

Locals take the wheel

As Cambodia’s tourism landscape matures, more locals are taking the lead and devising innovative tours to give visitors a true taste of the country and help them discover outlying areas, while driving social and economic change at the same time. By Marissa Carruthers



Ecotourism projects in Banteay Srey, near Siem Reap, allow visitors to see the agricultural lifestyles of the local communities

Tourism is becoming a stronger force for change in Cambodia as locals take the front seat and devise innovative tours and activities showcasing a more authentic side to the country.

In recent years, more locals are taking the lead in Cambodia’s growing crop of community-based tourism products, a contrast to barely less than a decade ago when the majority of such products were headed by foreigners and NGOs.

“In my experience, tourism is definitely being driven more locally,” said Miles Gravett, Khiri Travel Cambodia general manager. He added that while NGOs and foreign organisations still play an instrumental role in helping initiatives with the initial set-up, many of the operations have today been handed over to locals. “This is great,” remarked Gravett.

Chi Phat is a shining example of how community-based tourism is

empowering local communities. Started in 2007 under the guidance of wildlife NGO Wildlife Alliance (WA), the aim of the community-based ecotourism project was to equip locals living in the remote village with an alternative form of income.

Nestled in the heart of the Koh Kong jungle, the area was notorious for illegal logging and poaching activities. WA set about training the village’s hunters and loggers in tourism, helping them open homestays, lead treks and hikes through the jungle, and roll out a series of activities that offer visitors an authentic glimpse into life in this remote part of the Cardamom Mountains.

The project is now entirely run by the community, comprising more than 40 homestays, plus trekking, cycling and kayaking adventures led by knowledgeable villagers. “This project has proven to be very beneficial to the community,” said Chin

“
(Locally led efforts) make tourists feel more connected and empowers communities.”
– Samnang Nuonsinoeun, co-founder, Journeys of Change



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Meankung, CEO of Cambodian Experiences. “It is a good example of tourism providing extra income and protecting the forests and wildlife from deteriorating.”

Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT) is another pioneering locally-led initiative. The NGO was founded in 2001 as a voluntary university student initiative and has grown into a locally-driven organisation working with communities across the country’s north-east to help eradicate poverty and protect the environment.

As part of its mission, it provides tourism and hospitality training for underprivileged youth living in Kratie and the surrounding areas and operates Cambodian Rural Discovery Tours (CRDTours), which are led by local guides and take visitors on a range of locally driven rural trips such as homestays in villages and Mekong islands and visits to family-run businesses and workshops.

The development of these community-based initiatives are also helping to drive visitors to new destinations away from the well-trodden tourist trail. For example, German NGO GIZ has helped communities across remote parts of Siem Reap to develop homestays and other tourist-related activities. It is also currently working with communities in Preah Vihear. After helping with the set-up, the organisation

hands over operations to locals.

While agreeing that community-based tourism initiatives help to open up new destinations and encourage longer stays, Gravett remarked that most of such itineraries remain a hard sell for a majority of travellers, “who come to Siem Reap and stay in a five-star hotel for two to three nights and then leave”.

“It’s a constant fight trying to build new destinations,” he added.

That is not deterring Liger Leadership Academy student Samnang Nuonsinoeun, who launched Journeys of Change with fellow students in September 2017. It currently offers bike trips around the outskirts of Phnom Penh, led by students, and is gearing up to launch a market tour and responsible shopping trip.

“Tourism has the potential to (drive) change,” said the 17-year-old. “It’s important that we have really good tours capturing (the essence of) Cambodia and its people. We are seeing more and more Cambodians lead this... they are the ones who live here and can show tourists the authentic (aspects of life); it makes tourists feel more connected and empowers communities.”

Despite the community-driven tourism landscape gaining momentum in Cambodia, Gravett thinks a real challenge for many locally-led initiatives is marketing. “That falls back on us as DMCs to be able to



From left: Locally-led initiatives help to drive visitors to new destinations in Cambodia



“The industry has to help a lot of these community-based tourism projects with marketing and driving business.”

– Miles Gravett, general manager, Khiri Travel Cambodia

market these projects to foreign travel agencies and tour operators,” he shared.

“The industry has to help a lot of these community-based tourism projects with marketing and driving business. It takes time to develop a new destination and that is what a lot of these projects are doing.”

Coralie Romano, Diethelm Siem Reap branch manager, notes a rise in clients requesting community-based tourism activities.

“We have quite a few people who want to experience at least one night in a homestay and local activities,” she said. “We are seeing more and more visitors wanting sustainable tourism experiences and to give back to communities when they visit.”

Also helping drive the popularity of homestays are the availability

of more comfortable options. While many homestays still remain basic – something Romano says can “surprise” guests – cleanliness and hygiene is on the rise. “The options are much better these days,” she added.

Meankung feels that the new wave of responsible tourists that the community-driven sector tends to attract is also helping Cambodia clean up its reputation as a sex tourism destination. “(The image) is much more positive now,” he stated. “It is still seen as a cheap destination, but that is also changing.”

The merits of locally-led tourism product development extend beyond the industry. Gravett said: “Tourism can play a huge role in preserving cultural and natural heritage and developing communities in Cambodia.”

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Destination

The missing link

Thailand is putting forth a more compelling high-end proposition, with suppliers stepping up on service and experiential offerings. But is manpower keeping up? By Suchat Sritama



Thailand's constantly expanding luxury travel operators continue to face manpower shortages (pictured: Moon Bar, Banyan Tree Bangkok)

With Thailand maturing past its image as an inexpensive destination, hospitality players are increasingly competing on service standards rather than price, although some continue to be encumbered by a talent shortage in the industry.

Thailand's maturity as a destination has recently been accompanied by large-scale efforts to polish its image, including rebranding Pattaya from an entertainment town to a family-friendly destination, repositioning Hua Hin to a world-class beach resort, and anchoring Chiang Mai as a new gateway for FITs from China.

Previously seen as an affordable destination, Thailand last year came in fourth in WTTC's ranking of

countries by tourism receipts.

Against this backdrop, travel service providers are finding that price competitiveness alone is not sufficient to vie for quality business. Instead, more are prioritising compelling branding, innovation and enhanced service standards in order to stand out in the destination's ever-growing hotel supply.

Edouard Demptos, general manager of Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok, observed that more guests are looking for elevated experiences rather than discounts.

"At the same time, they are seeking memories and experiences, health and wellness, as well as dining with a social responsibility aspect," he continued.

In order to capture the higher-end segment, the hotel is paying special



Like many other hotels, we find it hard to (hire and retain) talented people.

– Chooleng Goh, general manager, The Athenee Hotel Bangkok

attention to guests' individual preference through recent service enhancements.

"For instance, Hyatt created a new luxury travel advisor programme, Hyatt Privé, designed for invited clients only. These guests get access to personal connections, local recommendations and exclusive promotions at Hyatt's luxury, lifestyle and resort hotels."

Patrick Basset, COO for upper Southeast and Northeast Asia at Accor, said Thailand has built up a strong heritage in hospitality as well as convenient access via strong regional flight connections.

"(Over the years) Thailand has transformed to offer an extensive collection of high-end products and services as luxury travellers seek experiences that are authentic and tai-

lored to their personal needs."

"If we do this (offer authentic, tailored experiences) successfully, then there is an immense feeling of discovery for guests. They are more likely to go home and pass on their stories," Basset remarked.

Overall, the travel industry is becoming much more adept in boosting guest satisfaction, he observed.

On the east coast of Thailand, Pattaya is expected to benefit from the Eastern Economic Corridor and expanded U-Tapao Rayong-Pattaya International Airport.

Similar to Bangkok, luxury supply is growing alongside a focus on elevated services.

Kasemsak Bhamornsatit, owner of Trikaya Cultural & Academic Travel Services, said what is important now is to raise professionalisation among service providers, especially when it comes to personalisation.

He further cautioned that price wars, common in the destination before its image was spruced up, will inhibit the destination's success.

The boutique travel operator has set its eyes firmly on quality over quantity. In most cases, the company will check in with customers and tailor packages based on their interests and preferences. The company hires only certified and experienced guides and they must be able to assist clients and respond to enquiries round the clock.

Trikaya Cultural & Academic Travel Services also derives business entirely from overseas travellers, mostly from North America, Singapore, the Philippines and China, Kasemsak said.

As new standards emerge when it comes to service and marketing, manpower may be a growing concern in the destination.

Chooleng Goh, general manager of the Athenee Hotel Bangkok, said Thailand continues to be a top-of-mind choice for both leisure and business travellers.

New hotels may be opening in Bangkok every month, but growing supply has posed "no problem" to demand, Goh said. The major difficulty hotels are facing, according to Goh, is talent shortage.

"Like many other hotels, we find it hard to (hire and retain) talented people," she said, adding that new properties tend to poach manpower from more established hotels.

Moreover, employing front-office staff such as chamber maids and cleaners is no easy task "because local people don't want to work such jobs despite them paying more compared to other jobs", according to Goh.

To retain talents within the group, relocation options are made available to staff who are willing to transfer to different Luxury Collection (a Marriott brand) properties. Moving within the group is better than losing talent altogether, Goh stressed.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports reported that 38 million foreigners travelled into Thailand in 2018, with the number expected to climb to 41 million this year.

The sector generated direct and indirect income of up to 19 per cent of the country's GDP – representing the largest portion alongside export and agriculture.

Fresh Eyes

Hop on for new business

Hop-on hop-off buses only recently took off in Bangkok. The city's pioneer discusses his inspiration for jumping into the business, and addresses perceived challenges with congestion. By Suchat Sritama

It's possible for tourists to visit around 18 major sites within a day in attractions-filled Bangkok, but existing transport options are still not up to standard. This drove Charnwit Kanchanawat to launch Amazing Bus Tour, the city's first operator of a hop-on hop-off service in Bangkok last year.

Even though tourists visiting the Thai capital have many options to get around, few are ideal. Charnwit said riding *tuk tuk* can be expensive while taking taxi can take hours in the Bangkok traffic. There is also the risk of encountering unscrupulous drivers.

Amazing Bus Tour was launched in September 2018, months ahead of another two rivals, including a *tuk tuk* hop-on hop-off. Before this, Charnwit had been in the business of exporting hydroponic vegetables for about 15 years.

"Inspired by my personal experiencing while studying in the UK and travels abroad, I (thought to myself that) Bangkok should have a good one-stop service for city tours, where customers can easily visit more attractions."



"Tourists spend less money but are able to visit up to 18 attractions within one day. This is only made possible by a city tour bus."

Charnwit Kanchanawat
Founder,
Amazing Bus Tour

"Overseas hop-on, hop-off do not have much onboard service but we do. We have travel experts on the bus to explain attractions and assist customers," he said.

With a total investment of 48 million baht (US\$1.5 million), the bulk of which went into importing 10 new and environmentally friendly buses.

The company currently uses half the fleet for its first route, departing from Siam Paragon to 17 major attractions including Chinatown, Chao Phraya River Walk, Giant Swing, Bang Lumpoo, Marble Temple Golden Mount, Silom, Little India and Khao San.

When asked if the city's traffic congestion may present difficulties, Charnwit said the road conditions in Bangkok's old town is not as bad compared to other areas.

The main proposition is greater convenience and better accessibility for the self-travelling, he said.

"Tourists spend less money but are able to visit up to 18 attractions within one day. This is only made possible by a city tour bus."

It costs 850 baht for a 24-hour

ticket, 1,150 baht for 48 hours, and 1,350 baht for 72 hours. Children rates are about half the adult fare.

For now, more than 80 per cent of demand is for the 24-hour option.

Months after Charnwit brought the concept to Bangkok, Giants City Tour rose to popularity among foreign tourists mainly from the UK, Italy, Germany, Spain, Australia, the US, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

Giants City Tour currently penetrates the markets through online channels including OTAs. It also markets offline through distributing collaterals to hotels, coffee shops, restaurants and attractions.

The company plans to add one more route this year focusing on heritage sites. It will soon launch an application to reach more young tourists and FITs, as well as new markets through introducing foreign languages such as Japanese and Chinese.



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Tried & Tested Royal Cliff Beach Hotel

A recent facelift has given this decades-old hotel a stronger contemporary vibe, refreshed rooms and updated amenities, ensuring this Pattaya icon stays a landmark icon for years to come, finds Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

LOCATION Royal Cliff commands one of Pattaya's most enviable addresses from its Phra Tamnak Hill location, about three kilometres from the city centre where the walking street, bars and shopping malls are found, thus offering a tranquil beachfront stay with easy access to the city's key landmarks.

From Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport, it's about a 75-minute drive to the resort.

ROOMS Stepping into my Ocean Deluxe Room, I was blown away by the stunning views of the Gulf of Thailand. The horizon was formed by an azure sky meeting the turquoise sea, punctuated with speedboats and their white water trails; while a trio of crystal blue pools sparkled in the foreground.

As part of the resort transformation led by renowned Thai architect Duangrit Bunnag, Ocean Deluxe rooms – together with the Mini Suites – were transformed with new bathroom features installed. The ensuing result is an expansive 36m² interior featuring a pleasing white-and-lightwood palette accented with Thai decorative touches.

I stayed at the 474-key Royal Cliff Beach Hotel, which together with the 88-key Royal Cliff Beach Terrace, 373-key Royal Cliff Grand Hotel and 85-key Royal Wing Suites & Spa, make up the Royal Cliffs Hotel Group.

FACILITIES A destination unto itself, the sprawling 26ha beachfront estate is home to myriad amenities. Architect Bunnag once again oversaw the construction and design of the property's new features.

Fitness and sports fans should head to the Fitz Club – Racquets, Health & Fitness, which was transformed to sport an Amazon vibe in addition to fun slides. The upgrad-



ed Funtasea kids club and variety of pools promise hours of fun for families. As well, the infinity pool as well as private beaches are definitely popular in-resort lounging spots, especially during sunsets.

Other recreation facilities include seven tennis courts, the Nah Pah Thai Cooking School, a cigar lounge and luxury spas, among others.

Already a dominant player in Pattaya's MICE space with its PEACH convention centre on-site, Royal Cliff is now pushing into the lifestyle and sporting segments with the creation of its own events – e.g. a one-night show by UK comedian Bill Bailey – making it an even more attractive destination for families and leisure groups alike.

F&B The vast hotel complex boasts 11 restaurants and six bars, offering options from Asian to European fusion. Notable dining outlets include

Chamu for Japanese, Maharani for Indian, Huang Chao for Cantonese, and Rossini for Italian flavours.

Overlooking the pools and sea, all-day-dining Panorama is where international buffet breakfasts are served. In the lobby, which has also undergone a redesign, stands a new lobby bar and bakery.

SERVICE Service was pleasant and efficient – and delivered with smiles.

VERDICT A grand dame that has stood the test of time, its recent makeover has given it greater shine as a sanctuary for relaxation.

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Baan Noppawong Hotel

Hotels

Local sojourns

More are converting heritage or family properties into hotels, drawn to new opportunities at a time when travellers are seeking a taste of local hospitality. By Suchat Sritama



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Recent relaxation of laws governing conversion properties has prompted a spate of small hotel openings in Thailand, among which are residences and heritage buildings.

The concept of boutique hotel appeared in Thailand for the first time 30 years ago, when Thais returning from their education overseas began turning their own properties into tourist accommodation.

It is estimated that hundreds of new operators are have in recent years entered the market, with many more scheduled to open their doors in 2020.

Major factors driving the growth include the relaxation of a hotel law that will allow old building owners to repurpose their properties into tourist accommodation and more easily obtain the necessary licences.

Despite many Thai destinations already grappling with an oversupply, new boutique players believe they can survive in the market with their relevant, innovative and differentiated offers.

Montara Hospitality Group – which operates a luxury hotel in Phuket named Trisra, Phraya Palazzo riverside boutique hotel in Bangkok and a museum in Lam-pang province – this year transformed an old movie theatre in Bangkok's Bangrak district into Prince Theatre Heritage Stay.

CEO Kittisak Pattamasaevi shared that the hotel offers a sense of heritage and place in a neighbourhood that once formed part of a commercial district in the Bangkok old town.

Down the line, the group intends to tap into its expertise to focus more on F&B and intimate private events.

Another example of a repurposed hotel is Bangkok Publishing Residence, a museum-slash-hotel which opened its doors two years ago in a shophouse that used to house the publisher behind the long-gone *Bangkok Magazine*.

With only eight rooms, priced between 5,800 (US\$181) and 7,800 baht, the hotel sees good demand despite not accepting walk-in guests. Guests mostly hail from the US, Europe, China and Taiwan.

General manager Panida Tosnaitada said: "Our family never ran a hotel before, but we are confident (of achieving success) if we can serve and understand client's needs."

Changes in consumer preferences is also boding well for business. Panida observed that more tourists are choosing not to stay in big hotels, instead preferring to experience more authentic local hospitality and culture.

Staporn Sirisinha, founder of Serene Bangkok Bed and Breakfast, agreed. "There are so many big hotels in the market, but not all meet the taste of tourists. Today's travellers are seeking experiences, (not just in their tour itineraries), but also when it comes to accommodation," Staporn said.

His four-room hotel also offers spa treatment. He sees half of business coming from domestic guests and the other half from international travellers.

Kantasom Noppawong Na Ayudhaya, started operating a hotel within an 80-year colonial-style house in Bangkok's old town six years ago. He is the third generation occupant of the home, but the first to run a hotel business.

At Baan Noppawong Hotel in old Bangkok, whose room rates vary between 2,000 and 2,500 baht, some 80 per cent of guests hail from the US and Europe.

In Bangkok's Huaykwang district, another creative hotel named Me Style Garage launched in 2018. All 75 rooms are decorated with car parts and accessories while classic cars, engines and motorbikes are displayed in public areas.

Beyond Bangkok, small hotels and poshtels have also gained popularity in other tourist cities. An example is Nhapha Khao Yai Resort in Nakhon Ratchasima province.

Managing director of the resort developer, Kawit Koudomvit, said all 10 villas are built on an old mining cliff. Each unit is priced over 8,000 baht including meals – higher than most room rates in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Pattaya and Hua Hin.

The domestic market makes up 70 per cent of business, with the remaining guests hailing from Singapore and Malaysia.

NEW HOTELS

Mövenpick BDMS Wellness Resort Bangkok

Mövenpick's third outpost in Bangkok has soft-opened on June 1, leveraging its connection with owner Bangkok Dusit Medical Services (BDMS), Thailand's largest private hospital group which runs the BDMS Wellness Clinic next door, to offer a holistic suite of wellness amenities and programmes.

The urban retreat in Bangkok's Ploenchit area features 293 guestrooms outfitted with wellness amenities like mood lighting, yoga mats and bouncing balls, of which 15 suites feature Mövenpick's "first in Asia" YouBed, a Swiss invention that allows adjustment of softness and hardness.

Hotel Nikko Bangkok

Nikko Hotels International, the Japanese luxury hotel group, has expanded its footprint to Bangkok. Hotel Nikko Bangkok, owned by Grand Tower Inn Group, is located in Thonglor, Sukhumvit, and features 301 guestrooms and suites, including 10 extended stay rooms complete with kitchenette.

Centre Point Pattaya

Centre Point Hotel Pattaya has



Mövenpick BDMS Wellness Resort Bangkok

launched, featuring 556 units in a 33-storey building. Each room is equipped with international hotel-standard fittings, a living area, pantry with microwave, and private balcony. The hotel also features a 180-seater restaurant and a 286m² room for meetings and events.

Shama Lakeview Asoke

Revitalisation work at Shama Lakeview Asoke, under Thailand's Onyx Hospitality Group, was recently completed, a year after the property's rebrand. Conceptualised by Bangkok-based ASC Interior, the redesign of the 429-unit serviced residence was inspired by the nearby Benjakitti Park.

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An ever-changing island

From north to south, Bali is seeing a flurry of new developments and plans, all with the aim of uncovering new markets and opportunities for the popular island destination, writes Mimi Hudoyo

Despite being an established destination on the regional travel map, private investors as well as state-owned enterprises alike continue to see tourism opportunities on the Island of the Gods, rolling out a flurry of new infrastructure and attractions.

A major project underway in Sanur is the overhaul of the 58-year-old Grand Inna Bali Beach, as owning company Hotel Indonesia Natour (HIN) has unveiled plans to remake Bali's first five-star hotel into an integrated resort.

To be renamed Hotel Indonesia Bali, the 43ha estate will comprise the existing 525-room hotel and garden villas – which will be renovated and expanded – a new mid-scale hotel opening next year with 166 keys, a convention centre with a capacity of 10,000 guests, a lifestyle art market, an eco-park and a pier.

The whole project is targeted to finalise in five years with a total investment of Rp2.8 trillion (US\$197.2 million). When ready, the resort will boast a total of 1,017 keys, compris-

ing 943 rooms in three- to five-star categories, 73 premium villas and one presidential villa.

Hotel Karya Indonesia, a joint venture between HIN and four state-owned companies – Hutama Karya, Pembangunan Perumahan, Waskita Karya and Wijaya Karya – is the developer of the project.

The redevelopment of the Grand Inna Bali Beach, whose last renovation dated back to 1993, would enable the historic property to better keep up with the competition, according to Iswandi Said, president director of HIN.

Recognising the estate's valuable asset, location and potential, Indonesian president Joko Widodo has instructed the revitalisation of the hotel, and minister of state enterprises Rini Soemarno came up with the idea of turning it into a small-scaled integrated resort.

Iswandi remarked: "Hotel Indonesia Bali will not only provide a new convention destination in Sanur, it will become a new icon for Bali with all its facilities."

While acknowledging that Sanur's

laid-back character has been its asset in attracting senior travellers from Europe and long-staying visitors, Iswandi said the new development is critical for the destination to accommodate and tap onto other market segments, particularly business events and leisure travellers.

In the meantime, state-owned Indonesia Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) is in the process of drawing up a new masterplan for Nusa Dua, a 350ha integrated tourism estate on Bali. With the refined masterplan, the resort is expected to attract not only MICE businesses but also the leisure market.

Ricky Baheramsjah, head of investment and marketing division at ITDC, said: "With the re-masterplanning, ITDC intends to revitalise Nusa Dua and offer something unique and differentiated from other destinations in Bali."

The new masterplan will enable Nusa Dua to keep up with changing customer preferences, explained Ricky. "Nusa Dua's (existing) masterplan is 30 years old already."

"When you look at the type of new

Above: State-owned ITDC is currently drawing up a new masterplan for Nusa Dua

“With the re-masterplanning, ITDC intends to revitalise Nusa Dua and offer something unique and differentiated from other destinations in Bali.”

– Ricky Baheramsjah, head of investment and marketing division, Indonesia Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC)

hotel brands coming into Bali such as W, Aloft and Moxi, (they are different from the earlier types of hotels); even established hotel brands like Four Seasons and St Regis are repositioning themselves to attract a new generation of travellers.

"Travellers are looking for something different. A lot of the guests in Nusa Dua may stay in the area from morning until lunch time, and then they would head out and seek out entertainment like the Rock Bar, and Omnia or other trendy, bohemian-type attractions. We want to offer something of similar feel and quality but still maintaining our high-end luxury position," he said.

While MICE will remain a key market for Nusa Dua as the area is home to two major convention centres, Ricky said focus will now be given to the leisure market too.

"For the hotels, leisure is part of their business too. In order for us to be competitive in the leisure market, we need to provide a more interesting and entertaining proposition, (offering more fun activities) in Nusa Dua."

WHAT'S HOT

Tours & Activities Window into local culture and sights



Motorbike riding in West Java
Exotic Java Trails' five-day tour starts with a city tour of Bandung, followed by Kawah Putih (White Crater) in Ciwidey before heading to the Ramayana beach at sunset. The following day, the ride up the mountain passes through tea plantations and waterfalls, rice terraces and the Cileunca Lake. The third day begins early with a ride up Cukul Sunrise Point, followed by a visit to Malabar Tea factory for tea and lunch, and a taste of the famous Luwak coffee before heading back to Bandung. The guided tour is available for eight to 20 people, with 250CC

(clutch/scooter) motorbikes provided. www.exoticjavatrails.com

Tanah Abang Journey
Jakarta Good Guide's day-long trip is a walk into history, as participants learn about the Dutch colonial vision to develop a new trade centre outside the Benedenstad (Old Batavia/Old Jakarta) area as well as the struggle of the Mataram kingdom when it tried to attack the Dutch colonial government. The tour starts in Textil Museum, and moves on to Tanah Abang market to visit a wholesale centre that was built with the permission of governor general Abraham Patramin in 1735.

From left: riding on two wheels across West Java; planting vegetables in Belitung

Tour participants are then taken to Hok Tek Ci Sen temple in Tanah Abang market for a look at the evolving Chinese community that formed the Tanah Abang to become a trading center in Batavia. The tour ends with a visit to Arab Village, which has been the base camp of the Mataram army before invading the Dutch. <http://jakarta-goodguide.com>

Belitung highlights
Complete a trip in Belitung with a visit to Eggplant Creative Tourism Village in Terong Village. Located on the northern coast of Belitung

Island, visitors will experience the traditional ways of planting and picking vegetables, weaving and painting *caping* (a traditional cone-shaped hat made of woven bamboo). The itinerary also includes an activity of Ngeremis, the local Belitung activity of picking mussels along the shore and fishing of *ikan beluko* (a type of local fish). To know more about the local culture in Belitung, visit a Belitung traditional house where participants will learn about *makan bedulang*, a traditional way of eating. www.BelitungIsland.com



While the new masterplan for Nusa Dua may not be ready until the year-end, some "revitalising" programmes have been introduced. The peninsula area, for example, has been landscaped in such a way to be able to host large-scale events. Recent launches that will appeal to investors include the launch of the Manarai Beach House, a beach club run by the Ismaya Group, pointed out Ricky. "With the investors, we are also looking at revitalising the Bali Collections (shopping, dining and entertainment centre), to make it more attractive to the new market," he added. Meanwhile, ITDC is already in the early stages of developing north Bali as a cruise tourism destination, with plans to develop a resort similar to Nusa Dua with about 10 to 12 hotels, F&B and entertainment facilities, a marina or a proper cruise terminal. The resort will stand on a 100ha piece of privately owned land, expandable to 250ha, near Menjangan National Park. Ricky explained: "The lack of sea ports in Indonesia means that any cruise ships going from Singapore or Thailand to Australia and South Pacific bypasses Indonesia almost completely, which is a loss of opportunity. If we provide stopovers across Indonesia, these will provide a great opportunity to capture the cruise market." However, accessibility is currently North Bali's greatest development challenge, as the airport lies on the island's south, from where it takes about three hours to drive to the Menjangan area. ITDC hence considers north Bali more accessible by cruise ships. And with contemporary cruise ships offering many man-made entertainment on board, the beaches, nature and national park in the north will make attractive drawcards for cruise passengers, Ricky added. Furthermore, the area's development is

expected to stimulate the arrival of more infrastructure and facilities, which is still lacking in north Bali. Amid its push for better infrastructure and modern facilities for the destination, the Bali regional government, on the other hand, is also working to cultivate the island's core strengths in tradition, culture and attractions. As part of the government's aim to disperse tourist footfalls away from the island's packed south, the Bali Government Tourism Office, together with academics and experts in the field, has selected local events and attractions across different destinations for promotion. Dewa Ayu Laksmiadi Janapriati (Laksmi), head of marketing, Bali Government Tourism Office said: "We are identifying local attractions and festivals in Bali, particularly in areas less popular to travellers." She shared a few examples, among which is Jembrana in west Bali, an area known for its cattle breeders and a traditional bull race festival. To attract visitors and stimulate the locals to develop tourism, a Governor's Cup is planned for Jembrana this year. To showcase the community-based ecotourism that Pemuteran, West Bali is known for, the Pemuteran Bay Festival was held last year featuring activities like underwater art parade, underwater expo and biorock reef conservation. In the meantime, the assimilation of the Balinese and Chinese cultures is shown in the Balingkang Kintamani Festival, a cultural parade depicting the romantic legend between King Jaya Pangus with Kang Cing We of China. "We collect local (traditions and attractions) from each regency in Bali, categorise them into local, national and international events, and promote them accordingly," said Dewa Ayu, citing the promotion of Balingkang Kintamani Festival to the China market as an example.



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Destination

Natural playground

Now that Belitung has become a hot domestic destination, the next step is for the destination to step up its pursuit of the international market. Does Belitung have what it takes to attract more foreign visitors to its shores?

Tiara Maharani finds out



A popular domestic destination in recent years, Belitung now wants to woo international visitors

Having emerged as a hot domestic travel destination in recent years, Belitung – an island east of Sumatra – is now set on transforming itself to make its mark in the international travel community.

The central government has committed

to growing tourism in Belitung, with Tanjung Kelayang earmarked as a priority destination. There, the Ministry of Tourism has unveiled grand ambitions to create a new Nusa-Dua-like complex in a 324ha area, which will also embody the concept of sustainable tourism.

Arief Yahya, minister of tourism, said: “We will build Tanjung Kelayang as an integrated resort destination, which will be home to high-end hotels and resorts, a retail village as well as international restaurants, conference centre and other attractions.”

As well, Arief believes that Tanjung Kelayang, situated along a pristine beachfront, is well placed to capture the growing “bleisure” market, benefiting from its unique mix of corporate and leisure facilities and strategic location.

The Tanjung Kelayang area will be built gradually, with the first phase expected to be completed in five years. By end-2019, the destination will see the launch of the 180-room Sheraton hotel, which will be followed by Sofitel and MGallery properties next year.

Arief commented: “The recent development of Tanjung Kelayang has further raised Belitung’s attraction as a fresh destination, which can be seen from the (increasing) number of visits to Belitung.”

Belitung received a total of 380,941 arrivals in 2017, comprising 371,338 domestic visitors and 9,603 foreign visitors. This was an increase over 292,885 visitors in 2016 arrived, made up of 285,773 domestic and 7,112 foreign visitors, he shared.

Belitung’s tourism growth has had a positive ripple effect on the hotel industry. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, there were 1,940 star hotel rooms in 2018 – up from 1,781 rooms in 2017.

The geographic proximity to Jakarta – an hour’s flight away – has also facilitated Belitung’s growth as a tourist destination, attracting hospitality brands like Golden Tulip, Fairfield by Marriott, Santika Premiere, and the latest, Swissbel Hotel.

To grow air connectivity, the regional government has approached a number of airlines to mount flights to the destination, including AirAsia as well as carriers flying to Thailand, Isyak Meirobie, deputy regent of Belitung, told TTG Asia. “China is one of them. At this point, we are still in talks,” he said.

However, at press time, Garuda Indonesia has just announced the axing of the the four-times-weekly Singapore-Belitung service, which had only began operations in October 2018.

With the closure of this Singapore con-

nection, inbound agents fear that the positive momentum Belitung is starting to see for the international market in the past six months will be lost.

“The number is not in hundreds, but every week there are (overseas) groups that come (to Belitung),” said Yudianto Evan Setiawan, director of Billitonesia Tour. “A few groups were planning to visit Belitung in June-July, but this (service) closure inevitably made them cancel their trip and we lost the business.”

Without a direct link, Singapore and overseas clients are now “thinking twice” about selling Belitung, as domestic flights via Jakarta are more expensive and time consuming, he added.

“At this moment, the dream to make Belitung an international destination is broken,” Yudianto said. “Now we’re relying on AirAsia, said to launch flights from Kuala Lumpur in August. Hopefully the regional government will truly realise the cooperation with AirAsia.”

Airport capacity is another key challenge, Isyak pointed out, as the annual number of passengers has reached 800,000, outstripping H.A.S. Hanandjoeddin International Airport’s capacity of 250,000 passengers.

State-owned Angkasa Pura II has taken over the management of HAS Hanandjoeddin Airport to unveil a 400 billion rupiah (US\$28.4 million) development plan beginning next year, which will see the addition of a new terminal that will accommodate three million passengers, an apron and a taxi way.

As well, Isyak is planning to form the Belitung Tourism Board to market the destination, as more new attractions and travel products come online.

Karmila Santy, chairman of Association of the Indonesian Tours and Travel Agencies (ASITA) Belitung Chapter, sees strong potential in the destination’s natural assets, with Tanjung Kelayang Beach, Batu Berlayar, Kelayang Beach, Lebong Island and Lengkuas Island among the key attractions.

Karmila said: “Belitung has 200 islands, and most of them have not been explored, so the tourism potential is still large.”

While Belitung is not lacking in attractions, Herry Sulistya, director of sales of Fairfield by Marriott Belitung, opined that tour operators are still offering standard island-hopping packages with some photo taking and snorkelling opportunities thrown in. “These kind of itineraries are only suitable for first timers with staying less than three days,” he said.

Agents should exercise greater creativity in designing packages to attract repeat travellers, opined Yudianto.

“Besides beaches and islands, they must think creatively to sell new attractions, such as combining nature and culture, so that packages are more varied and travellers are also not bored.”

Yudianto suggested that activities such as kayaking, diving and visiting turtle breeding spots can be combined with village tours for tourists to immerse and learn about the local culture, hence enhancing the overall Belitung experience.

Already, Fhia LF, director of Belitung Archipelago, is developing an adventure tour package that combines visits to a geopark, local coffee plantations, waterfalls and a tarsius conservation area.

“The government efforts to register the Belitung geopark (for UNESCO consideration) received good response from adventure tourists,” said Yudianto. “We also see a lot of scientists who are interested in coming to research the nature of Belitung.”



Enriching Village Experience

Sheltered within a Balinese village that is poised above the Ayung River valley in Kedewatan Ubud, Pramana Watu Kurung is an elegant resort designed to honour Indonesia’s rich artistic heritage. Through its use of natural materials, Pramana Watu Kurung is bonded to the surrounding environment and gives the impression that it has always been part of the local village. The resort is a place where travellers can slow right down and experience the harmony of Balinese life in all its simplistic glory.

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Fresh Eyes

Hospitality gigs

A platform seeks to be the Go-Jek of Indonesia’s hospitality sector, matching hotel jobs with workers seeking them, writes Tiara Maharani

Having spent more than 15 years working in the hospitality industry, Wing Prakoso, co-founder at Hore! Indonesia, only knows the staffing issues in the sector too well.

He said: “It is difficult to get competent daily workers, especially when hotels have events or are fully booked. The problem is not because no one can be employed, but because millennial workers lack motivation and commitment to work, and also have attitude problems.”

On the other hand, he is also concerned about the growing number of vocational school and university graduates who remain unemployed as hotels cut back on manpower amid current economic situation.

Keen to address this challenge of supply and demand, Wing and two friends in January 2018 launched Hore! Indonesia (which stands for Hire On Ready & Educated) as an

Hore! Indonesia is similar to Grab and Go-Jek. Hotels select the workers, who will then respond whether he or she can or cannot do the work.

Wing Prakoso
Co-founder,
Hore! Indonesia



platform for hospitality recruiters to hire ready and educated staff to complete daily jobs.

Through the platform, hoteliers can access a ready pool of qualified workers, who have been interviewed, filtered and tested for their abilities. For young people, Hore! offers a flexible way to earn money and build up their experiences while providing flexibility in work hours.

Wing elaborated: “Hore! Indonesia is similar to Grab and Go-Jek. Hotels select the workers, who will then respond whether he or she can or cannot do the work.”

To become members, interested hotels and workers just have to sign up on the website. How then does Hore! ensure that its pool of workers are competent and ready for hire?

Wing explained: “Every worker who registers as a member of Hore! must go through several stages before being allowed to find work. First, they must fill in the profile data and be interviewed by our team, who then gives a review and rating. After that, we will provide training (to them) based on reviews and ratings.”

Hotels or parties can also rate the services of the workers. The higher the rating, the higher the remuneration rate for a worker. The rating also determines the quality and performance of the worker.

He added: “The rating also applies to hotels. Workers have the right to

give an assessment, whether the hotel gives a reasonable fee, treats workers well, among others. This is to ensure the welfare of our members.”

Both hotel or workers can submit complaints, which will be followed up by an Hore! staff to mediate and seek a solution for both parties.

Workers who have received complaints will be temporarily suspended and sent to a training or workshop, Wing told TTG Asia.

To date, 1,350 workers have joined Hore! Indonesia as members. The platform has also established cooperation with 40 hotels, 10 restaurants, two event spaces, and one catering service in Surabaya, while in Jakarta it has partnered with seven hotels, one event space and one catering service.

Going forward, Wing hopes to attract more young people to join the platform and increase the workers’ hourly wages, which are currently paid at an average of 120,000 (US\$8.40) to 150,000 rupiah.

Next on the start-up’s agenda is expanding into other cities, such as Yogyakarta, Bandung and Bali.

“We hope to work more with big (hotel or restaurant) brands. We also intend to collaborate with tourism institutes and vocational schools.

“We aim to be the platform that will empower young generations for a greater good and to contribute to Indonesia’s hospitality industry,” Wing concluded.



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Hotels

Connection gains offset slowdown

Amid a domestic travel slump, Indonesian hotels are finding cheer in more international air services linking up the country to new markets. By Mimi Hudoyo

While high airfares continue to hinder domestic tourism, the Indonesian hotel industry is generally upbeat about business prospects this year, finding bright spots in the crop of new air connections which are expected to open up new markets to the destination.

Indonesia's domestic market has been a traditional stronghold for the hospitality sector, although surging domestic ticket prices this year have affected the travelling patterns and demands on the homefront.

Sudarsana, general manager business development of Santika Indo-

A deluxe room in Jambuluwuk Thamrin, Jakarta



nesia Hotels and Resorts, said: "The airfare hikes have particularly affected our properties outside Java, such as in Makassar, Bangka and Belitung."

"Business travellers (from Jakarta) used to travel twice to three times a month now they travel once a month. Some even make a visit once every two months," she added.

The high domestic airfares pose a particular challenge for Lombok, where domestic travel still remains stymied following last year's natural disaster, noted Made Pudjayanti, group director of marketing and communications at Jayakarta Hotels & Resorts.

"Luckily for our hotel on the island, we are strong with the government meetings," she remarked.

But Indonesian hoteliers are finding positive momentum in the new air connections coming into the country, especially Bali.

Aeroflot and Rossiya Airlines have earlier launched their joint services between Moscow and Bali. Virgin Australia has commenced its seasonal Darwin-Bali service on April 10, and VietJet started its five-weekly flights from Ho Chi Minh City to the island on May 29. Coming up, Turkish Airlines will commence its Istanbul-Bali service in July.

Bali, Lenny Willyana, director of sales and marketing at Discovery Kartika Plaza Hotel in Bali, hopes



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A collage of ten images showcasing Indonesian tourism: a woman in traditional Balinese attire, a rhinoceros, Mount Bromo, a coral reef, a traditional wooden house, a boat on a lake, a person in traditional dress, a Komodo dragon, a beach scene, and Borobudur temple.



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“The airfare hikes have particularly affected our properties outside Java, such as in Makassar, Bangka and Belitung.”
– Sudarsana, general manager business development, Santika Indonesia Hotels and Resorts

that the crop of new direct international connections will encourage longhaul customers to stay longer in the destination. “Travellers will have more days and choices to explore more parts of the island.”
Mella Purwanaika, vice president marketing of Jambuluwuk Hotels & Resorts, is “excited” about AirAsia’s Perth-Lombok service commencing on June 9.

“We are hoping this would give good impact to Jambuluwuk Gili Trawangan (during the summer peak season), as the island is recovering (from natural disaster last year),” she noted.

Traffic from the UK market is starting to pick up for Jambuluwuk, while in Bali the hotel group is working with inbound operators specialising in the Indochina market to capture new markets, Mella shared.

Meanwhile, having identified India as a new source market, Jambuluwuk Hotels & Resorts is now expanding into India.

Mella explained: “Apart from China, the Indian market to Bali has been growing (in the last couple of years), so we started participating at SATTE since last year.”

Santika Indonesia Hotels and Resorts, on the other hand, is looking to Eastern Europe as part of its market diversification strategy.

Among its new openings this year, the Kayana Lombok – an upmarket villa resort under Santika’s Royal Collection brand – will launch in July to coincide with the European summer high season, Cita Dewantoro, general manager corporate sales and marketing told TTG Asia.

“This is a resort targeted for the European market. Samaya Ubud and Anvaya Seminyak, which are also part of the Royal Collection brands in Bali, are popular with this market,” said Cita.

Seeing the healthy growth of the Middle Eastern market, Jayakarta Hotels & Resorts is tapping the Iranian market, particularly for its Bali property as well as The Jayakarta Inn & Villas Cisarua, Mountain Resort & Spa near Bogor – the latter is a popular destination with the Middle East market – according to Made.

She also sees opportunities for properties in Lombok and Labuan Bajo (Komodo) with the European and Australian markets, thanks to the improved accessibility in West and East Nusa Tenggara.

NEW HOTELS

Swiss-Belresort Tanjung Binga

Nestled 150m from the Tanjung Binga Beach in Belitung, the four-star Swiss-Belresort Tanjung Binga has a total of 77 rooms, many of which have their own balcony with beach views. Amenities include three restaurants, as well as swimming pool, a spa, 24-hour fitness centre and a jogging track.

The property also has three function spaces, including the Kelayang Ballroom which can accommodate up to 200 guests. The hotel is a 45-minute drive from H.A.S. Hanandjoeddin International Airport.

Eco Beach Tent

Located on Tanjung Kelayang Beach, Belitung, Eco Beach Tent

is a “glamping” accommodation concept with seven tents/villas.

The property has been designed and built with natural materials such as nipa palms, coconut leaves and dolken logs. Some furnishings have been handcrafted from waste timber, with driftwood also used for part of the artistic decorations.

Facilities include beachfront restaurants, outdoor function spaces, and watersports activities such as banana boat and snorkelling.

Artotel Wahid Hasyim

The Indonesia-based Artotel Group has opened the Artotel Wahid Hasyim – Jakarta, its second property in the capital city. The hotel has 122 rooms starting from 20m², all of which were decorated by five emerging local artists.



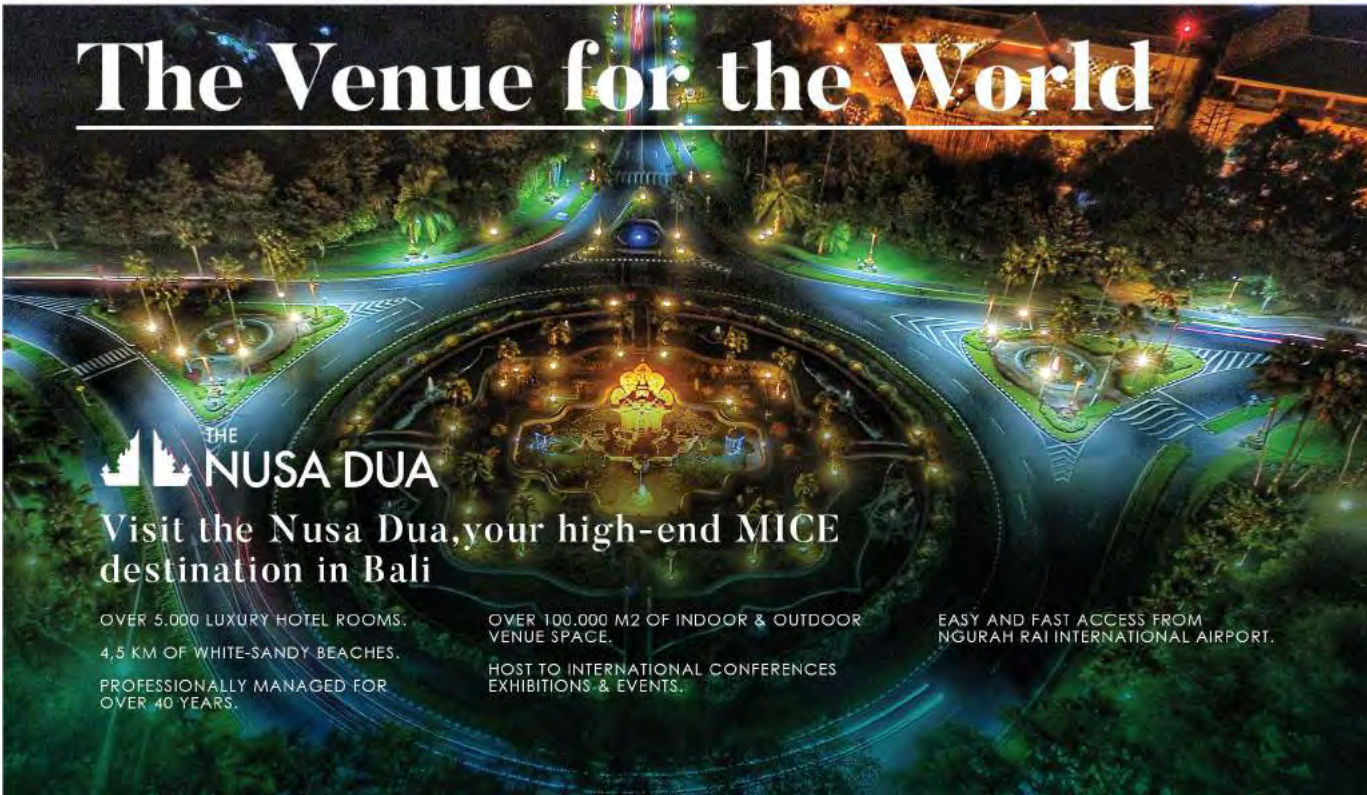
Swiss-Belresort Tanjung Binga

Facilities include Meet-Space, an event space for up to 50 people; Artspace, an art gallery for the local artist community and a mandatory fixture at Artotel properties; and the 24-hour Bang Bang Restaurant & Bar.



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Tried & Tested InterContinental Jakarta Pondok Indah

InterContinental Jakarta Pondok Indah recently opened its doors in south Jakarta, marking the return of the brand into the capital. Mimi Hudoyo checks into the high-end hotel

LOCATION The hotel is located in Pondok Indah, south Jakarta, where upmarket residences, international schools, reputable hospitals and entertainment facilities call home.

South Jakarta has increasingly becoming a popular location for companies to open their businesses, but only a few upmarket hotels are currently operating in the area.

The hotel itself is strategically integrated within a high-end commercial complex where the well-known Pondok Indah Mall, an office tower, a water park and a 18-hole golf course are inter-connected.

ROOMS My Club InterContinental room on the 23rd floor offered a clear view of the surrounding area through the full-length windows. The colour scheme and the elegant interiors combine to make the 47m² room feel even more spacious than it already is.

The room is equipped with a large screen IP TV and mobile platform access to a range of personal experiences, such as the sound bar.

The bathroom is not only large but also has features expected of a luxury property, such as separate bathtub, shower and toilet.

F&B The all-day dining Sugar & Spice is located on the Level 1, serving buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner with cuisines from across the five continents. A Teppanyaki 'speakeasy' bar will come soon be added.

The Indonesian selection offered authentic tastes and for spice lovers,



the chefs are not shy about playing things up with the variety of sambal chilli sauces. (A word of caution: the chilli is really hot.)

The Indian food is sumptuous and the papadam is so light and crunchy, not to mention the creamy home-cured salmon.

I had a taste of the chef's new menu item of the BLT soup (*bakso* meatball, *lidah* ox tongue, *tunjang tendon*), which was still in its test kitchen. The soup was surprisingly light and fragrant, while the ox tongue was tender and the tendon melted in my mouth. This dish, in my opinion, should be included in the menu.

I checked on the breakfast spread at the restaurant and found such a tempting selection that I chose to dine at the Executive Lounge, just so that I could rein in my appetite by tucking into the fresh and healthy options – and equally delicious food.

The Lounge at the lobby level is a great spot to connect with friends or business partners. Trolleys feature a variety of single-origin coffee and tea throughout the day as well as gin in the evening, plus a selection of canapés. DJs and live bands will perform on Wednesdays to Fridays, but the sound system is set in such a way that patrons could easily talk over drinks and music.

The Lounge also serves daily afternoon tea and on weekends, offers a buffet of light meals like sate, dim sum, samosa and mini chocolate fondue.

Two additional F&B facilities, The Aqua Lounge by the pool and a rooftop dining venue, are coming soon.

FACILITIES The most outstanding facility is the meeting and banquet facilities. Not only does the hotel have a huge ballroom with an 11m-high ceiling that can host up to 3,500 people and multiple breakouts, it also has a dedicated wedding lounge, and wedding gallery displaying wedding elements as well as bridal changing rooms. A Chef Table, a dedicated food-tasting room is available for planners of big events, with direct access to the banquet kitchen.

Other facilities include the Inaria Spa with Jacuzzi, steam and sauna, fitness centre and swimming pool. The Planet Trekkers, the signature children's facilities include swimming pool and playground on Level 8, and an indoor play area near Sugar and Spice.

SERVICE The hotel soft-opened last December but it has been keeping a low profile in the past months to overcome any glitches a new hotel might have. And based on my stay, this strategy worked out fine. The services are top notch: smooth check-in and out, quick response to enquiries, requirement and orders.

VERDICT A business hotel boasting luxury comfort, surrounded by playgrounds for children and adults.

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WHAT'S NEW

Airlines

Citilink Indonesia links capital cities up

Citilink Indonesia has commenced four-times-weekly Jakarta-Kuala Lumpur services in February, marking its sixth regional services after Denpasar-Dili, Jakarta-Penang,

Garuda Indonesia's Airbus A330-300 aircraft



Surabaya-Penang, Banyuwangi-Kuala Lumpur and Surabaya-Kuala Lumpur.

According to OAG data, this route connecting both capital cities was the fifth busiest route in the world, which saw 19,849 flight frequencies in 2018.

Garuda goes to Nagoya

On March 23, Garuda Indonesia started a direct service between Jakarta and Nagoya, Japan's fourth largest city and a major industrial and manufacturing hub.

The four-times-weekly service is operated on Tuesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday with an Airbus A330 aircraft, providing 36 business class seats and 186 economy class seats.

GA884 will take off at 23.35.

from Soekarno Hatta International Airport and arrive in Chubu Centrair International Airport at 07.25 the following day. On the return, GA885 will leave Nagoya at 10.00 and arrive in Jakarta at 15.00 on the same day.

Dedicated LCC terminal at Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport

Terminal 2F of Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport has been operating as an LCC terminal since May 1.

According to Muhammad Awaludin, president director of Angkasa Pura II, the airport authority, having different terminals is a segmentation strategy for the Soekarno-Hatta airport, which already has Terminals 1, 2 and 3, and Terminal 4 is under

development. A dedicated terminal for Umrah will also be built.

Wi-Fi on Sriwijaya flights

Sriwijaya Group will introduce free Wi-Fi on board its flights next year.

The airline company recently launched its new SJ inflight Entertainment, a wireless streaming inflight service which allows passengers to connect their devices to the network in order to access content such as movies and TV shows, music, videos, games and e-magazines, or chat with other passengers on board.

The AirFI system, touted as the latest system in the aviation business, is compatible with different operating systems like iOS, Android, Windows and Linux.

NTO

Making most of events

In a Q&A with Mimi Hudoyo, Rizki Handayani, deputy minister for marketing development for South-east Asia, Australia, Oceania and Indonesia (domestic travel), talks about how events can be better marketed and promoted to travel trade and consumers alike

Indonesia is targeting 20 million arrivals this year. What are your marketing plans, particularly for Bali, which contributes 40 per cent of arrivals to the country?

Our marketing programmes continue to be (focused on) branding, advertising and selling. In some markets we highlight (Lombok) West Nusa Tenggara, giving them updates on the latest situations like the infrastructure development, and hotels reopening and renovations following the disaster last year.

We also inform business partners on the regional government's commitment during an emergency situation, such as providing free accommodation for stranded passengers as per SOP.

Other programmes span familiarisation trips to Bali and Lombok as well as joint promotions with airlines, be it boosting seat load factors of existing flights, or promoting new services such as VietJet Air's service to Bali and AirAsia's Perth-Lombok route.

We have conducted sales missions to Vietnam and Australia and familiarisation trips for tour operators and media to Indonesia. We also support the airlines' below- and above-the-line promotions.

The Ministry of Tourism has rolled out a calendar of events since last year. How much has this helped to boost arrivals, especially to greater Bali?

Bali alone has a lot of events, not just culture but also music, sports and culinary. We promote not only the ones compiled in the (national) calendar of events, but also other international events.

In Banyuwangi, East Java (which is part of Greater Bali), we are starting to include beach cleaning in our marketing promotion.

There is still room for improvements (in event promotion) though. We used to think that travel agents and tour operators should and would promote events, but the fact is that most travellers today are FITs and rely on digital (information), we need to increase the use of social media.

Meetings with our Visit Indonesia Tourism Officers (VITO) revealed that we have not been optimising our digital marketing efforts. We are still engaged in destination branding but lacking in product content.

Our strategy is to create content related to events and disperse information through VITO. The targets are South-east Asia and Australia, markets which can make quick decisions (to travel to Indonesia).

How can Bali and Beyond Travel Fair (BBTF) play a part in achieving the tourism targets?

This event gives us two things. First of foremost, it is a business event, which will strengthen Bali's status as a business events destination. Secondly, on the leisure travel part, it provides product knowledge to the buyers on what Indonesia can offer. This is the place where they can find new products, develop them into packages and sell to the clients.

The benefit of having such an event here as compared to attending a mart overseas is we can showcase the destination. Sellers who cannot participate overseas have the chance to showcase their products here (at the show).

I would like to encourage more



Our strategy is to create content related to events and disperse information through VITO. The targets are South-east Asia and Australia, markets which can make quick decisions (to travel to Indonesia).

Indonesian regions to participate in this event. If the regional governments are into tourism, they should support the industry to take part.

How else can BBTF grow?

BBTF is a B2B event organised by an association, which is growing in terms of the number of buyers and sellers. The event needs to grow much bigger.

In my opinion, the event should not only be handled by ASITA Bali Chapter, but the national board, because the aim is to showcase the whole of Indonesia to the world.

The organiser needs to look at current trends. Apart from the conventional (brick-and-mortar) travel companies, they should also invite OTAs to take part. The trend today is more FITs than group tours, so more travel companies handling FITs should be invited as buyers.

More importantly, in order to grow, the organiser needs to think beyond just a market selling tour



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

products. It needs to have a theme related to current issues and trends.

The issue of the day is sustainability and Bali is currently doing a "no plastic" campaign. BBTF can bring this into the show by using sustainable exhibition materials, organising related workshops and at least 50 per cent of the products can be related to sustainable environment. (Such efforts) will reflect the sustainable development goals (SDG) that Indonesia has adopted.

There are NGOs in Indonesia supporting communities to develop sustainable environment. In Flores, for example, there is a group of women helping the local community to develop their traditional weaving. There are tour operators selling volunteer tourism products, and more buyers today are looking for products, which support SDG. They should take the space in the show.

I even think they should invite organisations such as UNDP to open a booth (showcasing sustainable initiatives) and speak at the workshop. All this will elevate the credibility of the show.



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BBTF spotlight

Balinese inspiration

With the Bali & Beyond Travel Fair (BBTF) taking place this month, TTG Asia checks into key hotels and venues in the destination for their latest updates



Green push for Hyatt Regency Bali

When Hyatt Regency Bali reopened in 2018, the hotel aimed to remind guests of Bali’s lush, laid-back and rustic spirit of the 70s and 80s. A major part of the hotel’s sustainability efforts involves keeping operations and sourcing local and green. Apart from cutting down on the usage of plastics and using recyclables, the team is also committed to using locally sourced ingredients to minimise the hotel’s carbon footprint while lending a hand to economic development in the local community.

Tie the knot at Discovery Kartika Plaza Hotel

Weddings are a key segment at the 318-room Discovery Kartika Plaza Hotel, which enjoys a private seafront location in Kuta. With the Indian Ocean as a picturesque backdrop, the seafront property makes an ideal wedding location for couples, and is famed for its spectacular sunset ceremonies. Apart from outdoor locations, couples can choose to hold lavish indoor celebrations in the Kharisma Ballroom, or for a smaller nuptial celebrations of 20 pax or less, intimate events can take place on the lawn of the Discovery Beachfront Villa, which has direct access to the beach.



Pramana Hotels & Resorts celebrates sixth anniversary

Established in 2013, Bali-based hotel management operator Pramana Hotels & Resorts has a wide collection of luxury resorts and villas in Bali. Each property in the Pramana portfolio boasts their own unique and intimate settings, offerings guests a sense of culture and relaxation that is unique to Bali. Marking its sixth anniversary in 2019, Pramana Experience has set its sights on growing its business in Bali and beyond.



Beach break at The Jayakarta Lombok

The Jayakarta Lombok Beach Resort & Spa is situated within the unspoiled natural beauty of Lombok island, and offers direct access to the Senggigi Beach. The 171-room hotel is divided into a main building and several bungalows surrounded by tropical lush gardens, with most of them offering a private balcony overlooking the pool and sea. The property also features a swimming pool, sand pool, kids’ pool, jogging tracks and bicycle hire, among others.



Bali Nusa Dua Convention Centre gets events technology upgrade

Following a recent events technology upgrade, Bali Nusa Dua Convention Centre is now equipped with advanced Wi-Fi infrastructure that allows users to upstream/downstream up to 10Gbps through 485 unit access points available across the entire complex. Fibre optic network is also now available in all function rooms for real-time audio visual and raw data transfer between rooms, which enables two or more simultaneous events to be seamlessly connected over a period of time.