depend greatly on their appointed intermediaries to come up with (programme) recommendations.

“Unfortunately, there are too many products (in South Korea) for the intermediaries to digest, and (event) trends are always changing. As a result, intermediaries may not have a deep understanding of South Korea and end up recommending



a programme that does not answer the needs of the client. They may also choose to stick to safe, tried-and-tested products that are no longer as exciting.”

The course covered three key areas: general information on South Korea (such as accessibility and weather); common blind spots (such as reasons for differences in tour prices); and trending and unique experiences for corporate events.

The Singapore office has been trying to improve the quality of destination programming on the intermediary side through similar courses since late 2011. Held twice a year, once in March/April, and the other in August/September, these courses are offered free to outbound travel agents specialising in business events. – Karen Yue

## SCB deploys event technology at TriBE

Sarawak Convention Bureau’s (SCB) use of technology to further enhance delegate experience at business events was evident at the recent Business Events Tribal Meet (TriBE 2018), a homegrown MICE conference.

For instance, the delegate registration and check-in process deployed a facial recognition software technology by SCB’s official Event Technology and Solutions Provider Partner, Evenesis. The use of facial scans slashed waiting time drastically, as much of the process was done ahead of the event. Prior to the conference, delegates were asked to upload photographs of themselves as part of the online registration process and these images were used as identification on event day.

SCB also launched its first 360 Degree Interactive Virtual Reality (VR) Video at the event. This 2.5-minute-long VR video showed locations in Sarawak, as well as the meeting facilities at Borneo Convention Centre Kuching. This software was developed by the bid team, and it can be customised for event bids.

Amelia Roziman, chief operating officer at SCB, added that the VR use was not limited to event bids, as it will also be used at trade events the SCB participates in. – S Puvaneswary





## More take notice of Cambodia

By Marissa Carruthers

Cambodia's growing range of products and greater affordability are making the country an attractive destination for the region's business events market.

Esther Ng, liaison director of Singapore-based Networks Synergy International, said clients are searching for new destinations to host meetings and events, and Cambodia's affordability in comparison to South-east Asia's major business events destinations, is planting the country on the radar.

Ng said: "There's a lot more interest in Cambodia. With some products, there is a big price difference too, of up to 40 per cent, compared with other countries, and there are many new hotels being built for the market."

This is a trend that Chatora Ath, general manager of Kilat Events, has noticed.

She said for many regional companies, Cambodia is ticking all the right boxes, adding she has seen a rise in bookings from businesses based in Singapore and Malaysia.

Ath added: "Cambodia is much more affordable than other popular countries like Singapore, and has a lot more accommodation to offer at more affordable prices than Vietnam and Thailand."

The surge in corporate interest has led to a rise in hotels catering to the sector. Pacific Hotel in Siem Reap, for example, is constructing a conference centre for up to 1,200 pax to add to its current business facilities. It is slated to open before 2019.

Rudy A Cagang Jr, the hotel's operations manager, noted a rise in enquiries from India and Singapore. "Cambodia's affordability definitely plays a part in this," he said.

## HRS invests in AI, data solutions

An increasing amount of robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) is being pumped into HRS' solutions for the hotel value chain, as the company responds to increasing demand for these technologies in the marketplace.

Tobias Ragge, CEO of HRS, told *TTGmice*: "We're using a lot of AI in terms of the procurement of hotels, sourcing appropriate alternatives for programmes, and the display logic of booking tools for a corporate traveller based on personal and corporate preferences."

"We're even able now to filter out fraudulent rates, so any time a hotel sends back wrong negotiated rates, we can filter these out of the shopping channels used by travellers."

Kimi Jiang, vice president Asia Pacific, HRS, added that the solutions are "localised and fine-tuned" for every market in Asia-Pacific in order "to provide for the differing needs of local demand". – Pamela Chow

## In brief

### Seoul MICE Alliance grows in size

The Seoul MICE Alliance (SMA) gained 39 new members this August, bringing the public-private coalition representing Seoul's business events industry to a total of 299.

New members include Seoul's Oil Tank Culture Park, an emergency oil reserve built in the late 1970s which has been transformed into an event complex; Baesan, a former warehouse turned into an industrial-style, flexible space; and recently-opened property Novotel Ambassador Seoul Dongdaemun Hotel & Residences.

### IHG unveils Business Edge for SMEs

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has introduced IHG Business Edge, a programme designed to enhance the corporate travel experience for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Companies with less than 250 employees and up to US\$50 million in revenue, and that spend at least US\$5,000 with IHG annually, are welcome to join. This will give them discounted rates at participating hotels across IHG's portfolio of 5,400 properties across 15 brands.

ONE MINUTE with IT&CM Events

## Here's What We Learnt From IT&CMA 2018's Glowing Education Line Up Bangkok, Thailand



**We learnt how to engage and capture the attention of our audience in new and experiential ways**

Keynote Address  
Experiential Marketing Forums



**We explored events on board cruises and modern incentive ideas**

Asian MICE Cruise Conference  
Incentive Forums



**We looked into GDPR and the importance of member data protection**

Session:  
GDPR: Crucial Steps in Building Trust and Value

By SITE

site



**We celebrated the role of women in the workforce**

Session:  
ICCA-TTG Passionate Breakfast  
By ICCA and TTGmice



**We got into a hot debate over PCOs for events**

Session:  
Why Do You Need A PCO When You Can Organise Your Own Conference!!

By ICCA and World PCO Alliance



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# An event that performs

Destination Asia Singapore is no stranger to Philips events, but the first-ever Asia Pacific Customer Event in Singapore calls for special attention. By **Caroline Boey**

### Event brief

The annual Philips Asia Pacific Customer Event is targeted at customers and business partners from South-east Asia and Asia-Pacific. It is usually held overseas and for the first time, the 2017 event was staged in Singapore at the Philips APAC Center.

The theme of the event was Made to Perform, based on the concept of healthy living through sustained performance. Every touchpoint of the event would have to allow attendees to experience sustainability “live”.

The client also wanted a paperless event with no disposables, to recycle and to reuse; and to convey an impactful tone-of-voice.

The event was held on April 10 and 11, with the first day focusing on Health of the Body, and the second on Health of the Mind.

### Challenges

A major challenge was how to conceptualise the event. Daniel Tay, director, corporate meetings & events with Destination Asia Singapore, said: “An immense amount of time was spent on this and how to conceptualise the event theme Made to Perform, which also revolved around sustainability.

“We had to abandon traditional ways of organising events, like not printing large amounts of collaterals, and had to intensify our brainstorming to come up with new ideas to reduce, reuse and recycle.”

Another challenge was to convert the Philips APAC Center into an event space. He explained: “Due to major space constraints, we had to make sure the selected breakout rooms were appropriate and large enough to accommodate the carousel groups which were divided into nine groups.”

The DMC also had to convert the office space of Philips APAC Center into an event venue in four days.

### Solution

The DMC used digital LED walls, developed an event mobile app, and utilised recycled pallets to display the products and biodegradable corn ware disposable tableware during meals.

The event app developed covered important information such as the event schedule, health analysis (tracking of steps taken daily) and useful contacts. It consisted of a photo gallery and attendees were encouraged to take photos throughout the event and to upload them. This allowed the attendees to engage and communicate both effectively and efficiently. At the same time, it acted as a sustainability initiative of going paperless.

### Key takeaways

Philips has worked with Destination Asia for the last five years and in the fast-paced world of retail marketing and sales, new product releases containing innovations and value improvement are key to success.

This often means that new products are released at the very last moment and are only available to be showcased days, sometimes hours, before an event. This creates the need for the DMC to be very flexible as key information is often only known the day before the event, requiring additional showcase design and build.

For the 2017 event, the DMC had to work with one hotel, five venues and the customer’s own regional headquarters. This required good teamwork and coordination among a broad range of individuals at Destination Asia.

### Event

Philips Asia Pacific Customer Event 2017

### Organiser

Destination Asia Singapore

### Venue

Philips APAC Center, Singapore

### Date

April 10 to 11, 2017

### Number of participants

386

### Challenges

A need to bring the client’s concept, Made to Perform, to live through multiple touchpoints; a sustainable living experience must be conveyed throughout the event; major space constraints at chosen venue

Tay commented; “One of the key takeaways from the event was our ability to come together as a team, which consisted of internal and external staff, to deliver the event successfully within the tight time frame.

“Each and every individual team member was important as we had our own specific roles to play. We were pleased that we managed to deliver our very best and live up to our logo tagline to “exceed expectations.”



# An unexpected turn

An uneventful private gathering of 150 turns into the centre of attention for more than 600 people on Election Day, pushing the Sheraton Petaling Jaya Hotel to quickly take on crowd control and security measures. By **S Puvaneswary**

## Event brief

An event organiser from the Pakatan Harapan Coalition political party confirmed a booking for the grand ballroom at the new Sheraton Petaling Jaya Hotel just a day prior to their event, which was to take place on the evening and night of the 14<sup>th</sup> General Election on May 9. The organiser needed the venue for some 150 invited guests to watch live streaming of voting results from polling stations across the country.

## Challenges

What started off as a typical evening at the hotel took a drastic turn after 22.00, when the polling results started to favour the Pakatan Harapan Coalition party over the incumbent Barisan Nasional party which had been the ruling party for the past 60 years.

As the vote counting progressed, it suddenly seemed possible that the Pakatan Harapan coalition might actually win the election and form a new government. With this, well-wishers, supporters and party members started to throng the hotel lobby. Many insisted on entering the grand ballroom to be with party members.

Joining the growing crowd were press members from local and international media organisations although no press briefings were scheduled at the beginning.

From just 150 expected guests, the crowd ballooned to around 600.

The hotel had a crowd control issue in its hands. The organiser's own security staff was also outnumbered by the crowd.

Christopher Moore, the hotel general manager, recalled: "As more and more people gathered at the hotel, we heard that party leaders of Pakatan Harapan were also on their way. We knew we had a very important function on our hands with many top politicians joining in."

More hands were urgently needed on deck, but with election day being a national public holiday, many hotel managers and staff were not at work.

Moore added: "Another challenge was to keep the press away from the ballroom and the proceedings inside. Later, many photographers and film crew stood on our marble table tops and chairs to secure a vantage point during the press conference.

"And when the Coalition leaders arrived, we had to ensure their safety and that their movements were not hampered by the unruly crowd."

## Solution

Many staff who were not working on that day



The Star Media

### Event

Pakatan Harapan Coalition's private event during the 14<sup>th</sup> General Election

### Organiser

Pakatan Harapan Coalition

### Venue

Sheraton Petaling Jaya Hotel

### Date

May 9, 2018

### Number of participants

Around 600

### Challenges

Burgeoning crowd requiring security and crowd control; sudden arrival of top politicians; strained hotel manpower due to national public holiday for the elections

entered the ballroom were legitimate guests.

Moore recalled: "It was a difficult task as some of those who turned up also held titles and insisted that they be let into the ballroom. They claimed to be invited guests but they didn't have the necessary tags. It was quite challenging!"

To deal with the growing number of members of the press, the hotel chose to contain them in the foyer area, one floor below the grand ballroom.

"We also suggested that the organiser kept them updated on press briefing timings. We believed that would keep the press from getting restless and unruly while they waited," he explained.

Moore said many of the press members had waited for more than two hours for the press conference to begin, and it finally took place close to midnight. In the meantime, the hotel distributed bottled water and allocated manpower in the foyer area to prevent "the press photographers and film crew from damaging our furniture".

## Key takeaways

Moore said the team spirit of the staff that night was incredible.

"They didn't mind being recalled to work on a public holiday as they believed they were serving the nation and were being part of history in the making," he said.

"They worked as a team. Their patience and ability to think on their feet to provide solutions to all the challenges that night was what made this event a success."

were recalled to work that night, and they were given temporary new responsibilities. This included managing the crowd and the media, and to ensure the growing list of requirements of the organiser was taken care of.

The hotel also sealed the lifts and escalators leading to the ballroom on the third floor, barring unauthorised personnel.

The hotel security and staff assisted the organiser's security team in ensuring people who



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# Events on the high seas

Still resistant to the idea of taking your next corporate incentive, meeting or conference onboard a cruise ship? We lay out the benefits planners and delegates can gain from events on the high seas, the latest unique venues and experiences available on some of Asia's best cruise ships, and a handful of tips that will help corporate groups make the most of their time onboard





# Making a case for MICE cruises

Customisation, access to unique destinations, all-inclusive fares, and use of event facilities, dining venues and entertainment options are just some of the distinct benefits of taking a business event onboard a cruise ship, but persistent myths surrounding the experience need to be dispelled. By Karen Yue

It is widely known that cruises allow holidaymakers to explore various destinations without the hassle of packing and unpacking while enjoying the ease of an all-inclusive fee that covers accommodation, transportation, F&B and entertainment.

For corporate groups taking their gatherings to the high seas, a cruise experience brings far more benefits.

While Genting Cruise Lines (comprises brands Star Cruises, Dream Cruises and Crystal Cruises), has seen continued year-on-year growth in corporate bookings for events of 30 to 2,000 guests, its senior vice president – international sales, Michael Goh, revealed that some persistent myths surround MICE cruises still stand among corporate clients.

“The common misconception is that MICE cruises can be costly and boring,” said Goh.

His observations are echoed by industry peers Freddy Muller, Silversea Cruises’ vice president, corporate & incentive sales, and Farriek Tawfik, Princess Cruises’ Southeast Asia director.

Adding to Goh’s list, Farriek said clients also perceive events onboard cruises as being inconvenient, a hassle to organise, and lacking in event facilities and capabilities.

## All the right reasons

Naturally, cruise representatives are eager to set the story straight.

Goh said: “In fact, (the cruise product) is the most cost effective form of group travel and promises diverse and unique business offerings in one seamless voyage. The ship itself is a destination on its own, complemented by enchanting destinations.”

Farriek added: “Participants are able to wake up at a new destination every day (but) need to pack and unpack only once which means more time for them to engage in activities.

“As well, shore excursions also offer great opportunities for team bonding and can be tailored to a group’s specific interest. Furthermore, groups can visit destinations that can only be accessed by sea or are difficult to reach over land.”

Cruises on the high seas are also “distraction-free” while allowing planners to “balance the seriousness of business objectives with leisure”, Goh pointed out.

An even more tantalising benefit, is the customisable nature of the product.

Said Muller: “The majority of business events on Silversea are full ship charters. This allows a corporation endless opportunities to customise their experience. They can select their destination, duration of voyage, and (onboard) branding opportunities.

“We have team members located globally to be visible and accommodating. We even have an operations team dedicated solely to running all our business event programmes.”

**“A deep understanding of the latest event trends and fast-changing needs will help drive stronger MICE cruise take-ups.”**

**- Michael Goh**  
Senior vice president – international sales, Genting Cruise Lines

## Something for everyone

Muller believes that there is cruise ship for any type of corporate gatherings.

“Most of the cruise lines are able to offer programmes for true incentive, reward programmes. Others allow for more meetings and conventions, as they have purpose-built ships for this type of business; these ships would have large conference facilities,” he said.

Farriek noted that Princess Cruises’ larger ships are ideal for meeting groups of 300 to 500 people, thanks to their large theatres and dining halls.

Genting Cruise Lines, with its different cruise brands and products, can accommodate events “of any scale”, remarked Goh.

“We get a good mix of incentive trips, company retreats, seminars, product launches and award ceremonies,” he said, adding that the introduction of Dream Cruises’ massive ships, *Genting Dream* and *World Dream*, homeported in Singapore and Hong Kong/Nansha respectively, have given the company “greater flexibility to accommodate any events at sea”.

## Education as game-changer

Cruise industry leaders told *TTGmice* that the way to dispel these common misconceptions about MICE cruises is better education targeted at event planners.

“We see a big potential in MICE cruises as there is currently a low awareness among planners and companies that events can be organised easily and held successfully onboard cruise ships,” said Farriek.

“We are driving and promoting further awareness of MICE cruises. We are working closely with our partners such as travel agents to offer fam trips and training. Our educational tour onboard *Sapphire Princess* in Singapore last January, done with *TTGmice*, for example, received an excellent response.”

As well, Muller emphasised the need to show the differences across cruise brands, products and segments. For example, planners could consider expedition cruising and river cruises as well.

“We have seen that business from Asia does venture outside of (regional) waters, showing interest in destinations such as Alaska and the Mediterranean,” he said.



**From left:  
Michael Goh,  
Freddy Muller  
and Farriek  
Tawfik**



# experiential events at sea



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# What's onboard

Cruise ships today are a treasure trove of fun facilities and memorable experiences. Here are some that would charm event delegates



## Royal Caribbean International

### Studio B ice skating rink

*Voyager of the Seas* features an iconic ice skating rink where performances by professional skaters from around the world are held. On top of that, the rink can support teambuilding activities and be used as a unique venue for casual meetings for up to 800 pax.

### Skypad

*Spectrum of the Seas* and *Quantum of the Seas* offer some of the world's most innovative activities at sea, which are perfect for teambuilding. The Skypad, in particular, is a gem. It promises an out-of-this-world bungee trampoline experience but with a virtual reality spin. Participants strap on a headset and are at once transported to another time, place or planet. This virtual adventure launches them high into the stratosphere and let their imagination soar.

### Two70

Unique to the Quantum class of ships, Two70 is an entertainment hub which offers guests multiple experiences throughout the day. Ordinarily,



**From above: Host an impressive gathering at Two70, a venue unique to Royal Caribbean's Quantum class ships; rest and relax in a Dream Cruises Executive Suite; catch fantastic performances at The Zodiac Theatre, Superstar Virgo**

Two70's giant windows offer sweeping views of the ocean, but become massive screens that show any scene, real or imagined, with Vistarama. Naturally, it is the perfect venue for meetings and seminars, especially events that require impressive visuals to complement messages.

## Dream Cruises

### Rope course and zipline

The rope course and zipline onboard Dream Cruises ships is perfect for team bonding. Participants first tackle a tricky rope course before gliding down the 35m zipline, set 18 decks above the ocean. What a rush!

### Dream Night

Unique to Dream Cruises, Dream Night is the grand finale to any cruise experience. As a spectacular fireworks display takes off against the night sky, guests are invited onto the main pool deck where they get to indulge in champagne and cocktails.

### Dream Palace

While Dream Cruises ships are a luxurious experience, Dream Palace takes things up several notches. It is in a class of its own, a regal "ship-within-a-ship" enclave with 142 suites and private VIP facilities including its own swimming pool, spa, gym and dining venues. Guests are pampered by meticulous Dream Butlers who promise personalised attention.

## Star Cruises

### Galaxy of the Stars

Offering panoramic views of the ocean from a glass-fronted observatory area, this lounge in *Star Pisces* and *SuperStar Virgo* is ideal for presentations and product launches. With a seating capacity of up to 292 guests, it also serves as a popular dance spot where delegates can unwind to popular music after a day of conferences.

### Zodiac Theatre

The Zodiac Theatre in *SuperStar Virgo* is a performing arts space for musicals, dance performances and magic shows. With its 830-seat capacity, the theatre is equipped with state-of-the-art lighting, rigging and sound systems. The audience is assured of a comfortable and enjoyable experience, thanks to plush seats and good acoustics.





## Princess Cruises

### Movies Under The Stars

This open-air poolside amphitheatre brings back the romance of movies under the stars. Blockbusters are screened every evening at this top deck attraction, and complimentary fresh-popped popcorn and hotdogs are dished out. Movies Under The Stars makes a delightful addition to any corporate programme onboard the cruise ship.

### Luxury beds

Touted as the first bed onboard a cruise line that is designed by a board certified sleep expert, Princess Cruises' luxury beds provide delegates the ultimate sleep experience out at sea. Ultra-premium features including a plush nine-inch single-sided medium firm mattress with two-inch thick pillow top for enhanced support as well as luxurious Jacquard-woven cotton linens. Delegates are refreshed and ready for the day's programme, and will return home from their event all rejuvenated.

### 24-hour room service

Complimentary 24-hour room service ensures delegates are never hungry throughout their programme at sea, no matter the time of the day. The all-day room service menu includes hand-tossed pizzas to dazzling multi-course gourmet dinners.

## Norwegian Cruise Line

### Race track

Both *Norwegian Joy* or *Norwegian Bliss* feature the largest race track at sea – the first ships to lay claim to offering this entertainment option. The race track is large enough to support up to 10 go-karts racing at the same time at up to 60kmh. Perfect as a teambuilding activity, the competitive track features many twists and turns while the go-karts come with four speed settings to accommodate novice, intermediate and advanced drivers. Thrillseekers should watch out for the special 'turbo boost' on each lap.

### The Haven

Hidden away at the top of the ship is The Haven by Norwegian, home to the most luxurious, well-appointed and spacious accommodation. Not only will VIP delegates have access to all the ship has to offer, they will also enjoy the personal attention of a concierge and 24-hour butler.

## Oceania Cruises

### The Culinary Center

*Oceania Riviera* and *Oceania Marina* offer the first custom-designed and hands-on cooking school at sea, where guests learn how to prepare a variety

**From above: Catch a movie under the stars onboard Princess Cruises ships; race a go-kart on a Norwegian Cruise Line's ship; master impressive cooking skills at Oceania Cruises' The Culinary Center; be pampered by Silversea Cruises' top butlers**



of exquisite dishes in a fully-equipped teaching kitchen. Classes are led by master chefs from around the world.

### Stay connected

Oceania Cruises is rolling out its new Wavenet high-speed Internet service fleet wide, available to all guests at no extra charge. For businessmen out on a programme at sea, this invaluable service ensures they remain connected.

## Silversea Cruises

### Signature butler service

A Silversea cruise experience is never without a top-class butler service which begins the moment guests come onboard. Upon arrival, the butler welcomes guests personally, orientating them to their suites and even offering to unpack their bags. The butlers remain attentive throughout the voyage.

### Professional event planning services

Silversea's team of corporate and incentive planning professionals provides creative solutions to ensure that corporate events take off successfully. The extensive host of event planning resources available onboard will ensure that all special activities and services are well customised and arranged, promising delegates an unforgettable experience.





# Hot ports of call

Cruise line chiefs reveal their favourite ports of call in Asia, and dish out tips on what corporate groups can do there for an unforgettable travel experience

## Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

“Ho Chi Minh City is a pulsing city that retains an old-world charm despite its rapid growth. Beautiful pagodas sit next to vibrant markets, while food vendors serve steaming bowls of pho in the shade of historical colonial buildings. The best way to soak it all in, is to ride a local pedicab through the bustling streets. For guests who would prefer to escape the bustling city, I will recommend a Mekong River cruise.”

### Felix Chan

Vice president, sales Asia  
Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings

## North Bali, Indonesia and Macleod Island, Myanmar

“My top picks include North Bali and Macleod Island in Myanmar, both of which are accessible right to their door step with Dream Cruises.

In North Bali, be sure to check out the wonders of Singaraja City, the enchanting Pura Ulun Danu Bratan which is a major Shaivite water temple located on the shores of Lake Bratan, and the traditional Candi Kuning market.

MacLeod Island, which is exclusive to us, provides a uniquely diverse island adventure. It is a hidden and private island with untouched natural beauty and pristine beaches. Guests will get a sense of exclusivity and freedom to go scuba diving or jungle trekking. There is also a wide range of water sports to choose

from. Guests can also simply relax on the beach.”

### Michael Goh

Senior vice president,  
international sales  
Genting Cruise Lines

## Vietnam

“Arriving into Vietnam is an experience on its own. With the intimate size of Silversea’s ships, we can navigate freely through Ha Long bay during misty, foggy conditions. Once we arrive, you will tender ashore and take a transfer to the Giac Tam Buddhist Zen Monastery. As you drive through the scenic country side of Ha Long Bay, you begin to absorb the culture. Upon reaching the spectacular monastery, your cultural experience peaks. Here you can experience a fascinating lesson on Zen meditation from one of the monks – an experience that stays with you for life.”

### Freddy Muller

Vice president,  
corporate & incentive sales  
Silversea Cruises

## Phuket, Thailand and Penang, Malaysia

“I have two favourites. In Phuket, you will reach Patong Beach where our ship tenders. This is within walking distance to nearby attractions where there is plenty of shopping, food and

beverage and relaxation options. I suggest that teambuilding groups go island hopping and snorkelling at Phi Phi island or sea cave canoeing at Phang Nga Bay National Park.

Over in Penang, the pier is situated at close proximity to George Town. There is a wide array of cultural sites, gastronomic and shopping attractions in Penang, which are easily accessible via our shore excursions. I recommend that groups join the Heritage Cycling Tour to Clan Jetty to view traditional settlements created by Chinese fisherman or the Habitat Nature Discovery at Penang Hill where they can enjoy sweeping views of Penang from a tree-tops walk.”

### Angie Stephen

Managing director,  
Singapore and South-east Asia Royal  
Caribbean Cruises

## Yokohama, Japan

“Yokohama is my pick, as the pier has a pleasant waterfront promenade which is a great spot for a stroll and for spectacular views of the Minato Mirai skyline. The port is also situated in the heart of Yokohama, so shopping and tourist attractions are easily accessible. In Yokohama, Sankeien Garden is a beautiful Japanese-style garden where you can view cherry blossoms and autumn foliage, depending on when you visit.”

### Farriek Tawfik

Director, South-east Asia  
Princess Cruises

From left: Macleod Island, Myanmar, and Pura Ulun Danu Bratan in North Bali, Indonesia





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# Get your checklist ready

Business event planners taking their programmes onboard a cruise ship get plenty of support from the cruise lines, but it never hurts to be prepared. Princess Cruises' Farriek Tawfik and Royal Caribbean Cruises' Angie Stephen dish out some hot tips that will help planners get more out of the cruise experience

## Book early

Plan ahead and make reservations early to secure the best stateroom selection and venue spaces, especially if your group isn't chartering the whole vessel. The larger your group, the farther ahead you should plan and book.

For a full ship charters, Stephen advises planning to begin 1.5 to two years ahead. For 1,000 guests and more, planning should begin one to 1.5 years ahead. Six to 12 months of planning should suffice for smaller groups of 500 to 999 guests.

## Be BFFs with cruise team planners

The cruise line's in-house planner will be your closest ally, working closely with you from the get-go to secure and arrange everything you might need, from conference room booking, dining room seating and customised features for your gala dinner and themed parties. They are experienced in handling onboard business events and are a hassle-free help for MICE agents and event planners.

## Go for customised leisure activities

Start by having a clear understanding of your group's preferences and requirements before planning a team-building programme onboard. Once these details are known, have a look at the wealth of activities and leisure facilities available on the ship. These days, cruise ships are packed with much more than what a five-star hotel can typically offer. Most of these on-board activities are also customisable, allowing you to shape a programme suitable for your delegates' profile and level of expectations.

## Dole out the special treats for VIPs

To reward the best of the best in your group, be sure to plan special events. Consider booking them into premium accommodation or treating them to a speciality dining experience. Guests of Royal Suite Class on Royal Caribbean International and Princess Suite on Princess Cruises offer more customised adventures, greater exclusive access and inclusive amenities.

## Stay connected

Don't forget that your delegates are businessmen by nature, and would want to remain connected to the world beyond the cruise ship while

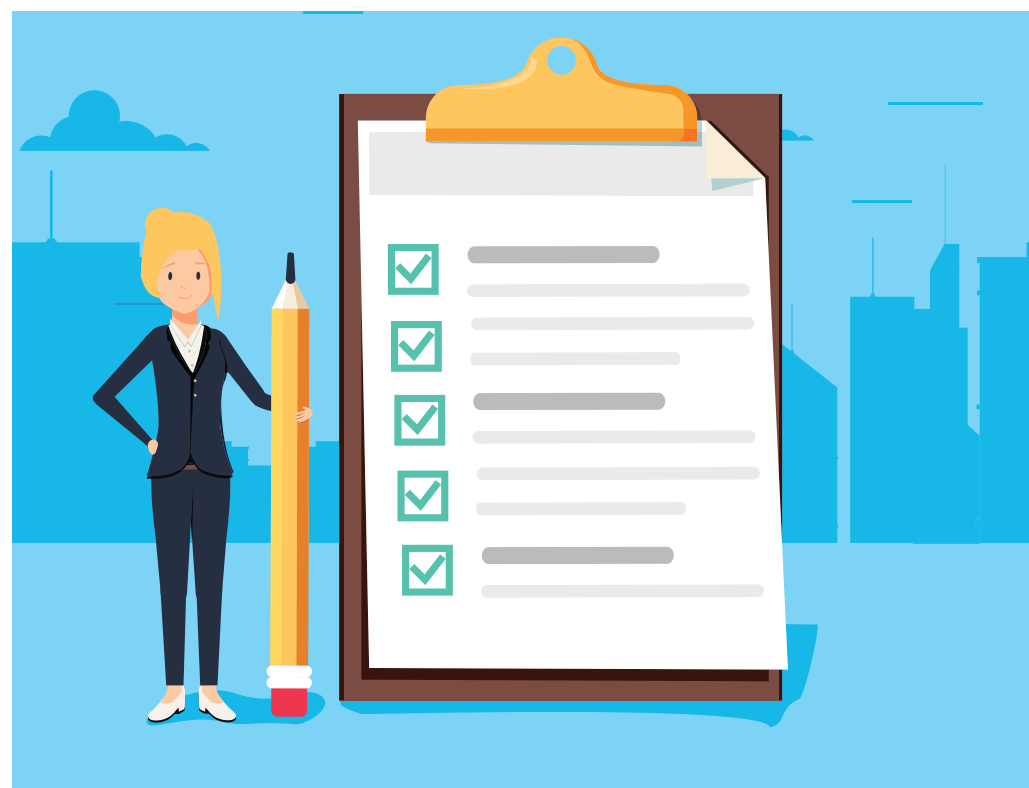
onboard. Work with the cruise line to secure complimentary Wi-Fi for everyone.

## Plan for many feasts

Dining options are aplenty onboard cruise ships, and most will have dining venues that can accommodate large groups of several hundreds of guests. Plan ahead so that the ship's kitchens can prepare and accommodate various dietary requirements your guests might have.

## Go for off-peak seasons

To get the most attractive rates, avoid school holidays and festive dates which usually come with higher rates.





# Boosting the tempo

Pleased with their MICE performance so far, TCEB is pretty confident that its support schemes will continue to appeal, reports **Rachel AJ Lee**

According to a Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) spokesperson, performance for Thailand's business events industry from the first to third quarter in financial year 2018 was "impressive".

During the same period, the number of delegates grew 20.3 per cent to 910,912 year-on-year. Meanwhile, the generated revenue grew 8.5 per cent to 68,898 million baht (US\$2 billion) year-on-year.

Within the MICE sector, the segment that revealed the strongest growth was incentives, which posted a 24 per cent growth in overseas delegates (213,943 vs 265,384) and a 15.9 per cent growth in generated revenue (13,142 million baht vs 15,232 million baht).

TCEB offers a range of support schemes, which has brought in new business.

For instance, the support scheme in the meetings and incentive sector, entitled "Meet Mega", has been relatively successful in attracting mega-size groups. This year, TCEB has welcomed a total of eight mega groups – from direct marketing companies in the Asia-Pacific – that have held their events at certified venues in Bangkok, Pattaya and Hua Hin. Group sizes ranged from 3,500 to 20,000 pax, and resulted in a total of 65,280 delegates and generated 5,510 million baht in revenue.

Next, in the associations sector, 11 bids in the fields of medicine, engineering, IT and zoology, have been won by Thailand as of 1H2019. They are expected to bring in around 14,770 attendees and revenue of 1,227 million baht.

Meanwhile, the government agency's support has also brought in a number of exhibitions for 2018 such



as the SILMO Bangkok – The ASEAN Optical Fair, Label Expo Southeast Asia, and Medical Devices ASEAN.

For 2019, CPhI South East Asia, a pharmaceutical tradeshow, has already confirmed its call at Bangkok. To be held at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center, the event is expected to draw more than 6,000 attendees and 270 exhibitors.

TCEB's president, Chiruit Isarakunkun Na Ayuthaya, earlier this year shared that the bureau has aligned its efforts with the country's new economic policy to drive competitiveness in 10 key local industries – known as the 10 S-Curve industries – through business events.

The 10 S-Curve industries are integrated medical services, future automotive, smart device, health tourism, biotechnology, food processing, robotics, aviation and logistics, biofuel and biochemical, and digital services. In this regard, TCEB has been collaborating with overseas and

local partners to bring in business events from these industries into the kingdom.

Medical Devices ASEAN 2018, as a trade event for the integrated medical services industry, received TCEB assistance. TCEB supported IMPACT Exhibition Management in bringing more than 4,000 medical professionals around the region to attend the exhibition that highlighted technology and innovation in medical devices.

Other recent successes include SIGGRAPH Asia, CEBIT ASEAN Thailand, and Future Energy Asia 2018. SIGGRAPH Asia, the continent's largest conference and exhibition on computer graphics, interactive techniques, digital content welcomed some 6,500 attendees from 58 countries in November 2017.

Next, oil-and-energy event Future Energy Asia 2018 will take place from December 12-14.

TCEB's spokesperson said: "We are still looking for partners to bring in events from the 10 S-Curve industries and roll out support schemes. Our target partners are government agencies, especially the ministries related to the 10 S-Curve industries, and overseas organisers and local suppliers."

**Thailand's MICE sector posts growth with signals of strong market confidence; The Grand Palace in Bangkok pictured**



## The rose in the north

Chiang Mai, one of Thailand's five MICE-designated cities, believes that its international-level conference facilities, unique experiences and cultural immersion programmes will be able to pull in more corporate groups.

Nooch Homrossukhon, director meetings and incentives department, Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), shared that one of Chiang Mai's key selling points is

the city's Lanna heritage and tradition of ethnic tribes that reside in the mountainous areas. Moreover, Chiang Mai's natural landscapes and eco-tourism sites allow for "fun, educational, and adventurous team-building and incentive activities".

For instance, teambuilding programmes at the Horizon Village & Resort – located 10km from the city centre – are interwoven with local culture, such as Thai dancing class, Thai cooking class, or the making of herbal candles that delegates can bring home as a souvenir.

Aside from organising teambuilding activities, Horizon Village & Resort boasts Chiang Mai's newest meeting space, a Lanna-style convention hall named Hor Kum Twee.

The 640m<sup>2</sup> function space has capacity for 500 pax theatre-style, and 400 pax for banquets. The property also offers a Grand Ballroom which can hold up to 800 pax theatre-style, as well as 12 other smaller function

rooms that can hold between 10 and 300 pax.

Meanwhile, Chiang Mai Exhibition and Convention International Convention (CMECC) provides 521,600m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space across several halls, and 29 various meeting rooms. The largest hall – made up of three interconnected smaller halls – offers 8,000m<sup>2</sup> of space which can accommodate more than 10,000 people.

Besides CMECC, Chiang Mai has at least 10 hotels, mostly in the city centre, that can hold events for up to 1,200 delegates. For instance, the Le Meridien Chiang Mai has its own convention centre that can accommodate up to 1,400 people. The biggest group it has handled numbered 1,200 pax in February 2018.

The Chiang Mai International Airport is now being upgraded. Come 2030, with a runway expansion and terminal extension completed, the facility will be able to handle a taxiway capacity of 34 flights per hour, as well as cater to 18 million passengers. – Rachel AJ Lee

The Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Center



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## REVIEW CENTRAL

### JW Marriott Hotel Bangkok By Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

Standing in the Ploenchit area, the 20-year-old JW Marriott Hotel Bangkok is staying fresh with a makeover that is currently underway until mid-2019. The completion of the revamp's first phase in December 2017 added 130 luxury rooms and suites, while the second phase is due to finish this fall with 178 rooms.

#### Rooms

Established Thai architecture firm, PIA Interior Company, was tasked with outfitting the accommodation with a new look. The result are rooms and suites exuding understated elegance, melding traditional Thai elements with modern touches. The lightwood flooring matched with neutral gray and brown tones to give the space a sophisticated yet relaxing feel.

Despite its understated look, the expansive suite at closer look will rich decor features, such as a glass-encased royal barge sculpture (complete with

engravings of mythical creatures), gray-and-white murals depicting life during Thailand's olden days, and poems of the legendary Thai poet Sunthorn Phu inscribed on the bed headboard.

The accommodation enhancement also kept functionality in mind, with the traditional desk ditched in favour of a lounge area that comes with a plush sofa, adding to amenities such as a kitchenette, flatscreen TV, and a sleek bathroom.

#### MICE facilities

JW Marriott Hotel Bangkok offers 1,400m<sup>2</sup> of flexible event spaces spread across three floors. Spanning a variety of sizes between 56m<sup>2</sup> and 470m<sup>2</sup>, most meeting rooms are named after iconic areas in the hotel's vicinity – think Lumpini, Ploenchit, Sukhumvit, etc. The Grand Ballroom, which was given a facelift in 2014, can accommodate up to 600 guests, and is equipped with the latest audiovisual technology and LED lighting.



#### Other facilities

The hotel has eight F&B outlets in total, offering a selection of cuisines ranging from the New York Steakhouse to the Tsu Japanese Restaurant. For relaxation, there's a health club and spa, outdoor swimming pool, and whirlpool.

#### Service

If the new suite is a sign of things to come, I'm looking forward to the completion of the facelift in 2019.

Room count 441

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# Favourable winds ahead

More meetings are bound for Kuala Lumpur, drawn by new luxury hotels, favourable rates and a friendly business environment. By **S Puvaneswary**

**T**he corporate meetings segment in Kuala Lumpur is looking healthy, report DMCs and venues, with strong forward bookings spurred by competitive hotel rates and new five-star hotel brands entering the capital city, as well as the weak ringgit which has made the destination attractive to foreign companies.

In general, the local currency has been on a general downhill trend since 2Q2015, further weakened after the national General Election on May 9. The ringgit stood at 4.1 against the US dollar on August 20, as compared with RM3.91 on March 1, 2018 and RM3.63 on March 2, 2015.

Additionally, the new Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad's pledge that the government will be business friendly augurs well for the business events industry.

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre's general manager, Alan Pryor, said: "This is very positive for Malaysia and can only enhance our competitive advantage, and enable us to grow our market share of inbound corporate meetings."

Pryor added that the capital city's appeal for corporate meetings lies in its affordability, an experienced supply chain, purpose-built meeting facilities, accessibility to the region and a business-friendly environment where English is widely spoken.

China and Australia are two markets that show the most promise for Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. He explained: "This is directly related to proximity and good access, and the fact that there is a strong relationship with Malaysia in terms of trade and investment and economic cooperation. The corporate sector generally makes up 20 per cent of the centre's business mix, and this can vary dependent on the business landscape and market conditions."

Also positive about the city's corporate meetings sector is Adam Kamal, general manager at Tour East Malaysia. He said: "The relaxation of Indian visa as well as a further depreciation of the ringgit had resulted in a 10 per cent increase in Indian arrivals for us this 2H2018. Based on enquiries you've received, I foresee strong forward bookings in 2019."

Adam also revealed that Bali's

Mount Agung eruption in July and Lombok's earthquake in August has led some corporate interest to be redirected to Kuala Lumpur. As a result, his agency has seen a spike in enquiries from India and China, for groups of between 60 to 200 people for September onwards.

Agreeing with Pryor on Kuala Lumpur's relative affordability compared to other Asian business cities, particularly those in India, Adam said: "It is cheaper for Indian corporates to meet in Kuala Lumpur than in the metro cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai as hotel rates here are more competitive."

"For instance, a five-star hotel here charges around US\$100 per night, while in India the same would be around US\$400. A 4D/3N meeting package here which includes five-star accommodation based on twin-share and all meals will cost US\$400 per person, whereas in India the same rate applied only to per person, per night."

According to Adam, Kuala Lumpur is also attractive due to its proximity to leisure hotspots such as Ipoh, Melaka and Port Dickson, which are two hours' drive away. This makes it easy for planners to include fun day trips to the business itinerary.

The skyline of Kuala Lumpur city at dusk



Patrick Foto/Shutterstock

## TALKING NUMBERS

**10**

The position Kuala Lumpur takes in the ICCA Asia-Pacific city ranking 2017, for having hosted 65 approved association meetings

**13,838**

The number of rooms in Kuala Lumpur in the five-star hotel category

**8,000**

The number of delegates at SEMICON Southeast Asia 2018, the largest conference and exhibition held at Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre this year



For Luxury Tours Malaysia, growth in corporate meeting this year comes from India and Indonesia. There were more groups of at least 400 delegates this year compared with 2017.

Arokia Das Anthony, the agency's director, said many of his corporate clients had offices in Kuala Lumpur and the reason for these meetings were to meet with their Malaysian counterparts. He added: "Some combine meetings with tours within Greater Kuala Lumpur. After the Malaysian General Election and change of government, we saw an increase in corporate bookings and incentive groups from India and Indonesia in June, July and August, with short lead times of 10 days.

"We think part of the reason was that companies wanted to see how things were in Malaysia as well as take advantage of the Mega Sale period and the zero rated Goods and Services tax break of three months which ran up to end August.

"Kuala Lumpur is a shopping haven and many delegates like to use their free time after meetings to



**"(The new government's business-friendly stance) is very positive for Malaysia and can only enhance our competitive advantage, and enable us to grow our market share of inbound corporate meetings."**

**Alan Pryor**

General manager,  
Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

go shopping along the Jalan Bukit Bintang area."

Arokia expects the recent opening of more five-star international luxury brands in the city to lure a heavier corporate traffic.

"Banyan Tree Kuala Lumpur, Four Seasons Hotel Kuala Lumpur and W Kuala Lumpur opened in July and August. We have a number of bookings for C-level meetings of no more than 40 people each, and these have chosen luxury properties," he said.

Four Seasons Hotel Kuala Lumpur general manager, Tom Roelens, said the additional supply of luxury inventory in Kuala Lumpur will attract new attention, further enhance the quality of events held in the city, and provide relief for the city's inventory shortage when large conferences and events call at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

Since the hotel's opening in July, Roelens said the property has seen strong forward bookings for C-level



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meetings and other private events held alongside larger conventions in the city.

Corporate meeting demand is also growing from beyond regional source markets, noted Saini Vermeulen, executive director at Within Earth Holidays.

He has reported a 20 per cent year-to-date growth in corporate meeting bookings from Poland and 25 per cent from Romania. These were a result of his company's move to engage a sales representative to develop the outbound leisure and corporate market in Eastern Europe 2.5 years ago.

As well, corporate meetings from Saudi Arabia to Kuala Lumpur has

grown slightly year-on-year, with forward bookings for November to early 2019 looking strong. Saini said the market is drawn to Kuala Lumpur's many hotel options with meeting facilities and easy availability of halal dining venues.

To keep demand coming, the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau is pressing on with sales missions and networking events with meeting planners and corporate clients in China, India and South Korea – Malaysia's top three source markets for corporate meetings and incentive travel.

These markets altogether contributed 84 per cent of total corporate incentives to Malaysia last year.



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## REVIEW CENTRAL

### Banyan Tree Kuala Lumpur By S Puvaneswary

53A and 56. My room on Level 56 offered unobstructed views of the city's iconic landmarks – Kuala Lumpur Tower and the Petronas Twin Towers.

Staying true to Banyan Tree's roots in spa retreats, my room came with an essential oil burner and fragrant incense sticks, as well as a chromotherapy shower which offers seven colour lighting changes and three shower settings – rain, column or cascade settings, each creating a different sensation on the body.

I found these amenities to be very thoughtful and unique among city hotels.

#### MICE facilities

There are three spacious and fully-equipped function rooms, spread across the lobby level and level 53. These warmly furnished spaces can accommodate up to 16 people each in boardroom seating.

These are supplemented and complemented by other flexible venues across the hotel. The dining facilities are versatile and can be used for private gatherings.

For instance, Altitude lounge on level 53 offers a private space that opens up to a partial open-air pool area that is perfect for coffee breaks or cocktail par-

## DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH

**1** In July, deputy minister of tourism, arts and culture, Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik, shared that talks are being planned with airlines such as China Southern Airlines, AirAsia and Malindo to start direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Guiyang, Guizhou province.

The ministry hopes to tap into Guizhou's 43 million strong population for potential leisure and business arrivals.

**2** A list of tourism events will be made part of the *Visit Malaysia Year 2020* campaign, starting from 1 January, 2020. Business event organisers can choose to include any of them in their pre- and post-meeting programmes.

**3** KTM Komuter express service between Kuala Lumpur and Seremban has been reinstated on July 25, after a suspension in 2016 for maintenance works.

ties with live cooking stations.

Also a gem for event planners is Vertigo, said to be the highest hotel rooftop bar in Kuala Lumpur. Perched on level 59, Vertigo charms with breath-taking views of the city skyline. Naturally, this makes it a great venue for hosting VIPs groups or welcome dinners.

#### Other facilities

Banyan Tree Kuala Lumpur houses four dining outlets – Horizon Grill, a seafood and grill restaurant; Vertigo rooftop bar; Altitude wine lounge; and a bakery.

For active business travellers, there is a well equipped, 24-hour gym, as well as an open-air pool.

Not to be missed is the Banyan Tree Spa, an award-winning chain belonging to the hotel brand. This outlet focuses on a non-clinical and holistic approach based on traditional Asian healing therapies. There are four couple treatment rooms which event planners can use for spouse programmes.

#### Room count 55

#### Star rating Five

#### Contact

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Website: [www.banyantree.com/en/malaysia/kuala-lumpur](http://www.banyantree.com/en/malaysia/kuala-lumpur)

**T**he Banyan Tree brand brought its luxury offerings to Kuala Lumpur on July 1, boasting a convenient location in the heart of the Central Business District of Kuala Lumpur and connection to Pavilion Kuala Lumpur and Petronas Twin Towers via a linked bridge. With its limited room inventory and spacious function rooms, the hotel is set to win the hearts of planners with intimate, high-end gatherings on hand.

#### Rooms

The property has 55 rooms, including eight suites, all located between levels





## Bridging connections

Improved transport options between mainland China and Hong Kong are helping to bolster the MICE segment in the latter, reports Prudence Lui

**W**ith the opening of the Express Rail Link (XRL) on September 23 and soon-to-launch Hongkong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB), Hong Kong is currently consolidating its position as a bridge between China and the rest of the world.

In addition, initiatives such as the Belt and Road (B&R) and Greater Bay Area (GBA) are contributing to the increase in business events for event organisers, as well as tourist numbers for Hong Kong.

Topic-specific conferences and exhibitions that have already taken place this year include the First Belt and Road International Food Expo (Hong Kong) which was held from June 27–29 at the AsiaWorld-Expo; and the third edition of the Belt and Road Summit held on June 28 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.

According to a Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) spokesperson, the destinations “aims to attract events that incorporate cross-border itineraries to capitalise on Hong Kong’s strengths as a connected hub”.

For instance, the Asian Logistics and Maritime Conference – to be held from November 20–21, 2018 – will include elements of enhanced accessibility to the Western Pearl River Delta.

Hong Kong will also be hosting The World’s First Cross-border FinTech Event during the Hong Kong Fintech Week 2018 on October 29 to November 2, with four days in Hong Kong and a one-day trip to Shenzhen for additional networking and

a site visit, showcasing the business synergies brought about by the GBA initiative.

Later this year, Hong Kong will also be hosting a seminar in Zhuhai for travel trade partners, as well as corporate fam trips targeting corporations in the GBA to educate them about the city’s offerings for their next corporate meetings and incentive trips.

Meanwhile, Momentous Asia Travel & Events has been offering its PCO services to conference organisers that are keen to attract more delegates from mainland China, as well as countries like Kazakhstan.

Its general manager Doris Lam expects more corporate business in the future.

She shared: “We previously confirmed one big conference expecting 1,500 pax in 2019, but unfortunately, because there is no space available at Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, the organiser decided to move the event to Shenzhen.

“However, with the XRL and convenient transfer between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, we do expect a large number of overseas delegates arriving via Hong Kong and transferring to Shenzhen.”

Lam added that for most of the company’s incentive groups that hail from Western countries, they will usually have a day trip in Macau. To offer a fuller experience, Momentous Asia Travel & Events will be extending their itineraries to Macau and Guangzhou.

“This will offer a fuller experience for visitors, as Hong Kong, Macau and Guangzhou are unique (destinations), where each has a distinctive

### TALKING NUMBERS

#### 1.9 million

The total number of overnight MICE visitors in 2017, a decrease of two per cent from 2016

#### 365,101

The number of overnight MICE visitors in 1Q2018, a 6.9 per cent year-on-year growth

#### 139,570

The total number of overnight MICE visitors from shorthaul markets from January–March 2018, a growth of 38.6 per cent year-on-year

blend of East meets West,” she said.

While International Conference Consultant’s director, Katerina Tam, agreed with Lam’s views about the improved access, she pointed out: “The link between China and Hong Kong will in turn boost the number of attendees from Mainland. But that’s just the transportation. Chinese participants have to take into consideration other factors such as the relevance of the conference and cost of trip.”

Pacific World Meetings & Events Hong Kong’s business development manager, Dwirt J Ang, believes that GBA synchronises well with their destination coverage – Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Macau and Hong Kong, from GBA and Sanya – and provides “a complete approach” to the region that was lacking previously.

He added: “There will be minimal impact from B&R as it mostly

More Chinese groups are expected once the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (above) opens



focuses on commercial trade. We've not yet obtained (event) leads from the mainland, (and as such) have identified this as one of our targeted key segments for 2019."

With the HZMB straddling Lantau Island, both Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) and AsiaWorld-Expo are also gearing up to tap into potential traffic – resulting from the improved access – with dedicated strategies.

Hong Kong Disneyland, for example, has extended its radar to reach more cities in central China, such as Changsha, Fuzhou, Nanning, Xiamen, Kunming, and Hangzhou. These cities will benefit from the launch of XRL as they are within the XRL 5-hour zone.

HKDL's business solutions & events director, Karen Kwan, shared: "We will also zero in on Zhongshan, Jiangmen, Zhuhai, Maoming, Yangjiang and Zhanjian, which will have shorter drive time to Hong Kong via the HZMB.

Kwan added that they have been working closely with HKTb to participate in business events promotion

briefings in mainland China and overseas. HKDL has also stepped up collaborations with travel trade partners in Guangdong, as well as local industry partners to conduct promotions across nine Asian countries and mainland China.

As for AsiaWorld-Expo, the convention and exhibition facility formed the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridgehead EXPO Tourism Belt alliance with Zhuhai International Convention & Exhibition Center, Hong Kong Regal Hotel, and Zhuhai Chimelong Hengqing Bay Hotel.

They will jointly increase global awareness of the exposition and tourism resources of Hong Kong and Zhuhai, and showcase the multi-destination travel model, with the ultimate objective of enlarging its business events catchment area.

Currently, the alliance members are in the midst of customising marketing materials to promote the regional concept on international trade shows, align their resources, and implement the One Fair, Two Cross-Boundary Venues strategy"

## DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH

**1** Tai Kwun – formerly the Central Police Station, Central Magistracy and Victoria Prison – is a historic compound that has been revitalised and opened as a cultural haven. Home to galleries, small-scale exhibitions spaces, and chic restaurants, new event spaces include a theatre with over 200 seats.

**2** The 40ha West Kowloon Cultural District comprises multiple key arts and culture facilities, including the Xiqu Centre which is scheduled to open in late 2018. The district is also home to flexible event spaces such as a versatile lawn and concrete paving that can be used for outdoor events.

**3** Scheduled for completion end-2018, The Mills was once the heart of Nan Fung Textiles' manufacturing. Its former mills are being transformed into a single coherent complex to house a business incubator, retail facilities, and event spaces.

## REVIEW CENTRAL

### The Murray Hong Kong By Prudence Lui

**H**oused in a 1969 government building, The Murray, Hong Kong, a Niccolo Hotel is located between Cotton Tree Drive and Garden Road. The premises was converted from a government office block under a revitalisation project.

#### Rooms

My N2 Grand room affords ample space at 50m<sup>2</sup>. I also appreciated the extra touches of luxury like in-room check-in rather than just a cold towel upon arrival.

I was also surprised by the turn-down

amenities – a hydrating face mask made by the hotel. This will be changed regularly to items such as a chocolate bar and face mist.

Moreover, 75 per cent of rooms are 50m<sup>2</sup> or bigger. All oversized accommodation features uniquely recessed windows allowing abundant daylight without direct heat from the morning sun.

#### MICE facilities

There are ample choices of indoor and outdoor venues for events with more than 1,900m<sup>2</sup> of available space.

For instance, a dedicated MICE floor – Murray Room on 25<sup>th</sup> floor – provides 425m<sup>2</sup> space for small to mid-scale events. Though there are no windows on this floor, the space benefits from great lighting equipment and event-friendly set-ups.

Event planners may also consider the Cotton Tree open-air terrace which can accommodate up to 150 people. The Arches is a semi al-fresco venue that can hold up to 500 guests. The property's Garden Level, meanwhile, offers 150m<sup>2</sup> of landscaped event space for a maximum of 125 guests.

Also on the second floor of the hotel are the multipurpose function rooms comprising a pre-function area and six

rooms that range from 35-40m<sup>2</sup>, three of which can be combined for a larger space of 105m<sup>2</sup>.

Lastly, Popinjays on the hotel's topmost 26<sup>th</sup> floor offers panoramic and spectacular views. The 355m<sup>2</sup>, 120-seat entertainment space includes an indoor dining area, a private dining room and a bar. For an exclusive experience, The Aviary, a private dining room with a glass facade, will be available for intimate events for up to 14 guests.

#### Other facilities

There are four other F&B options (The Tai Pan, Garden Lounge, Murray Lane and Guo Fu Lou), a spa, and an indoor lap pool.

#### Service

I tested a concierge's knowledge on private clubs and temples. He demonstrated his expertise and patience, giving a rare insider's view rather than just mentioning off-the-mill touristy spots.

#### Room count 336

#### Contact

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# Paving new roads

Several global events have sparked a promotional blitz for Singapore as players step up to revamp their corporate offerings, reports **Pamela Chow**

Once a convent and school, the conserved CHIJMES is now home to restaurants, bars, and event spaces



The second half of 2018 conferred Singapore a spread of international fame in the form of high-profile events such as the Trump-Kim summit in June, as well as the premieres of movie *Crazy Rich Asians* and television series *Masterchef Singapore*.

Encouraged by this international exposure, business events players here are ramping up their promotions and products, with the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) working to woo large conventions and meetings.

Jeannie Lim, executive director, conventions, meetings & incentive travel, STB, told *TTGmice*: “As with all high-profile visits, (the Summit) places Singapore on the map for international audiences and showcases Singapore as an ideal destination, especially for business and meetings. Having the Summit will also further burnish our credentials as a leading business events city.”

The board is intensifying its partnerships with business events stakeholders, such as industry associations, to promote Singapore “as a hub for their flagship industry events”, explained Lim.

Recently concluded events include the ACTE Global Summit and SA-CEOs’ Singapore MICE Forum 2018, which drew record attendance numbers. Singapore will also host the ASAE Association Leadership Forum Asia Pacific this month.

Next up, the city state will host Rotary International Convention 2024, which is set to be the largest association convention to be hosted here, with more than 25,000 Rotary members from around the world expected to attend.

Chew Ghim Bok, Singapore’s bid

chair for the Rotary International Convention 2024, explained: “We suggested having the main event at one venue, and the plenary and breakout sessions at a nearby hotel or convention centre. Singapore is so small, so this mix-and-match element was also very attractive to the organisers.”

Chew added that Singapore also enjoys strong “regional support” in terms of having a good reputation among its neighbours, who spoke highly of the country’s safety and efficient immigration at the meeting.

Held in Sentosa, the Summit has also given the island a new burst of fame that the Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC) is riding on.

Lynette Ang, chief marketing officer, SDC, shared: “Building on the opportunities that were brought about by the recent DPRK-USA Singapore Summit, we are now marketing our capabilities as a MICE destination to engage and discuss with destination management companies, professional conference organisers, and even directly with corporates.

“In this regard, beyond being able to tap on our differentiated venues and assets to curate unique meeting and incentive travel experiences, we are also able to offer our safety and security capabilities as required of high-profile events.”

Equally important, Singapore’s reputation as a fun and attractive destination was preened by the premiere of the *Crazy Rich Asians* movie and the *Masterchef Singapore* TV show, which have contributed to a host of tour agencies launching itineraries that bring *Crazy Rich Asian* experiences to reality.

These include Indus Travel’s 12-day *Crazy Rich Singapore* Culture & Thailand Beaches, which spends

“Building on the opportunities that were brought about by the recent DPRK-USA Singapore Summit, we are now marketing our capabilities as a MICE destination...”

**Lynette Ang**  
Chief marketing officer,  
Sentosa Development  
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## DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH

**1** The Singapore Tourism Board has kicked off the second wave of its Passion Made Possible campaign with a greater emphasis on co-creation with local talents. STB will soon roll out brand activations in at least 16 overseas markets and introduce three new Passion Tours by local operators.

**2** Sentosa Island is receiving a host of new developments under their 2030 masterplan. These include the redevelopment of its main north-south pedestrian thoroughfare by 2021; as well as Far East Hospitality's three new hotels next year that will add another 800 rooms.

**3** Singapore Airlines will launch non-stop flights between Singapore and Los Angeles in November. Thrice-weekly flights commence on November 2, and daily operations commence from November 9. From December 7, a further three services per week will be added.

## TALKING NUMBERS

**7.3%**

The year-on-year percentage increase in international visitor arrivals to Singapore between 1Q2017 and 1Q2018, reaching 4.6 million

**25,000**

The number of members expected at the Rotary International Convention 2024, set to be the largest association convention to be hosted in Singapore

**3,000**

The average number of business events hosted by Marina Bay Sands a year, with 2017 being a great year with more than 3,500 events held on premises

four days touring the city's historic sights, traditional cuisine and natural wonders; as well as Wok 'n' Stroll's Crazy Rich Asians – Behind the Scenes Food Tour, that treats its participants to food mentioned in the novel and movie at venues like Newton Hawker Centre and Joo Chiat; as well as more upscale venues like Bib Gourmand restaurant New Ubin Seafood at CHUMES, and LeVeL33 Craft-Brewery Restaurant & Lounge.

"When business travellers come to Singapore, they have about three hours (of free time) before their conferences for the whole day. We wanted to give the audience the experience of being a crazy-rich Asian for one evening," explained Wok 'n' Stroll founder and CEO Karni Tomer.

The tour began its first run in August, when it had already garnered bookings for this month, revealed Tomer. She added that the tour – which can accommodate up to 10 pax – is "very suitable for corporate groups". The agency will market the tour through STB.

## REVIEW CENTRAL

### Six Senses Duxton By Pamela Chow

**S**ix Senses launches its first Singapore property with the Six Senses Duxton, an oasis of luxury nestled within several conserved heritage shophouses in central Singapore.

#### Rooms

The intimate property houses 49 rooms, each uniquely designed due to the building's layout. This makes for interiors that pay true homage to the heritage of its location, which dates back to the 1860s.

The Skylight Suite, in which I stayed, featured a lounge flooded with natural daylight that mimics the open-air courtyard of traditional shophouses. The 41m<sup>2</sup> room exuded a lush and calming vibe with its black wood furnishings and brown parchment-like wallpaper.

On the top level, the Duxton Duplex Suite incorporates a spacious loft concept with spiral banister stairs reminiscent of olden houses, and looks out to a striking view of neighbouring shophouses and buildings. All suites house one double bed, making it a truly luxurious reward for top achievers.

#### MICE facilities

There are no meeting venues here, but Six Senses Duxton elongated lobby – thanks to the property taking up eight shophouse lots – features a host of lounging and working spaces, both communal and private.

This luxury hotel, more ideal for incentive groups than residential meeting groups, makes up for its lack of traditional function rooms with unique alternatives. Top achievers can be celebrated at Yellow Pot, a 50-seater restaurant and 20-seater bar within the hotel. My dinner here was extremely sumptuous, with modern Chinese offerings that contain neither MSG nor GMO.

Companies with sustainability in mind will be pleased to know that all ingredients are personally sourced from local and regional suppliers by the chefs, and the hotel bans single-use plastics and



excessive waste in its supply chain.

Also ideal for incentive groups is the hotel's wellness experiences, including a visit to a nearby family-owned tea house, an outdoor yoga session on Duxton Hill, as well as a calming and immersive singing bowl experience.

Murray Aitken, general manager of Six Senses Singapore, shared that a lounge will soon be converted into a traditional Chinese medicine consultation room, where a physician will be stationed to provide guests with a basic diagnosis.

#### Service

Staff members are warm and attentive, especially in Yellow Pot where they were happy to explain the dishes and chat with guests about their day. I loved the turn-down service that included treats such as a jar of soothing Tiger Balm and an adult colouring page.

**Room count** 49

**Star rating** Five

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Catch up

# Daniel Chua

When Daniel Chua is not playing events specialist and business owner, he devotes his time to speaking with and motivating fellow industry players and new blood. He wishes the industry was less fragmented and would, instead, stand stronger together

**Have you ever thought you'd be in conference and event management when you were younger? What brought you into the business?**

As someone who had no mentor in this industry, I felt drawn to the human interaction and exchanges that events facilitate. My initial focus was on corporate celebrations.

It was upon deeper involvement with clients that they started to entrust me with further intricacies of their global meetings and conferences, many of which have details that are bound by non-disclosure agreement to ensure confidentiality. It's great to be treated as a trusted auxiliary by clients!

**What do you love most about being in conference and event management?**

In this business there's a cycle that repeats itself – pitching, planning, delivery and closure. However, the details are always different although the framework may be similar.

It is never a dull day in meeting and conference management. Plus, always being able to end an event on a high note so far is highly motivating. Not every client is effusive, but their kind words when received, are always encouraging to my team and I.

**Do you have a pet peeve about the business**

**though? What is it and why?**

One of these is the corporate process of calling for pitches on a project basis rather than multiple projects on a longer term horizon. This makes for uncertainty for the event specialist. Peaks and troughs are less seen in other industries. This is especially challenging for boutique event firms, affecting their ability to attract and retain the best and brightest bloods for business growth.

At the same time, we will encounter that minority of clients with high demands within tight deadlines, multiple changes to their orders and who fail to pay deposits up until the event date, claiming organisation policy and that an organisation as large as theirs must be trusted. Some even go silent when payment is sought after the event, even if the completed event has won the praises of organisation bosses and attendees.

We see the best and worst of human decency in our business, which reminds us to always treat our partners with the respect we seek ourselves. Having staff undergoing this does not help with the retention rate unfortunately.

Another thing that gets

to me is how firms (event agencies) still see each other as competitors rather than collaborators. In our business, when it rains, it can pour and it seems logical for us to collaborate.

**You are actively involved in Singapore Association of Convention & Exhibition Organisers & Suppliers (SACEOS), playing the role of vice president, meetings & incentives. Why is it important for you to do this for the business events community?**

I'm as active as time allows, with the belief that every little drop makes the mighty ocean.

SACEOS is also actively evolving to meet industry needs, and I'm now vice president for digital innovation to support a current theme that affects the entire business events industry.

I love this industry despite its challenges, and it is incumbent upon people with a passion to make a difference. If not industry members for the industry, by whom then? Having a proper forum through established national associations like SACEOS to collaborate on a global level is essential.

Conversely, there are still many industry players who are not members yet. If we do not work together more closely to improve the industry status quo, the issues of fragmentation will always plague us, and as much as the numbers may show industry growth, being fragmented means we will always be at the mercy of clients instead

of enjoying a more level playing field.

**What do you wish you could do more for the business events community?**

I wish I had more time to begin with. A dear client and friend recently reminded me again of the importance of working on the business, and not only on projects. As much as the success of my business consists of successful projects, he certainly made sense.

I hope to be able to find staff that will stick it through to partner level. This is especially challenging as I do not have the finances of larger corporations that can better absorb human resource-related time and money losses. Given the need for continuity especially with longer projects, finding reliable contract staff is critical.

Once my team is self-sustainable, I will have more time to develop and promote innovations and collaborations that have industry-wide benefits, especially the use of technology that allows more positive human experiences.

**Lastly, when you are not busy with conferences and events, what do you do to pass time?**

Family time is essential and my family's happiness is a key motivator for me at work.

Staying fit mentally, physically and spiritually is also essential for me to stay keen in this industry, so I have to make sure to invest at least some time there. – Karen Yue

**"We see the best and worst of human decency in our business, which reminds us to always treat our partners with the respect we seek ourselves."**

**Daniel Chua,**  
Founder and chief executive,  
Aonia







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**Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority**  
(TTG Show Daily: PATA Travel Mart 2017)

**Accor Asia Pacific**  
(TTG Show Daily: ITB Berlin 2018)

**Finnair**  
(TTG Asia 2017)

**Frasers Hospitality**  
(TTG Travel Awards Supplement 2017)

**International Convention Centre Sydney**  
(TTGmice 2018)

**Small Luxury Hotels of The World**  
(TTG Asia Luxury 2017)

**Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
(TTGmice 2018)

**Tourism Authority of Thailand**  
(TTG Show Daily: ATF 2018)

### DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

**Conrad Bangkok**  
(www.ttg-mice.com 2018)

**Eco Meridian**  
(TTGmice e-News 2018, TTGmice eDM 2018)

**Hong Kong Disneyland**  
(TTG Asia e-Daily 2018)

**Resorts World At Sentosa**  
(www.ttgasia.com 2018, TTG Asia e-Daily 2018)

**TravelPort**  
(www.ttgasia.com 2018 and TTG Asia e-Daily 2017 and 2018)

### CONTENT MARKETING

**Catalan Tourist Board**  
(Video Advertorial: TTG Asia Luxury / ILTM Asia-Pacific 2018)

**Dubai Corporation For Tourism & Commerce Marketing**  
(4pp Supplement: TTGmice 2017)

**JTB**  
(6pp Supplement: TTG Show Daily: IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2018)

**Korea Tourism Organization**  
(3pp Advertorial: TTGmice 2018)

**Resorts World At Sentosa**  
(8pp Supplement: TTG India 2018)

**Singapore Tourism Board: MICE Excellence Awards**  
(4pp Supplement: TTGmice 2018)

### CREATIVE MEDIA BUY

**Dream Cruises**  
(2pp Coverwrap: TTG Asia 2017)

**Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute**  
(Belly Band: TTGmice 2017)

**Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau**  
(4pp Coverwrap: TTG Show Daily: IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2018)

**Thai Airways**  
(Double Page Spread Series Ad: TTG Show Daily: ATF 2018)

### INTEGRATED MARKETING CAMPAIGN

**Avis Budget Group**  
(TTG Asia Luxury 2018, TTG Asia 2017 and 2018, TTG Show Daily: PATA 2018, TTG Asia Digital Pushmail 2017, Sponsored Posts on www.ttgasia.com 2017 and 2018, Sponsored Posts on www.ttg-mice.com 2017)

**Best Western International**  
(TTG Asia 2017 and 2018, TTG Show Daily: ITB Asia 2017, TTG Asia e-Daily 2017 and 2018, www.ttgasia.com 2017 and 2018)

**Centara Hotels & Resorts**  
(TTG Asia 2018, TTGmice 2017, TTG Show Daily: IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2017 and 2018, www.ttgasia.com 2018)

**Hilton International Asia Pacific**  
(TTGmice 2018, TTGmice Planner 2018 online listing, TTGmice e-News 2018, www.ttg-mice.com 2018, Sponsored Posts on www.ttg-mice.com 2018, TTGmice eDM 2018)

**Philippine Tourism Promotion Board**  
(TTGassociations 2018, TTG Show Daily: ATF 2018, TTG Show Daily: ITB Berlin 2018, TTG Asia e-Daily 2018)

**Resorts World At Sentosa**  
(TTGmice 2017 and 2018, TTG India 2017 and 2018 – 8pp Supplement, TTG Asia e-Daily 2018, www.ttgasia.com 2018)

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## ■ Appointments



**Chandra Mohan Arunasalam**

### **Chandra Mohan Arunasalam**

Award-winning chef Chandra Mohan Arunasalam has joined Banyan Tree Phuket as executive chef. Prior to this, he was at Hilton Kuala Lumpur as chef de cuisine. He spent most of his career in the US, including notable work at the two-Michelin-star Avenues Restaurant with Curtis Duffy at The Peninsula Chicago.

### **Clinton Lovell**

Clinton Lovell is the new general manager for Amari Watgate Bangkok. Joining Onyx from Minor Hotels, Clinton was general manager at Avani Atrium Bangkok, as well as Anantara Seminyak Bali.

### **Dean Rossilli**

Onyx Hospitality Group has named Dean Rossilli area general manager for Malaysia to pave the way for the group's plans to have six hotels



**Gillian Officer**

open across three key gateway cities of Peninsula Malaysia by 2021. Based at Amari Johor Bahru, Rossilli joined Onyx from Pan Pacific Hotels Group where he held general manager roles in Indonesia and Singapore.

### **Gillian Officer**

Gillian Officer is now director of sales for Te Pae, Christchurch Convention Centre. She will work towards securing events for the opening of Te Pae from late 2020. She was previously the director of sales – conventions and outcatering at SkyCity, based in Auckland, and has held similar roles with the Wellington Convention Centre and The Edge, Auckland Convention Centre.

### **Jan Marshall**

Okura Hotels & Resorts has appointed Jan Marshall as general manager of the 170-room Hotel Okura Manila, which is slated to open



**Jan Marshall**

in 1Q2019 within the Manila Resorts World complex. He was last general manager of Hotel Nikko Osaka.

### **Kumar Muniandy**

Kumar Muniandy has joined Hilton Garden Inn Puchong in Malaysia as general manager. Prior to joining Hilton, Kumar was the general manager of the Oasia Suites Kuala Lumpur. He also served as general manager at the Sri Tiara Residences Kuala Lumpur.

### **Lee Chee Koon**

Lee Chee Koon, previously CapitaLand's group chief investment officer, is now president & group CEO. He takes over from Lim Ming Yan who gave notice to retire this year. Lee first joined the company in February 2007 and has held several positions within the group, including as CEO of Ascott, CapitaLand's wholly-owned serviced residence business.



**Kumar Muniandy**

### **Mark Kobayashi**

The Peninsula Hotels has appointed Mark K Kobayashi as senior vice president, sales and marketing. Kobayashi began his career with The Peninsula Hotels in October 2006 when he joined The Peninsula Tokyo as director of public relations. Moving up the ranks, he was last vice president, marketing, based in Hong Kong.

### **Myla Caceres**

Myla Caceres is now Radisson Blu Resort Phu Quoc's director of commercial. A seasoned hospitality professional with over 25 years of experience, Caceres last worked as Ascott International Group's cluster director of sales and marketing in Thailand, overseeing 11 properties.

### **Nikie Mok**

Nikie Mok is now director of sales & marketing at W Kuala Lumpur. She was most



**Lee Chee Koon**

recently the director of sales and marketing at Aloft Kuala Lumpur Sentral.

### **Porntip Pibarnwong**

Onyx Hospitality Group has named Porntip Pibarnwong hotel manager for Amari Residences Bangkok, Chiva Bangkok Hotel and Amp Am House. She was previously director of sales and marketing at Amari Watgate Bangkok.

### **Teekay Goh**

Hotel Maya Kuala Lumpur has appointed Teekay Goh as general manager. His hospitality experience encompasses a spectrum of hotels, resorts and serviced suites, including various senior sales positions with Berjaya Hotels & Resorts, Pangkor Island Beach Resort, Lanson Place Ambassador Row Kuala Lumpur and Parkroyal Serviced Suites Kuala Lumpur.



**Mark Kobayashi**



**Myla Caceres**



**Nikie Mok**



**Porntip Pibarnwong**



**Teekay Goh**





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