

Business Traveller

ASIA-PACIFIC



Luxury on the high seas
Charting Asia-Pacific's cruise industry



Hongqiao in the spotlight
Shanghai builds a new CBD in the west



How green is their valley
San Francisco and the Napa Valley shine



Currying flavour
Everyone loves a curry... but which one?

SEOUL SEARCHING



China.....	RMB60.00	Pakistan.....	Rs450.00
Hong Kong.....	HK\$45.00	Philippines.....	P275.00
India.....	Rs270.00	Singapore.....	S\$15.00
Indonesia (VAT Inc).....	Rp48,000	Taiwan.....	NT\$180.00
Korea.....	W10,000	Thailand.....	Bht180.00
Malaysia.....	Rm18.00	Others.....	US\$12.00

Korea's capital harbours attractions both ancient and modern



HONG KONG

IF YOU HAD 1/3/5 HOURS
TO EXPLORE HONG KONG
WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

For inspired meeting packages,
call 852-2822-8824 or email HongKongInfo@ConradHotels.com

CONRAD[®]
HONG KONG

NEVER JUST STAY. STAY INSPIRED.

ASIA EUROPE AFRICA MIDDLE EAST AMERICAS
CONRADHOTELS.COM #STAYINSPIRED



CONTENTS

44 | SIDE BY SIDE

The Korean capital has plenty of attractions for event delegates with some down time



38 | ROOM FOR GROWTH

The busy district surrounding Shanghai's Hongqiao airport is developing rapidly into a new CBD

50 | HOTEL UPDATE: KUALA LUMPUR

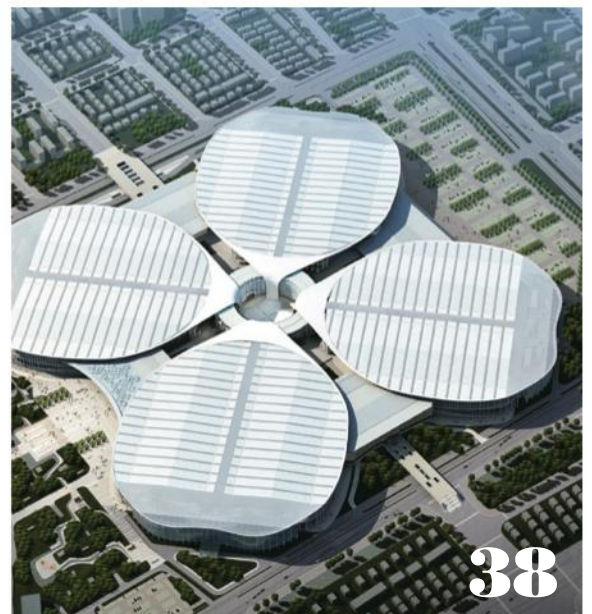
The hotel sector in KL is more vibrant than ever

52 | DATA MINE

Hotel packages around the world

53 | LOYALTY

Reward and redemption news



38

26

10 | UPFRONT

Airline and hotel news worldwide

16 | INBOX

Your letters and online posts

20 | TRIED & TESTED

China Airlines A350-900 Business Class; The St Regis Macao, Cotai Central; Grand Hyatt Taipei; Grand Ambassador Seoul associated with Pullman

26 | FULL STEAM AHEAD

Business is booming for cruise companies in Asia-Pacific as demand grows for luxury vessels with increasingly exciting facilities and travel itineraries

34 | BRIDGING THE GULF

Airlines from the Middle East have shaken up the aviation industry. How are their rivals responding?

CONTENTS

MAY 2017

Business
Traveller ASIA-PACIFIC
lifestyle

58



64



56 | LIFESTYLE NEWS

Your global hot list

58 | LAND OF PLENTY

Exploring the many pleasures of cosmopolitan San Francisco and bucolic Napa Valley

62 | BUSY IN BANGKOK

Cultural treasures, shopping highlights and leisure hotspots in the Thai capital

64 | FLYING START

Crowd-funding platform Kickstarter allows innovative ideas to see the light of day

68 | SPICE OF LIFE

Explaining the global culinary phenomenon that is curry... in all its forms and flavours

72 | FOUR HOURS IN SINGAPORE

Quay spots to visit on either side of the Singapore River

74 | SNAPSHOT

Qantas's Kangaroo Route



72



We search for familiar flavours, to make you feel at home.

A warm welcome. It's that special feeling of sipping your favourite tea, served just the way you like it. It comes from the thought that goes into everything you taste and touch. Because we understand that there's nothing as comforting as enjoying the things you love, without having to ask. It's just one of the lengths we go to, to make you feel at home.



SCAN TO
DISCOVER MORE



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 



To be honest, I've never really liked the idea of a cruise holiday. The thought of being restricted to a ship's relatively limited acreage is anathema to me because I'm a roamer, a wanderer who likes to head off into a city's backstreets, turning left, right, left... and so on until I'm lost. The people I then meet as I ask for directions, and the hidden gems I stumble across as I work my way back to familiar territory are the most exciting and fulfilling aspects of a holiday for me.

That said, I may be persuaded to change my mind if my wife suggests a long trip around the South Pacific islands, or a voyage to Antarctica in the luxurious confines of a Silversea vessel's berth. Read our story on how Asia-Pacific's cruise industry is coming of age ("Full steam ahead", page 26) and, like me, you may begin to see the many benefits of being swept in supreme comfort from one exotic location to another, on board an oversized cruise ship offering increasingly broad-ranging activities.

Perhaps I'm also leaning towards sea travel – at least in terms of leisure – because of recent news from the aviation industry. There's the ongoing trend towards uncomfortable ten-across seating in economy (even 11-across according to Airbus's "cabin enablers"); ever-increasing "security threats" and the heightened restrictions and delays that come with them; absurd travel bans that negatively affect our journeys; airport security staff who are allowed to seriously harm paying passengers...

The current state of global aviation is not what people were imagining at the turn of the century, when the future of flying looked bright and presaged a connected world in which individuals, organisations and nations would forge close ties and work together for the betterment of all.

We seem to have lost our way slightly – but my hope is that with clear, honest communication and an altruistic attitude from those in power (please?), we'll find our way back to positive ground.

Jeremy Tredinnick
Editor



Subscribe
and get automatic
membership to
**Business Traveller
Plus** –
the exclusive club
for our readers,
and a free
Timothy ULTRA
foldable backpack!*



Scan me to see the full range
of benefits and subscribe
businesstraveller.com/bt-plus

*Gift promotion period: May 1-31, 2017

HYATT name, design and related marks are trademarks of Hyatt Corporation. ©2017 Hyatt Corporation. All rights reserved.



GOOD GETS DOWN TO BUSINESS.
GRAND LIVES IT UP.

Just because you're in town for business, doesn't mean the experience can't be a pleasure. With creative cuisine, breathtaking backdrops, and unparalleled service, Grand Hyatt Singapore will make any business trip feel like a vacation. Book now and discover #WorldofHyatt.

GRAND HYATT SINGAPORE
10 SCOTTS ROAD
SINGAPORE 228211
SINGAPORE.GRAND.HYATT.COM



STEVE WHITE is the editor-in-chief of *Action Asia* magazine, and as such has roamed the continent in search of paths less trodden. Exploring is a lifelong passion for him, but so is food, and in Asia the two are inextricably linked, especially when it comes to curry (see “Spice of life”, page 68). “Unsurprisingly, writing about curry led me to eat plenty of it,” he says. “I literally started and finished a trip to Penang, whilst researching this story, in the airport’s curry restaurant, and once back home in Hong Kong I couldn’t resist the lure of the (in)famous Chungking curries.”



ALEX MCWHIRTER is an award-winning journalist specialising in aviation and rail transportation. He joined *Business Traveller* back in 1979 after many years in the travel industry, and his expert knowledge has enabled him to angle his many contributions towards the consumer. In this issue’s feature he looks at the rise of the Middle Eastern airlines, from humble beginnings in the 1980s through aggressive expansion in the 90s and early 2000s, changing the aviation landscape along the way (see “Bridging the gulf”, page 34).

Business Traveller

Editor Jeremy Tredinnick
Deputy editor Tamsin Cocks
Online editor Craig Bright
Staff writer Valerian Ho
Art director Loretta Lam
Designer Julia Yau
Contributors, Alex McWhirter, Steve White
Email editorial@businessstravellerasia.com
General manager sales Juliet Lim
Regional sales directors Gracy Siu, Iris Yeung
Sales manager Queenie Kwong
Admin & production manager Renee Chiu
Marketing manager Cynthia Ng
Circulation manager Allan Chan
Senior marketing executive Cherrie Wong
Managing director Julian Gregory
Editorial director Tom Oley
Director Peggy Teo

CONTACT

Editorial tel +852 2594 9393
Email editorial@businessstravellerasia.com
[facebook.com/BusinessTraveller.AsiaPacific](https://www.facebook.com/BusinessTraveller.AsiaPacific)
Advertising tel +852 2594 9300
Email advertising@businessstravellerasia.com
Subscription tel +852 2594 9318
Email enquiry@businessstravellerasia.com



Panacea Publishing Asia Ltd
Regional Head Office:
Suite 405, Chinachem Exchange Square,
1 Hoi Wan Street, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong
tel +852 2594 9300 fax +852 25196846
businessstraveller.com

Panacea Asia Pte Ltd
Singapore Office:
Spaces City Hall, 410 North Bridge Road,
Singapore 188726
tel +65 6407 7300 fax +65 6407 7251



Business Traveller Asia-Pacific is published 10 times a year at the address at left. The magazine is entirely independent of all commercial interests within the travel industry. All rights reserved in respect of all articles, illustrations, photography, etc, published in *Business Traveller* Asia-Pacific anywhere in the world. Reproductions or imitations are expressly forbidden without the permission of the publishers. Unsolicited contributions will not be accepted for publication and *Business Traveller* Asia-Pacific accepts no responsibility for loss of or damage to them. The opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the publishers, who cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.



Member Audit Bureau of Circulations

The **UK & Europe** edition of *Business Traveller* is published at: 41-43 Maddox Street, London, W1S 2PD, UK, tel 44 20 7821 2700, fax 44 20 7647 6331 email editorial@businessstraveller.com. In the **United States**, *Business Traveller* is published at: Eleven Ryerson Place, #201 Pompton Plains, New Jersey 07444, USA, tel 1 973 839 6200, fax 1 212 725 2646 email editor@btusonline.com. In **China**, *Business Traveller* is published by the Hong Kong office (address above). In **Germany**, *Business Traveller* is published at: Schulstraße 34, 80634 München, Germany, tel 49 89 167 9962, fax 49 89 1678 3914. The **Middle East** edition is published at: Motivate Publishing, PO Box 2331, Dubai, UAE, tel 971 4 282 4060, fax 971 4 282 4436. In **Hungary**, *Business Traveller* is published at: 1074 Budapest, Munkás Utca 9, tel 36 1266 5853, fax 36 1338 4293 email info@turizmus.com. In **Denmark**, *Business Traveller* is published at: Rymarksvej 46, DK-2900 Hellerup, Denmark, tel 45 3311 4413, fax 45 3311 4414. In **Poland**, *Business Traveller* is published at: 36 Swietokrzyska Str, 00 116 Warsaw, tel 48 22 455 3807, fax 48 22 455 3813. In **Russia**, *Business Traveller* is published at: Ul M Raskovoy, 34-14 127005 Moscow Russia, tel 7 495 662 44 39. In **South Africa**, *Business Traveller* is published at: Future Publishing (Pty) Ltd, PO Box 3355, Rivonia 2128, South Africa, tel 27 11 803 2040, fax 27 11 803 2022. In **India**, *Business Traveller* is published at: Panacea Publishing 20, Vaswani Mansion, 120, Dinshaw Vachha Road, Churchgate, Mumbai 400 020, tel 91 22 4220 2100.

Printing by: Apex Print, 11-13 Dai Kwai Street, Tai Po Industrial Estate, Tai Po, N.T., Hong Kong
© 2017 Panacea Publishing International ISSN 0255-7312

Wellness begins at Oasia

A focus on the mental and physical wellbeing of its guests helps this Singaporean brand differentiate itself from others



Oasia Hotel Downtown, Singapore

When Far East Hospitality launched Oasia Hotel Novena, Singapore in 2011, it did so with a clear vision of the philosophy that would define the Oasia brand and be intrinsic to both the Novena property and all the hotels and residences that came after.

Each Oasia property reflects Singapore-inspired hospitality, an elegant “home from home” for busy travellers that is calm yet empowered, conceived with our guests’ wellness in mind.

The core of this philosophy are three brand pillars – **Recharge**, **Refresh** and **Refuel** – and these are integral to each property, as is the thoughtful, subtle and yet attentive hospitality that is a hallmark of every Oasia hotel.

RECHARGE – “When I travel, I exercise...”

Extensive fitness facilities are available to travellers during their stay, including 24-hour well-equipped gyms in all the hotels, an 8th floor outdoor pool and Jacuzzi at Oasia Hotel Novena, an outdoor pool, kids’ pool and Aqua Gym at Oasia Residence, Singapore, as well as rooftop pools at both the Oasia Suites Kuala Lumpur and Oasia Hotel Downtown, Singapore.

REFRESH – “When I travel, I sleep...”

Every Oasia hotel has well-designed spaces with natural elements weaved into the décor that create a calm environment for travellers to unwind. Oasia Hotel Downtown, Singapore’s green façade has made it a unique landmark in the Lion City, and the greenery continues inside, complemented by copper and wood



Oasia Hotel Novena, Singapore



Oasia Suites Kuala Lumpur



Oasia Residence, Singapore

materials. Design elements in Oasia Hotel Novena – created by Japanese design company Super Potato in collaboration with local architectural firm Ong & Ong – also include inspiring wood and stone features in the lobby, club rooms and club lounge.

Meanwhile, Oasia Residence, Singapore is located close to West Coast Park, and Oasia Suites Kuala Lumpur benefits from its location adjacent to the lush KL Forest Eco Park.

REFUEL – “When I travel, I eat...”

With a focus on quality sustenance to nourish the body, all Oasia properties boast vibrant F&B venues and offerings that will appeal to the wellness-conscious traveller. Singapore’s Novena and Downtown hotels are home to The Marmalade Pantry, offering quality comfort food prepared using fresh and seasonal produce, while healthy meal options are offered in all the properties, plus fruit-infused detox water in their Club or Resident’s Lounges.

Oasia provides a restorative respite, and is the destination of choice for astute business and leisure travellers who seek wellness within the comfort and familiarity of a city.

■ www.stayfareast.com/oasia

Craig Bright compiles the latest news from businessstraveller.com/asia-pacific

In-flight laptop ban



THE US AND UK have issued a ban on carry-on electronics for flights from certain Middle Eastern, European and North African destinations (though strangely – and significantly – the US ban includes the airports of Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, which the UK ban does not).

Dubbed the “laptop ban”, the ruling applies to laptops, tablets, cameras, DVD players and electronic games, though medical devices and mobile phones will be allowed on board.

The Gulf carriers have been hardest hit by the security measure, but have responded positively. Emirates was first off the mark, offering a free laptop and tablet handling service at the gate. Etihad reacted by offering business class passengers free wifi and iPads, while Qatar Airways announced it would offer a laptop loan service to business class passengers.

However, Emirates has since confirmed plans to reduce frequencies on five of its 12 US routes, for which it blames “recent actions taken by the US government”.

emirates.com; etihad.com; qatarairways.com

Kerry Hotel opens on Kowloon waterfront

SHANGRI-LA HOTELS AND RESORTS has opened the Kerry Hotel, Hong Kong – the first new-build hotel to open on the Kowloon waterfront since 1955.

The hotel is located next to Hung Hom ferry pier, within walking distance of Whampoa’s famous ship-shaped shopping centre.

Designed by Andre Fu, more than 60 per cent of the 546 guestrooms have harbour views, with sizes ranging from the 42 sqm Deluxe City and Sea View rooms to the palatial 294 sqm Presidential suite. All rooms will feature free movies on demand and a free minibar. The hotel also boasts the largest ballroom in Hong Kong, plus six additional meeting rooms. thekerryhotels.com



Delta Air Lines and Korean Air expand strategic partnership

DELTA AIR Lines and Korean Air have agreed to a joint venture to expand their transpacific network.

As part of the agreement, Delta will launch a twice-daily non-stop service between Atlanta and Seoul on June 3,

while Korean Air will introduce a third round-trip service this summer between Los Angeles and Seoul, as well as a second flight to San Francisco.

Both airlines will share costs and revenue on flights across a combined

network of 290 destinations, giving passengers the chance to earn and redeem miles on both Delta’s Sky Miles and Korean Air’s Skypass loyalty programmes.

delta.com; koreanair.com





AIRLINE NEWS

AIR ASIA has signed a memorandum of understanding with Inmarsat to upgrade its in-flight connectivity. The airline will install the GX Aviation system aboard its Airbus A320s and A330s later this year, with the service scheduled to go live in 2018.

AIR CHINA launches its new Shanghai Pudong-Barcelona route on May 5, operated by an A330-200 flying three times weekly.

AIR FRANCE will begin codesharing with Singapore Airlines and Silk Air. The European carrier will place its code on SIA flights to Melbourne and Sydney, and Silk Air's flights to Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Phuket. In return SIA's code (SQ) will appear on Air France connections via Paris CDG to ten destinations.

AMERICAN AIRLINES has announced plans to codeshare with China Southern

Airlines later this year, following the airline's US\$200 million equity investment in the Chinese carrier.

ASIANA AIRLINES and Hong Kong Airlines have begun codesharing on all flights between Hong Kong and Seoul. Asiana flies the route four times daily while Hong Kong Airlines operates a daily service.

CATHAY DRAGON will cut its Tokyo Haneda service in October, but parent airline Cathay Pacific will continue to operate a twice-daily service between Tokyo Haneda and Hong Kong.

CATHAY PACIFIC has confirmed a ten-across seating configuration on its B777 fleet; the change is expected to take place from mid-2018 to 2020 with a new "ergonomically designed seat" with a 17.2 inch-width, six-inch recline and 32-inch pitch.

CHINA SOUTHERN has launched its new Guangzhou-Mexico City service, which transits via Vancouver – the

carrier's first route to Latin America and now the longest in its route network.

HAINAN AIRLINES now operates its Dreamliner aircraft between Beijing and Manchester, featuring 36 flat-bed business class seats and 177 in economy.

QANTAS has launched in-flight wifi on its Boeing 737-800 aircraft, enabling internet connectivity across its domestic flights. The launch marks the start of wifi rollout across 80 of Qantas's aircraft, due for completion by the end of 2018.

UNITED'S new B777-300ER now connects San Francisco and Hong Kong after beginning operation in late March.

The new aircraft features United's recently unveiled Polaris Business seat.

VIRGIN AUSTRALIA has launched a new Economy X product, offering extra legroom (between 34- and 39-inch pitch), located at the front of the aircraft and emergency exit rows. International passengers will also receive noise-cancelling headphones.



POLL

In which category of hotel do you normally stay on business trips?



For more surveys visit businesstraveller.com/asia-pacific/polls

Golden Touch of Jinling Hospitality



www.jinlinghotel.com

Located in the center of Xinjiekou Square, the Jinling Hotel Nanjing has 970 well-designed rooms and suites, 6 distinctive restaurants, a 3500 square-meter health club including the Angsana Spa, and a 10,000 square-meter underground lifestyle pavilion. All are prepared to exceed your expectations.

From now on, guests staying in the Executive Floor will also receive the following courtesies:

- Complimentary welcome fruit and other refreshing desserts
- Complimentary 1st full mini-bar of soft drinks
- 120 RMB laundry allowance per room night
- "Sweet Dreams at Jinling" promotion and Jinling's tailor-made bed linens
- Imported L'Occitane Bath and Body products.
- Free use of fitness facilities in the Health Club
- 30% discount on selected Business Center services
- 20% discount when dining at the Pacific Grill
- 24-hour private concierge service and butler service for guests staying in Suites and higher room types
- Free in-room themed welcome tea for guests staying in Senior Suites and higher room types



Exclusive Benefits for Our Most Valued Guests.



Join Us & Find More!

No.2 Hanzhong Road Xin Jie Kou Square, Nanjing 210005, China
 Tel: (86-25) 8471 1888 Fax: (86-25) 8471 1666
 E-mail: nl.jinling@jinlinghotel.com
 Reservation Hotline: (86-25) 8471 1888, 400-8289966, 800-8289966
www.jinlinghotel.com





WIN a free hotel stay

For a chance to win, visit
businesstraveller.com/asia-pacific/competitions



■ This month's prizes come from the **Grand Hyatt Hong Kong**. Situated on the harbour front in Hong Kong Island's Wan Chai district about ten minutes from the MTR underground train station and Star Ferry terminal, the hotel offers a medley of facilities that range from ten restaurants and bars to 21 indoor and outdoor meeting and event spaces. Along with the residential-style Plateau Spa, the 542-room hotel also offers a 50-metre outdoor swimming pool, 24-hour fitness centre, plus a jogging path, tennis courts and a golf driving range.

■ This month, three prizes are up for grabs with each winner receiving a two-night stay for two people in a Club Harbour King room at Grand Hyatt Hong Kong. Winners will also have access to the Grand Club Lounge offering daily breakfast, evening cocktails and canapés, and all-day Champagne.

MARCH'S ONLINE COMPETITION WINNERS:

Ian Walmsley (UK) and Allan Willis (Hong Kong) each won a three-night Studio Apartment stay at a The Ascott Limited property in Asia-Pacific.

VIP service at KLIA

KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (KLIA) has introduced a new VIP service aimed at international transfer passengers.

The KUL VIP Access service is an end-to-gate offering that provides benefits including limousine services, personal escort, buggy transfer, fast-track immigration and customs procedure, dedicated counters for check-in, premier lounge usage and exclusive shopping and dining deals.

Travellers can acquire the VIP pass for between RM200 (US\$45) and RM800 (US\$180) depending on the level of service required. klia.com.my



Airbus unveils A380 "cabin space optimisation" range



AIRBUS has unveiled a range of new "Cabin Enablers" for its A380 superjumbo aircraft, which it says can create space for around 80 additional seats. The product offering includes a redesigned front staircase, which the manufacturer says will free up space for 20 extra passengers.

Other "enablers" – some of which are already offered to airlines – include an 11-across (3-5-3) economy layout on the main deck (adding 23 economy seats), a nine-across premium economy layout on the main deck (adding 11 passengers), a redesigned rear staircase and aft-galley (adding space for 14 more passengers), and the removal of the upper deck sidewall stowage (increasing business class capacity by ten seats).

Airbus said that "an innovative seating concept" allows airlines to offer an 18-inch seat width in economy while moving to a 3-5-3 layout. airbus.com

Meet your match



You make critical decisions every day.
You work hard in silence, and let your success do the talking.
Your vision is global, your heart is local.
You never quit no matter how tough life gets.
After all, you did not wake up today to be mediocre.

*We understand.
Meet your match.*



Enjoy Our Best Rate Guarantee | www.the-ascott.com | +65 6272 7272

The Ascott Limited, a member of CapitalLand, is a Singapore company that has grown to be one of the leading international serviced residence owner-operators. It has more than 300 properties in over 100 cities spanning more than 25 countries across the Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe and the Middle East. Enjoy our award-winning hospitality at *Ascott*, *Citadines*, *Somerset*, along with *The Crest Collection* and *lyf*.

Qantas launches curated amenity kits

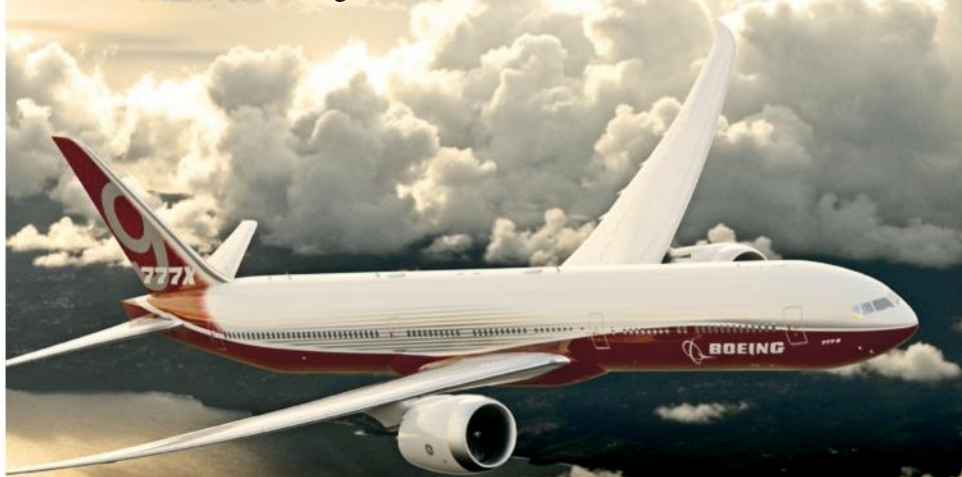
QANTAS has launched a new range of international business class amenity kits, designed in collaboration with 16 Australian artists, photographers and “digital influencers”.

Each of the kits will feature different artwork from one of the collaborators (eight types each for men and women), with two new designs launching every few months. Pictured is the Bubblegum Dystopia design by Jacob Leary.

All kits will keep the current Aspar products, which include hand cream, lip balm, face moisturiser, Colgate toothpaste and a toothbrush. All kits will also include an eye mask with the same design as the kit. qantas.com



New B777-9 will be ten-across in economy



BOEING has released full technical details of its future B777-9 series aircraft. These are expected to enter service in a few years' time and have already been purchased by many of the world's most prestigious carriers, including Japan's ANA, Cathay Pacific, Emirates, Lufthansa and Singapore Airlines.

Included among the B777-9's details are Boeing's recommended seating plans. These reveal that the unpopular ten-across (3-4-3) economy class layout will almost certainly be adopted by all airline customers.

However, heeding the almost universal negative passenger feedback from those flying ten-across economy on the current B777s, Boeing has been prompted to create a wider cabin on the B777-9, allowing seat manufacturer Zodiac to devise a lightweight seat providing 17.4 inches of width for the B777-9. Although this seat is not quite as wide as those configured nine-across, it should provide a roomier feel to the cabin. boeing.com



HOTEL NEWS

ACCORHOTELS has opened two new Ibis hotels in Asia: the 587-room Ibis Bangkok Impact hotel in Thailand and Ibis Saigon Airport hotel in Vietnam – a five-minute walk from Tan Son Nhat International Airport.

ASCOTT has opened its first serviced residence in Jeju. The Somerset Jeju Shinhwa World is part of the Shinhwa World integrated resort, which includes MICE facilities, theme parks and gaming.

DUSIT INTERNATIONAL has signed a management agreement to operate Dusit D2 Chaengwattana, the company's first D2-branded property in Bangkok, scheduled to open in 2020.

FOUR SEASONS has launched a new property in Tianjin, the 259-room hotel offering three restaurants, two ballrooms, a spa, gym and club lounge.

GCP HOSPITALITY has opened a new property in Shenzhen's Nanshan district, the Residence G, approximately 50 minutes from Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport. The hotel offers 178 rooms, which range from 38 sqm studios to 174 sqm three-bedroom apartments.

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL has launched the Four Points by Sheraton Melbourne Docklands. The 273-room waterfront property is situated about two kilometres west of Melbourne's central business district.

MOVENPICK HOTELS AND RESORTS is set to manage the new Movenpick Hotel and Apartments Al Azaiba Muscat, its first property in Oman's capital.

PAN PACIFIC HOTELS AND RESORTS will open three new properties in Asia-Pacific. These include Pan Pacific Beijing, Pan Pacific Melbourne (formerly the Hilton South Wharf) and the Pan Pacific Yangon in Myanmar in September.

ROSEWOOD HOTELS AND RESORTS has announced the Rosewood Hoi An, scheduled to open in Vietnam in 2019.

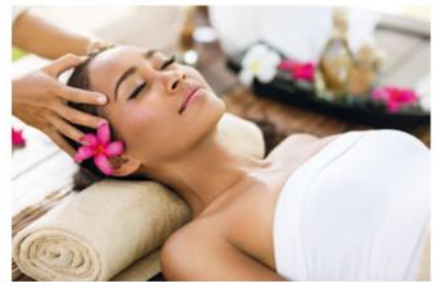
SHILLA STAY has expanded its portfolio with two new properties in Seocho, Seoul, and Haeundae, Busan.

SMALL LUXURY HOTELS welcomes the new 137 Pillars Bangkok, a boutique property with 34 suites, a meditation spa, dining outlets, rooftop bar and the highest infinity pool in Bangkok.



Excellence by the airport

Directly connected to Hong Kong International Airport, Regal Airport Hotel can't be beaten for its convenient location and superb facilities



Clockwise from top left: international cuisine; a duplex suite; the indoor pool; and OM Spa

For travellers connecting at Hong Kong International Airport, Regal Airport Hotel is an ideal overnight option, providing convenience and comfort alongside award-winning facilities.

Just a two-minute walk from the airport, guests can reach the hotel directly from the terminal via an enclosed linkbridge. The Airport Express will take you to the city centre in only 25 minutes or to the AsiaWorld-Expo convention centre in under five minutes.

All 1,171 smoke-free guestrooms and suites are well equipped and feature modern design accents and double-glazed, soundproofed windows. The top three floors are home to the hotel's Executive Club rooms, while triple and quadruple rooms are available for families.

For meetings and events, the hotel boasts one of Hong Kong's largest pillar-free grand ballrooms, measuring

1,050 sqm and accommodating up to 1,500 people, with a four-metre-high HD LED wall. In addition, there are 30 function rooms that can be booked for seminars and breakout sessions. The meetings team is always on hand to help, and planners can also avail of the property's event diagramming service.

Guests can choose from a selection of six restaurants and bars, offering delicious pan-Asian, Western and Halal cuisine. Abundant leisure facilities include the award-winning OM Spa, perfect for some pre- or post-flight relaxation, as well as a gym and indoor and outdoor pools.

Until the end of this year, travellers can take advantage of the "Enchanted Dining Suite" package. Upon booking a suite (a HK\$1,500/£193 supplement also applies*), guests will receive HK\$1,500 of dining credit plus Executive Club lounge access and privileges such as cocktails and

refreshments, free internet access and complimentary use of the health club and pools.

An innovative secure storage facility is available for guests storing valuable artwork and personal items. Rare and regional works are also on display in its art gallery.

Such initiatives have seen Regal Airport Hotel voted the world's best airport hotel by readers of *Business Traveller* UK for the past nine years. *Business Traveller* Asia-Pacific has named it the region's best airport hotel for 16 years in a row.

Its environmental credentials are just as strong, having achieved EarthCheck's silver accreditation.

■ Regal Airport Hotel, 9 Cheong Tat Road, Hong Kong International Airport, Chek Lap Kok. Visit regalhotel.com; tel +852 2286 8888; email info@airport.regalhotel.com

Get in touch at editorial@businesstravellerasia.com

Star letter

TECHNICAL GLITCH WITHOUT A HITCH

Here is one of the greatest experiences I've ever had with an airline customer service representative.

I searched for flights from Hong Kong to Busan with China Airlines, who offer the best schedule for me (I always avoid flights touching down before dawn and personally don't mind a two- to three-hour layover).

I selected my flights, proceeded to the payment process and put in my personal information, when suddenly the web page went blank. I refreshed the page a few times but it had no response at all.

After a few moments, I got back into China Airline's website, but the flights I had chosen were gone, with only business class left available (an extra US\$350 for the round trip). I felt this was kind of ridiculous; a well-established flag carrier should have a well-developed website and I

shouldn't have to bear this extra US\$350.

I therefore called the customer hotline. I really did not expect much since I have heard of some terrible experiences dealing with airlines' hotlines over the phone.

However Emily – the representative who answered my call – acted promptly. First she checked the system and found my input, and then she sorted things out with her manager. This involved a bit of back and forth as I understand the dates I had selected were very busy, but I was amazed with their keenness to help me instead of fobbing me off and wasting my time, and was very pleased to be offered the flights which I had chosen initially.

Such a well-trained customer service team is not easy to find these days.

Wallace Wong, Hong Kong



■ This issue's winner of Letter of the Month will receive one of the new branded Business Traveller cabin-size suitcases from Timothy Travel Essentials (timothytravelessentials.co.uk).

For the chance to win Letter of the Month, email us at editorial@businesstravellerasia.com and include your postal address and daytime phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters.

MOVING THE GOAL POSTS

I booked a flight on January 15, via the Thai Airways website, from Brussels to Hong Kong departing March 6.

As a member of Aegean Airlines Miles + Bonus, I chose the K class economy reservation in order to collect 100 per cent of the miles flown. However, when I checked my account, I was surprised to see only part of those miles had been credited, so I contacted Aegean.

In their response, they explained that changes to the mileage redemption scheme had been issued and published on February 27 – and that my flight and class had therefore automatically been revised.

I found this response unacceptable, and question the legality. I specifically chose a more expensive ticket to earn 100 per cent of miles – which I was clearly entitled to at the time of booking. Subsequent changes made by the airline should not impact this.

Marc Barber, Belgium

AEGEAN AIRLINES RESPONDS:

As Mr Barber mentioned, our members may easily see the corresponding miles of their flights by consulting the fare earning charts, which are available

through the official website of Miles + Bonus.

However, respective charts can be periodically altered, according to any updates on our internal agreements with the air carriers.

In such cases, our customers are immediately notified of the relevant changes via our official website, while the new mileage charts, depicted on our website, are applied with immediate effect. Respective information is also included in this link, which states: "the effective date relates to flight events, regardless of the booking date".

Based on the above terms, although we understand that Mr Barber booked his flights before the change of the "Thai Airways" charts, Thai can only authorise the mileage accrual according to the valid earning charts.

However, in this case we have exceptionally credited the additional miles to Mr Barber's account as a goodwill gesture.

We appreciate Mr Barber's initiative to bring this to our attention. It is our pleasure to answer customer questions and receive feedback on our loyalty programme. We look forward to welcoming him on board our flights in the near future.

BAD CONNECTION

On January 29 I was travelling from Incheon (ICN) to Jakarta (CGK) via Kuala Lumpur (KUL) on MH067 and MH725.

Flight MH067, scheduled to arrive at KUL at 1645, was delayed by about one hour. When I arrived at Kuala Lumpur airport, the Malaysian Airlines representative presented me with a new boarding pass and told me that I would have to take the next flight to Jakarta – MH727, scheduled to depart four hours later at 2205, instead of my original flight MH725 (scheduled to leave at 1805).

However, as I was in business class, I had disembarked the aircraft first and realised there was still a chance to make MH725. I ran to the train and headed to the gate for MH725 – which luckily was also slightly delayed, and I was able to take my original flight to Jakarta in a timely manner.

I felt this was quite a disappointing system from Malaysian Airlines. I was the only passenger from MH067 transiting through MH725 so it would hardly have caused a delay to help me catch my flight. Secondly, how come Malaysian Airlines automatically put me on the later flight (MH727) without first checking the status of flight MH725? Had I followed their instructions, it would have ruined the business meeting I had arranged for the evening of January 29, as flight MH727 wouldn't have arrived in Jakarta until 2305.

I still cannot believe the attitude of MH employees, who simply said: "You can't make the flight. The gate is located in the other terminal. Dinner will be in the Golden Lounge..." when they could have simply called and checked the status of flight MH725 and responded to me with the facts of the situation.

I wrote to Malaysian Airlines a month ago about this matter, and I still have not received any kind of apology.

Jung Hyup Kim, Seoul

MALAYSIA AIRLINES RESPONDS:

Malaysia Airlines wishes to explain the situation encountered by passenger Jung Hyup Kim on January 29, 2017.

As the flight he was travelling on, MH067, was retimed to arrive in Kuala Lumpur at 1745, one hour later than scheduled, his onward connection to Jakarta had to be rebooked due to the required minimum connecting time rule of one hour.

His original connection, MH725, was scheduled to depart at 1805, leaving only 20 minutes for him to catch the flight. As he had also checked in a bag, it would be difficult to transfer his luggage in less time than the normal transfer process of one hour, particularly as both aircraft were parked at different terminals in KLIA.

As per standard airline procedure, check-in needs to be done an hour prior to departure time to allow for the finalisation of aircraft weight and balance documentation. In any transfer process, Malaysia Airlines does not only consider passengers' connectivity to the next flight but also the connectivity of their baggage. The airline deeply regrets the disruption to Mr Jung's travel plans.

SUPER SERVICE IN SYDNEY

I travelled with my wife on Singapore Airlines' Flight 212 from Sydney to Singapore on March 29, 2017. We were greeted by a very friendly receptionist when we gained access to the SIA lounge at Sydney International Airport with my Krisflyer Gold membership.

Unbeknownst to me, my passport pouch containing cash and credit cards dropped from my carry-on luggage while in the lounge. We boarded the flight as scheduled, and it was only when the lounge staff came on board looking for me to return the pouch with all of its contents, that I realised it was gone.

I could have flown back to Singapore without knowing that I had lost my pouch with cash, cards and critical documents. We were truly lucky and thankful that the same receptionist went out of her way to look for us and return the pouch before the plane pushed back for departure.

I would like to share with you and your readers that there are still many friendly people with great customer service around; and hope the SIA supervisor recognises that one of their staff did a superb job in keeping the airline's customers happy. We will be flying SIA for many years to come.

TC Foong, Singapore

A NEW BREED OF BUSINESS TRAVELLER SUITCASES

AVAILABLE FROM JUNE 2017

www.timothytravelessentials.co.uk

TIMOTHY Travel Essentials

British Innovation & Engineering

Posts from our online forum [busesstraveller.com/forum](https://www.busesstraveller.com/forum)**POST UNITED AIRLINES – OVERBOOKED FLIGHT...***Canuckland***DATE***April 10, 17:39*

They say there is no such thing as bad publicity. This story clearly banishes that theory into the dustbin. And the lawyers must be wringing their hands with glee. As opposed to the UA employees who've clearly lost the plot.

PeterCoultas
April 10, 21:35

Fly the friendly skies and get beaten to a pulp on the ground... totally disgusting as a long-term UA executive frequent flyer...

Rferguson
April 10, 21:35

United could obviously have resolved this by offering generous compensation – which apparently it didn't. The irony being it will likely cost them thousands of times more now. It is absolutely shameful the way they handled it.

Ah,Mr.Bond
April 11, 11:30

I am sure anyone would become "disruptive" if asked to leave for no reason whatsoever. I hope this doctor takes UA to the cleaners for millions.

JohnHarper
April 11, 11:58

This is shocking. I don't travel to the US but if I did it would never again be on United. That their CEO is defending this situation based on their own overbooking and their desire to prioritise their crew tells me it's not a company I want to do business with. Given that the gentleman had paid for his ticket and was in his seat United should have found another solution. Surely they knew before boarding that this situation was occurring and could have stopped it at the gate. If they did not know that then should they be operating an airline?

MartynSinclair
April 11, 14:04

@stevecoots – "Unfortunately anything to do with flying in the US now is a licence to be treated like something scraped off your shoe by everyone involved." Steve, never a truer word spoken. On my flight to the US yesterday, I witnessed a senior cabin crewmember (an American airline) threatening a passenger mid-flight, something that on any other Western (non-US) airline would probably have resulted in the captain being called to intervene. Truly, truly shocking, and not all these incidents are in the name of "security"...

Edski777
April 11, 15:17

Apparently United used a method where they exclude unaccompanied minors and families. I suspect that they will also exclude high mileage frequent flyers and those sitting in a premium cabin. That leaves

any single traveller or pair in economy open to being picked to be offloaded. It just requires going through the list of passengers and their status, no complicated piece of software required. Overbooking and trying to entice passengers to give up their seat in exchange for vouchers and a guaranteed seat on the next flight seems to be more common in the US than in Europe, although it happens. Interesting to see how this develops. It may change the business practice in the US on overbooking.

LAPTOP AND IPAD BAN

POST
Cantona07

DATE*March 21, 16:38*

Anybody got any views on how a laptop computer will travel in a suitcase – thrown around, bumped and bruised during baggage loading/unloading, not to mention the freezing temperatures at 40,000ft... Can imagine the fun and games unfolding with damage claims to laptops, iPads, etc.

Tom Otley
March 21, 16:46

I can only imagine the effect on bookings for big source markets of these airlines (India and China), with passengers intending to travel to and from there to the US with a transit at one of these airports.

1. Passengers can't work on the flight.
2. They can't work on the stopover.
3. The electronic item might be damaged.
4. It might be stolen.

5. Lots of companies won't let a laptop travel in this way for security reasons.
6. They have to trust no one has left their laptop in sleep mode, which might then get damaged and overheat – in the middle of a bag surrounded by clothes...

I imagine travellers will immediately start looking for alternative routes and it will affect bookings – which will please the US airlines that have campaigned against the ME3.

MartynSinclair
March 21, 16:52

Passengers need to check whether a checked-in laptop is covered on their travel policy.

FDOS_UK
March 21, 17:12

For some it's irrelevant, they cannot check in equipment because of data protection issues. I'm one of them.

Londonfrog
March 21, 17:30

These days, governments can sell anything as long as they jam the word "security" in. I'm not buying it. Otherwise, France should be on the list (before UAE) as a country with most terrorist attacks in recent months.

FIND
MORE
FREE
MAGAZINES

FREEMAGS.CC



A fresh face

Rooftop swimming pool

Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel revitalises and upgrades its offering in Taiwan's capital city

Taipei's tallest hotel, Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, recently completed a NT\$1.5 billion renovation to all its rooms and suites, as well as the Horizon Club Lounge and many other areas of the hotel. This major refurbishment, which lasted 18 months, has added exciting new elements to a hotel that is already famous for its elegance and welcoming atmosphere.

Sung dynasty-inspired custom artwork can be found throughout the hotel, from the highlight *Along the River during the Qing Ming Festival* by Taiwanese artist Shen Cheen, to a fresh new twist on woodwork within the rooms, which is fashioned after traditional Chinese-inspired window frames into eye-catching detailing around the entrance, on the ceiling and in the minibar area. Large picture windows in each of the spacious, well-appointed guestrooms allow sunlight to flood in and also offer unparalleled views over Taipei.

Meanwhile, the 36th-floor **Horizon Club Lounge** has been reimagined and now offers a luxuriously understated ambience in tones of shimmering grey, with oversized windows that maximise the city panorama. It's a great place for guests to enjoy daily breakfast, refreshments or cocktails from the central bar, or for business travellers to host small meetings in the private meeting room.

One of the hotel's great strengths is the diversity of its dining options, with something for every culinary taste. Creative flair is on show at **ibuki by Takagi Kazuo**, Taiwan's first Japanese restaurant to operate with a Michelin-starred approach; meanwhile, Shangri-La's signature **Shang Palace** serves authentic Cantonese cuisine, and **Shanghai Pavilion** on the 39th floor is reputed to be the best Shanghainese restaurant in the city.

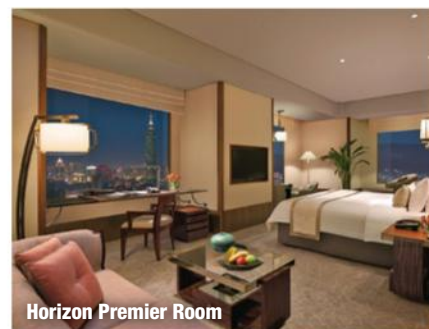
One floor below on level 38, **Marco Polo** is a trendy Italian eatery, and all-day dining is available in **Café at Far Eastern** on the sixth floor, boasting a dazzling buffet and à la carte specialities. Relaxing drinks are available in **Li Bai Lounge** and the charming **Lobby Court**, while in the **Marco Polo Lounge** a wide selection of creative cocktails are prepared by resident mixologist Kevin Luo, who can also conjure up tailor-made concoctions for all tastes and preferences.

Head to level 40 and you'll find our spectacular rooftop swimming pool with panoramic views of the city and surrounding mountains, as well as Qi Shiseido Salon and Spa, a serene space offering therapeutic treatments to soothe body and soul.

Seeing the city from on high is inspiring, so take the time to venture into vibrant Daan district that surrounds the hotel. Within easy walking distance you can find



Horizon Club Lounge



Horizon Premier Room

shops selling fascinating local handicrafts, antiques and furniture, bookstores, and imaginative paper and stationery stores. There's also a host of restaurants serving delicious snacks, Taiwanese and Japanese cuisine in stunning architectural locations, as well as stylish bars and cafés, plus, of course, a bustling night market. All on your doorstep.

■ Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, Taipei

201 Tun Hwa South Road, Section 2, Taipei, 10675, Taiwan Tel +886 2 2378 8888

www.shangri-la.com/taipei



China Airlines A350-900 Business Class Taipei–Hong Kong



BACKGROUND China Airlines became the first Taiwanese carrier to introduce the A350-900 XWB (extra wide body) when it launched on regional routes last year. This year it began serving long-haul routes including Amsterdam, Vienna and Rome.

CHECK-IN I arrived at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport's Terminal 1 at 1620 for my scheduled 1830 departure on flight CI923. The priority queues in Row 9 were empty, I was quickly checked in to a window seat, and security and immigration processing took just a few minutes.

THE LOUNGE China Airlines' Dynasty Business Class Lounge, located one level up on the left past security, is stunning, with a whimsical design aesthetic "based on the lifestyle and tastes of a literary recluse". I arrived during the "afternoon tea" food serving (3.30-5pm) and enjoyed a delicious bowl of Taiwanese beef noodles from the live cooking station. The lounge offers a full complement of facilities, including showers, sleeping rooms, fast wifi with no password required, etc (read the full lounge review on businessstraveller.com).

BOARDING Gate B8 was a 5-10 minute walk from the lounge. Boarding started rather haphazardly for premium passengers at 1800 (there was no announcement, I just saw other passengers being admitted and followed suit). On board I was shown to my seat and asked if I would like a paper. My request was unavailable on ex-Taipei flights – fair enough, but no alternative was suggested, which would have been helpful. As it later turned out, the flight attendant had shown me to the wrong seat. We didn't realise the mistake until meal selections were taken some 30 minutes later, by which point it was rather annoying having to move seat when already settled in and unpacked.

THE SEAT China Airlines has already won awards for its A350 business class product – and rightly so.

The 32 business class seats are configured in a 1-2-1 herringbone arrangement, creating a great sense of privacy and direct aisle access for all.

The cabin design is beautiful, with striking wood panelling veneers and residential touches such as the charming personal table lamps. The B/E Aerospace Super Diamond seat features a comfortable, 78-inch lie-flat bed, with fully customisable positions. Plenty of storage space includes a generous split-level footwell, a shallow tray, and a deeper space under the side panel – where the noise-cancelling headphones, IFE remote and USB/charging ports are located. The underside of this panel also reveals a generously large mirror. The seat itself is comfy, with silk-polyester blend cushions and a soft blanket. The seatbelt set-up required an extra shoulder strap to be worn during taxiing and take-off.

THE FLIGHT Printed menus were brought round before take-off at 1825, with two options for the main, plus an extensive drinks menu with two white and two red wines. I chose the beef goulash with steamed rice when the stewardess came to take my order five minutes later.

The flight pushed back at 1840, and took off at 1850. Shortly after, the captain announced a shorter flight time of 80 minutes. Dinner was served roughly 20 minutes into the flight; it was good, but not exceptional – the presentation could have been improved, and the taste was also slightly underwhelming. The Italian Conti Serristori Chianti Classico wine was very nice, however.

With no time to waste, I dived into the IFE system (it was a shame we couldn't access the IFE while waiting on the ground) and found a wide selection of the latest Hollywood blockbusters, plus TV shows, music and games. Onboard wifi was also available costing US\$11.95 for one hour.

ARRIVAL All too soon, the captain announced our descent and we touched down in Hong Kong at 2028, arriving at the gate five minutes later, and were off the aircraft by 2037 with just a short walk to immigration. Baggage arrived swiftly.

VERDICT The business class seating and cabin are outstanding, the lounge was excellent and it was a smooth flight experience from start to finish. A little polish on the service side would make this product really gleam.
Tamsin Cocks

DEPARTURE
1830

JOURNEY TIME
1 hour 50 minutes

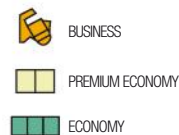
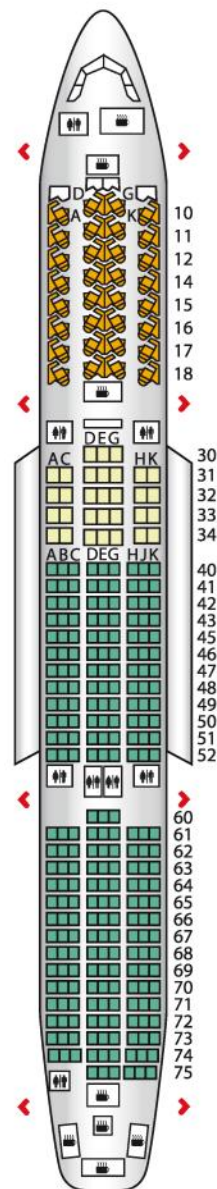
CONFIGURATION
1-2-1

SEAT WIDTH
28in/71cm

SEAT RECLINE
180 degrees

PRICE
Internet rates for a return business class flight from Taipei to Hong Kong in mid-June start from NT\$12,418 (US\$407) including tax and surcharges

CONTACT
china-airlines.com



The St Regis Macao, Cotai Central



BACKGROUND This 400-room hotel opened in December 2015, the sixth of seven properties built by Sands China Ltd on Macau's Cotai Strip – all connected on the first floor level by an extensive retail mall called Shoppes at Cotai Central.

WHERE IS IT? In the heart of the Cotai district on the main drag, facing the Venetian hotel. Macau International Airport and the Taipa Ferry Terminal are both between five and ten minutes' drive away. Macau's city centre is 15-20 minutes away by road.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? St Regis is billed as the "most prestigious address on the Cotai Strip". It is certainly more elegant and less brash than the majority, and although with 400 rooms it's one of St Regis's largest properties, in Cotai terms it's almost "boutique" in feel.

ROOM FACILITIES There are two room types (subdivided into queens, kings and Cotai view) and four suite types. I was in a Metropolitan suite (105 sqm) with a grandstand view of the Cotai Strip. The suite was roomy and stylish, with light wood tones, blue accents in the carpet, cushions, etc, and grey silk wallpaper – there's no sign of the gaudiness found in some of Macau's large hotels. A large, attractive cabinet held drinks, snacks and an Illy coffee machine (though your butler will deliver your choice with a simple phone call), and the round table and chairs served well enough as a work space, with sockets and a lamp on the sideboard nearby. A useful Handy smartphone is also provided for use in and outside the hotel.

The bedroom was big enough for a massive bed, a chaise longue and sofa, one of the suite's two 55-inch TVs, plus a B&O bluetooth sound system. Off the walk-in wardrobe and dressing area was the white marble-clad bathroom, sporting Laboratoire Remède bath products, an LCD TV built into the mirror, a roomy shower and large bath.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS With so many F&B outlets in the Shoppes at Cotai Central mall, accessible through a door on Level 1, the hotel only needs to offer

one restaurant and one bar – but each is exemplary. The Manor is split into sections, with the Verandah, the Dining Room, the Wine Gallery and the Library all offering a slightly different ambience. The food is excellent – I tried a fantastic meat plate comprising six cuts from different countries (including Miyazaki wagyu A5) and a gorgeous turbot dish, and I recommend both.

Also on the first floor is The St Regis Bar, a dark, comfortable refuge of calm with a beautiful stained-glass panel behind the bar, and an intimate area called The Vault that can be booked for private casual meetings.

MEETING FACILITIES The Study on the fifth floor is a business centre with four workstations, and business amenities can also be brought directly to your room. St Regis has nine meeting spaces on the fourth and fifth floors, the largest 628 sqm in size (the Astor Ballroom). However, the fifth floor is also connected to the Sheraton Grand's enormous meeting facilities as well.

LEISURE FACILITIES On the eighth floor is a private outdoor deck containing two heated pools, whirlpools, loungers and cabanas, as well as a pool bar offering light snacks and drinks. The 190 sqm St Regis Athletic Club is also on this floor, with a large gym stocked with Technogym equipment, an exercise studio and saunas in the changing rooms.

On the 38th top floor of the hotel, accessed by a separate lift from the 37th floor, is Iridium Spa, with ten treatment rooms including a Thai massage room, and a choice of custom-made "Gemology Cosmetic" oils.

VERDICT In the larger-than-life fantasy world that is Macau's Cotai district, this hotel is an oasis of calm and refined style, with top-quality service, rooms, dining and leisure options. As a corporate refuge for those doing business in the Cotai area it is highly recommended.

Jeremy Tredinnick

PRICE Internet rates for a Metropolitan suite in mid-June start from HK\$3,125 (US\$402) per night including tax and surcharges

CONTACT Estrada Do Istmo, Cotai, Macau; tel +853 2882 8898; stregis.com/macao

St Regis is billed as the "most prestigious address on the Cotai Strip" and is almost "boutique" in feel

Grand Hyatt Taipei

BACKGROUND With 853 rooms and suites, the Grand Hyatt Taipei is currently the largest hotel in Taiwan. It was one of the first major international brands to open in the Taiwanese capital back in 1990.

WHERE IS IT? In the commercial Xinyi district, directly adjacent to Taipei 101, the Taipei International Convention Centre and the Taipei World Trade Centre. There's easy access to the MRT at Taipei 101/World Trade Center Station on the red Xinyi line, and the airport is around 40 minutes away – the hotel offers a limousine transfer service in a wifi-enabled BMW with a choice of music and information via a tablet.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The exterior is rather imposing and monolithic, but the entrance lobby is magnificent, with ornate chandeliers, bubbling water fountains adorned with fresh flowers and a three-storey glass atrium that allows light to pour in. The space was bustling with people – unsurprising given the 99 per cent occupancy rate during our stay.

THE ROOM The entrance to my Grand Executive View suite was possibly my favourite part: you're greeted by a tranquil Japanese aesthetic comprising light-wood floors and walls, dark-wood panelling, an orchid on the hallstand and a brushstroke painting.

The living room and dining area is extremely luxurious and inviting – the overall feel is very residential, with homey knick-knacks such as artwork, magazines and books, and a Nespresso machine and good coffee and tea selection. The views from my suite encompassed a panorama stretching from Taipei 101 to the Sun Yat Sen Museum and unfinished Taipei Dome.

The circular dining table, rather than traditional work desk, is intentionally designed to offer business travellers a more comfortable in-room dining experience, but there's still a helpful pull-out panel with two universal sockets, USB and other ports, plus a bag of cables (though wifi was fast and easy to use).

Having a separate bedroom and unobtrusive dressing room area really makes your stay feel infinitely more homelike. A comfortable bed and excellent blackout blinds easily controlled via a bedside master panel were plus points, but a small gripe was the faint sound of the traffic lights beeping on rotation every minute or so.

The marble-ensconced main bathroom has a freestanding bathtub, glass-partitioned smart toilet and shower sections, and floor-to-ceiling windows on two sides. It felt a little exposed, but automatic blinds are available for privacy.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS There are 11 F&B outlets in the hotel. Highlights include the Japanese

buffet at Irodori – an extremely popular lunch option for guests and locals alike; Bel-Air, the elegant fine-dining steak restaurant, whose beautiful, transporting interior boasts private alcoves and a water feature element; and Yun Jin, offering a mix of Chinese cuisine, with local Taiwanese specialities and popular Sichuan options.

Café offers a fantastic international buffet spread – but be warned, with 99 per cent occupancy comes a snaking line to be seated at peak times. Ziga Zaga is the Italian eatery and nightclub, a lively spot for drinks in the evening with a live band and cocktail list. Booking at all restaurants is recommended.

MEETING FACILITIES Club lounge access is afforded to all room categories from floor 20 and above, plus all suites. It's a large venue with comfortable seating options. The breakfast buffet, though smaller than Café, is perfectly adequate (and far less crowded), with hot options and an egg station, fruit, breads and juices. The hotel offers 13 function rooms and a grand ballroom for about 600 people in a banquet setting.

LEISURE FACILITIES Club Oasis on the fifth floor features two 24-hour gyms and exercise studios, the Oasis Spa (professional treatments although I was slightly disappointed to see the treatment rooms were simply repurposed guestrooms), and an outdoor heated pool surrounded by a spacious deck and palm trees.



The entrance lobby is magnificent, with ornate chandeliers, bubbling water fountains and a three-storey glass atrium that allows light to pour in

VERDICT It was a pleasure staying at the Grand Hyatt Taipei, with thoughtfully designed accommodation, premium facilities and an excellent location. If anything this hotel is too good, attracting sky-high occupancy that can cause some congestion at meal times.
Tamsin Cocks

PRICE Internet rates for a Grand Executive View suite in mid-June start from NT\$22,754 (US\$746) including tax and surcharges

CONTACT 2 Songshou Road, Taipei 11051, Taiwan; tel +886 2 2720 1234; taipei.grand.hyatt.com

How To Assure A Fun-full Proof Success For Business Events

List the country that's great for "BLEISURE" experiences every business events participant loves to mix business with leisure they want to work alongside relaxation and have new experience

Specify the country that offers diverse in scenery and lifestyle that's good for theme meeting, pre-post meeting, sightseeing, and great shopping

Searching for world-class standard venues and accommodations should be as easy as a breeze, guaranteed. There should be variety of class and choice

Choose the country that treats business travellers with prestigious welcome and exclusive privileges naming facilitating your journey with airport special service on arrival and departure, considerable choices of hotels and accommodations at the city centre and retail experiences with exclusive scheme for business travellers

Choose the country their government support emerging business 4.0 also being the hub of global industries i.e. automotive, food & agriculture, energy, health & wellness and the advance infrastructure is on process

Let your participant vote for their dream destination
...definitely Thailand will come out

Check how fast, how convenient and how seamless the link in transportation air and land, give it a plus if geographically the country is the region's centre of aviation, having advantage flying to Asian countries in just a snap

Connectivity in communication should be fully high-speed and nationwide coverage

Try testing people's EQ with your high demand their smiling index should remain high while they find the creative solution for you professionally

Mix of high-style urban vibe and local authenticity in your chosen country will spice up the impression

Choose the country that has proven its stance on sustainability. Self-sufficiency economy has been the pillars of wisdom, which direct Thailand on the path of sustainability. The various venues in Thailand have been certified ISO 20121: Event Sustainability Management Systems and allow for engagement to local community, supporting local organic products direct from farmers

All the attributes to success you can find it in Thailand, the charm of unique culture, the welcoming spirit, professionalism and many exotic places supporting with emerging infrastructure and collaborative government policy. Let our bon vivant life assure your business events be fun-full experiences.



Grand Ambassador Seoul associated with Pullman



BACKGROUND Grand Ambassador Seoul is one of the South Korean capital's most enduring properties. First opened in October 1955, it's undergone plenty of changes over the years, entering into a franchise partnership with Accorhotels under its Sofitel brand in 1989, followed by a rebrand to its current name in 2009.

A notable leisure option is the indoor golf driving range, with ten tee boxes and a putting green

WHERE IS IT? About five minutes from Dongguk University subway station in Jung-gu, on the north side of the Han River. The shopping and entertainment districts of Myeongdong and Itaewon are just a few subway stops away. Incheon airport is an hour and three-quarters away by train, or around 50 minutes by car/taxi.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Contemporary but with elements of a bygone era, the Grand Ambassador has for the large part aged well with modern conveniences and facilities. Visitors used to the sleek design of newly built properties may find certain minor aspects of the hotel slightly dated, but various Pullman touches (particularly on the design and technology sides) ensure it remains convenient for the modern business traveller.

ROOM FACILITIES There are 413 rooms and suites, ranging from the 30 sqm Superior room to the 114 sqm Presidential suite (there are even three-bed Superior rooms and a traditional Korean Ondol room). I was in a Deluxe room, which at 35 sqm had ample space. The light beige décor with dark-wood furniture was bright and contemporary, and the sleek glass desk and leather chair were very comfortable to use.

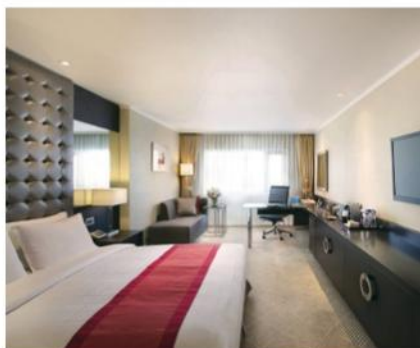
Appreciated amenities include: a coffee maker (with two complimentary capsules per day); a "mobile charging station" with three cables for handheld devices; and fast, complimentary wifi. Another convenience is the desk-side power board, which offers sockets for multiple plug types. That said, these aren't universal sockets, so you'll probably need an adapter.

The bathroom offers a modern smart toilet, but the shower within the bathtub (with a fabric curtain) seemed a bit old-fashioned for this level of hotel. The shower did have a rainfall function, but the added space offered by a shower cubicle is always preferable. Shower products were from CO Bigelow, and there were a number of bathroom amenities, but strangely there was no free dental kit – it was listed on the minibar for 6,000 won (US\$5) for two toothbrushes and 2,000 won (US\$2) for toothpaste.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS The King's is the hotel's main international buffet restaurant, renowned for its seafood offerings but also strong on Korean staples like bulgogi beef. Tucked away behind the elevators is Café de Chef, offering a mixed menu (presented on handheld tablet devices) of French and Korean cuisine – worth a visit if you're looking for a convenient but good-quality meal. The hotel also houses Cantonese/Sichuanese restaurant Hong Bo Gak, Japanese eatery Sushi Hyo, a lobby lounge and deli, and hotel bar La Vinoteca.

MEETING FACILITIES Grand Ambassador Seoul's Executive Club Lounge is located on the 16th floor, with access available to Executive room and suite guests (floors 14-18), who get two hours' complimentary use of the boardroom, plus breakfast, secretarial services, and happy hour from 6-8pm on weekdays and 5-7pm on weekends. The hotel has 15 function rooms (renovated 3-4 years ago) with the largest catering for up to 700 people. The 19th floor banqueting facilities also received a renovation last year.

LEISURE FACILITIES The most notable leisure option is the indoor golf driving range, with ten tee boxes and a putting green. It's a popular venue, but it didn't seem too overcrowded. The indoor golf is located on the basement levels alongside the gym, three-lane indoor pool (with Jacuzzi), aerobic studio and a sauna area offering dry, Korean and fog sauna options. The second basement level houses the hotel spa.



VERDICT One of the city's older properties, the Grand Ambassador Seoul has adeptly kept pace with newer counterparts in the city. While some minor details do date the hotel, it is still an excellent option for those with business in the vicinity or if you want to stay close to the city's most popular spots. *Craig Bright*

PRICE Internet rates for a Deluxe room with breakfast in mid-June start from 253,000 won (US\$228) including tax and surcharges

CONTACT 287 Dongho-ro, Jung-gu, 04618 Seoul; tel +82 2 2270 3111; pullmanhotels.com



Grand Ballroom

Events with greater meaning at Conrad Hong Kong

A MICE destination of excellence and integrity

Conrad Hong Kong is renowned as the region's premier event space – it has been the venue of choice for *Business Traveller* Asia Pacific's annual award ceremony for the past 16 years.

Conrad Hong Kong provides high-quality event spaces, with an extensive choice of 11 function rooms available, complementing the Grand Ballroom. Each room has a wide variety of specifications, including high-end audiovisual support, and benefiting from natural daylight.

All of this is underpinned by the dedicated event planning team at Conrad Hong Kong, whose experience, creativity and professionalism lead to spectacular results every time.

Not only is the hotel equipped with advanced facilities and unparalleled experiences, but it is also a green champion, committed to helping clients address social and environmental issues.

MEET WITH PURPOSE

To further empower delegates' green ambitions, the hotel has launched a series of green meeting initiatives, in line with Hilton's "Meet with Purpose", a concept designed to make it easier for event professionals to reduce waste and incorporate health and wellness into their meetings and events. "Meet with Purpose" has three key parts:



Cold-pressed juice options

Mindful Meeting incorporates practical strategies to conserve energy and resources, from the use of energy-saving light bulbs to the "LightStay Meeting Calculator" and Hilton Clean Air Program, which monitor and help to offset carbon footprints through donations on guests' behalf.

Mindful Eating offers guests more balanced dining options. The health-conscious menu includes options like organic beetroot marinated salmon and cold-pressed juices. By sourcing more local ingredients, the hotel is able both to support the community and minimise unnecessary energy consumption through transportation.

Mindful Being takes care of guests' physical and mental state with an array of fitness events, spa treatments and outdoor activities. For example, the hotel's "Walk in the Park" map helps delegates achieve 2,000 steps and unwind, with a 20-minute walk in the soothing natural environment of neighbouring Hong Kong Park.

SPECIAL OFFER

Those booking a meeting package between June and August 2017 will enjoy:

- One room upgrade to an Executive Harbour View Suite for every 10 paid rooms;
- 10 per cent discount on all spending at the hotel's restaurants and bars, and catering at the event;
- One-hour welcome or farewell cocktail reception; and
- 10 per cent rebate on your next event at Conrad Hong Kong in 2017 (for events over HK\$40,000).

Terms and conditions apply



Conrad Hong Kong

■ **Conrad Hong Kong** Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Admiralty, Hong Kong
Tel +852 2521 3838 Email hongkonginfo@conradhotels.com conradhongkong.com

Full steam ahead

Once perceived as floating retirement homes, cruise ships today have shattered the “bridge and bingo” stereotype to offer a diverse range of luxurious trips aboard lavishly appointed vessels, writes **Tamsin Cocks**





Cruising is a multi-billion dollar industry – and growing fast. According to the Cruise Line International Association (CLIA), demand for cruising increased 62 per cent between 2005 and 2015, with a record-breaking 24 million passengers globally in 2016.

For multi-destination travel, cruising offers three key advantages: first, it's convenient – you unpack once, and then the ship moves you to the scenery and the destination. Second, it's safe – itineraries can easily be adjusted to compensate for newly emerging risk zones (Istanbul, for example, has been temporarily dropped from the itineraries of Norwegian Cruise Line and others). And third, it's a value-for-money proposition – whether guests are in the budget

or the luxury sector, added-extras that you would typically purchase in a hotel (such as food, drink and entertainment) are often included in the price.

Typically, Caribbean or Mediterranean-bound vessels have dominated the cruise scene with a more Western clientele, but all eyes are now turning East. "Asia-Pacific has always played third fiddle to the US and Europe in terms of interest and infrastructure," says Steve Odell, senior vice president and managing director Asia Pacific at Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings. "But now everybody sees big potential here. At the moment there are roughly two million passengers, but the estimate is this could rise to five million quite easily in five years."

Despite lingering perceptions, these figures aren't being

driven by the older generations. Gleaming new super ships are targeting a younger, sophisticated demographic with cruise companies scrambling over each other to introduce innovative "first-at-sea" entertainment experiences and luxury modern offerings to this emerging customer.

NEW VESSELS FOR NEW MARKETS

"China is certainly the engine room of Asia-Pacific," says Odell, "and the Chinese cruiser is considerably younger – we're looking in the 35-45 bracket for the majority. So you'll find a lot more technology, virtual reality, games and outdoor facilities."

Launching this year, the new 3,840-guest *Norwegian Joy* has been specifically designed for this youthful Chinese demographic, ▶

Main: A bird's-eye view of the *Genting Dream*

with a competitive go-kart track, open-air laser tag course, simulator rides, hovercraft bumper cars, a state-of-the-art racing simulator and two multistorey waterslides. In recent years Royal Caribbean has welcomed two brand-new ships – *Quantum of the Seas* and *Ovation of the Seas* – both of which will have their homeports in Chinese cities (Shanghai and Tianjin respectively). On board is the trademark North Star attraction – a jewel-shaped capsule rising 300 feet (91 metres) into the air that offers the “highest viewing deck on a cruise ship” according to the *Guinness Book of Records*.

Home-grown ships are also adding groundbreaking options, such as Genting Hong Kong’s Dream Cruises brand, “the first-ever Asian luxury cruise line”. Its flagship vessel *Genting Dream* launched in November 2016, with homeports in Guangzhou and Hong Kong, and a second sister ship, *World Dream*, is scheduled to make her maiden voyage this year. The new mega ship offers 1,100 sqm of luxury retail space; 142 deluxe cabin suites with butler service and private pool; 35 restaurant and bar concepts, including Zouk nightclub and a pool party area; six waterslides; three spas, including cosmetic offerings from botox to skin lightening; two submarines and one “mermaid academy”.

“We designed the ship essentially as a floating, integrated luxury resort, and we are confident that *Genting Dream* will make her mark as the newest ‘must-experience’ vacation attraction,” says Thatcher Brown, president of Dream Cruises. “We aim to be a pacesetter in the region, meeting the needs of the emerging generation of confident, independently minded and affluent Asian travellers.”

Smaller ships, catering to the high-end luxury markets, are also seeing a healthy appetite in the region, and tailoring their offerings to match. For example, the new ultra-luxury ship from Silversea,



Silver Muse, is scheduled to set sail this year and recently launched a dedicated Chinese website. “China is a key market for Silversea and we see increasing demand for high-quality travel services, indulgent surroundings and more exotic destinations,” says Amber Wilson, general manager and director sales and marketing, Asia Pacific.

PROVISIONS FOR ASIAN PALATES

When catering to an Asian customer, F&B quickly jumps up the priority list. Forget designated mealtimes at horribly overcrowded meal halls; cruises these days offer “six-star” service, fine-dining and dedicated F&B experiences.

Norwegian Cruise Line claims credit for introducing the idea of a “freestyle” approach to dining whenever and wherever guests choose, and has taken this one step further aboard its new ship *Norwegian Joy*. “We’ve done a lot of work on cuisine,” says Odell. “The ship has 29 restaurants and we’ve designed these for local tastes with a mix of regional and European cuisine. The younger generation are used to having lots of choice and are much more adventurous than their parents and grandparents.”

On *Genting Dream*, a host of “first-at-sea” experiences are available for epicurean tastes. This includes the first ever Johnnie Walker House, with mentoring and

education from brand ambassadors along with curated tasting sessions. Wine lovers, meanwhile, can head for the Penfold Wine Vault and sample an extensive array of rare Australian vintages.

In the super-luxury domain, *Crystal Symphony* is renowned for its all-inclusive fine-dining model, where guests can select from an à la carte menu and enjoy premium wines, all accompanied by silver service. Dining experiences also include world-famous cuisine from master chef Nobuyuki “Nobu” Matsuhisa at Silk Road and the Sushi Bar.

EXPLORING THE REGION

With all the bells and whistles, it’s almost easy to forget about itineraries, but of course this is a crucial part of the experience. Blessed with incomparable cultural and natural diversity, Asia is finally gaining attention not just as a source market, but as a premium cruising ground. “Asia has natural appeal for the cruise industry. It’s a beautiful part of the world, with a great culture of service,” says Odell.

“Japan is particularly important in regional development, because it’s perhaps one of the more difficult places to navigate if you don’t speak Japanese. A cruise can provide a very easy and efficient way of getting around that big country and seeing all the beautiful things it has to offer.

Clockwise from top: *Genting Dream*’s Bar 360; *Celebrity Millennium* docking at Kai Tak Cruise Terminal in Kowloon Bay; and a balcony suite on board Silversea’s *Silver Cloud*



“The other rising destination is the Philippines, because this has not always been considered the safest place to travel in the region. But the Philippines government has developed a cruise plan and they’re opening up a lot more regional ports in the national parks.”

The main problem facing the Asia-Pacific region is infrastructure. Places like Papua New Guinea offer beautiful coastal scenery, but a total lack of port facilities, which restricts the appeal. Hong Kong is one of the more mature markets and recently unveiled the premium Kai Tak Cruise Terminal. But while it’s adept at processing thousands of passengers, getting to and from the terminal is still problematic, and will remain so until the planned MTR extension opens in 2019. Until then, luxury ships still generally

opt for the more centrally located Ocean Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui.

Crucially though, the key is coordinated regional development – a homeport is only as strong as its neighbours, as the ship needs somewhere else to go. “The Hong Kong and Singapore tourism boards have been huge drivers in creating cruise interest in the region,” says Odell. “They know that if they create a cruise hub they bring people who spend money in the region. They’ve been very forward-looking and are also trying to engage all the countries around them.”











The efforts are starting to pay off. In March, Star Cruises announced the debut triple homeport deployment of its flagship *Superstar Virgo* in Hong Kong, Manila and Kaohsiung, operating the “Jewels of the South China Sea” itinerary – an industry first.

“We are very excited,” said Anthony Lau, executive director of the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB). “This deployment reflects the effectiveness of Asia Cruise Cooperation in enhancing the development of cruise tourism in the region.” Dream Cruises’ Brown also agrees coordination is the way forward: “It wasn’t that long ago that cruise brands first entered the Asian market, but now that the industry is booming, all of the cruise brands need to grow together.”

Developing itineraries for the young Asian cruiser involves other cultural quirks that need to be considered, explains Odell. “Holiday time in Asia-Pacific is generally quite short, people are looking at 5-7 days maximum. A longer European trip is normally quite a challenging thing to sell, especially for the more mainstream market.”

However, longer world-cruise itineraries are starting to find favour with the Chinese customer. In 2015, Costa Asia launched China’s first “Around-The-World Cruise”, taking Chinese guests on a voyage to 28 destinations as it circumnavigated the globe. Now, the cruise company has launched a 46-day cruise to the South Pacific islands, opening another route for China’s growing cruise fan base. ▶

TEN NEW CRUISE SHIPS LAUNCHING IN 2017

CRUISE LINE	SHIP		DATE	SIZE
Dream Cruises	World Dream		November 2017	3,300 passengers
Lindblad Expeditions	National Geographic Quest		June 2017	100 passengers
MSC Cruises	MSC Meraviglia		June 2017	4,500 passengers
MSC Cruises	MSC Seaside		December 2017	4,500 passengers
Norwegian Cruise Line	Norwegian Joy		April 2017	3,840 passengers
Princess Cruises	Majestic Princess		April 2017	3,560 passengers
Silversea Cruises	Silver Muse		April 2017	596 passengers
Tui Cruises	Mein Schiff 6		June 2017	2,500 passengers
Viking Ocean Cruises	Viking Sky		March 2017	930 passengers
Viking Ocean Cruises	Viking Sun		November 2017	930 passengers



The Westin Bund Center Shanghai

One of Shanghai's most iconic hotels located in the heart of Shanghai, a short walk to the world famous Bund waterfront, providing guests convenient access to Shanghai's eclectic shopping areas, celebrated restaurants, famous local attractions, and major business districts.

To make a reservation, visit
westin.com/shanghai or call 86.21.63351888

THE WESTIN
BUND CENTER
SHANGHAI

上海威斯汀大饭店

spg.
Starwood
Preferred
Guest

©2016 Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. All Rights Reserved. For full terms & conditions, visit westin.com/shanghai



FORGING NEW CHANNELS

While onboard offerings are bursting with exciting embellishments, the cruise industry is also diversifying away from seafaring jaunts to river cruises, Arctic explorations and even private jets. Crystal Cruises is introducing no less than five new river yachts between 2016 and 2017. It has also unveiled Crystal Luxury Air, with 14- and 28-day "air cruises" set to launch this year on a twin-aisle Boeing 777-200.

Themed itineraries are also becoming popular, with a penchant for more adventurous travel to explore the world's poles proving particularly popular, as evidenced by Lindblad Expeditions' purpose-built *National Geographic Quest*. Meanwhile, Carnival, the world's largest cruise company, recently launched new brand Fathom, which focuses on "impact travel", where passengers get involved with community-based work that has a positive social impact.

Expanding to new markets is also an ongoing quest, with Cuba being one of the hottest new destinations on global cruise itineraries. Australia and New Zealand also both have robust cruise markets, particularly



From top:
Royal Caribbean International's *Ovation of the Seas*; and *Genting Dream's* four-person submarine

in New Zealand where the industry has doubled in the last five years.

The dynamism of the Asia-Pacific market only spells good news, yet it has also highlighted infrastructural issues that need to be addressed.

In December 2016, *Ovation of the Seas* became the largest ship ever to visit New Zealand, but it was too big for Auckland's two main cruise ship terminals, and had to anchor out in Waitemata Harbour instead. Industry insiders have commented that a lack of

appropriately sized port facilities is impeding the industry's growth, citing the recent cancellation of a new 4,200-passenger ship by P&O Cruises that would have specifically targeted the Australasian region.

Nevertheless, there's little doubt that the coming decades will see a surge in cruising opportunities for both Asians and intrepid international travellers, all keen to explore the diversity of the Asia-Pacific region from the comfort of a plush berth on the ocean waves. ■



120 YEARS OF TRAVELLING IN STYLE

Visit our website for 120 years of Suite Experience in European elegance

Kempinski
HOTELIERS SINCE 1897



Grand Kempinski Hotel
Shanghai

CHINA

上海凯宾斯基大酒店

No.1288 Lujiazui Ring Road, Pudong, Shanghai 200120 P.R.China | Tel: +86 21 3867 8888 | Fax: +86 21 3867 8666
reservations.shanghaipudong@kempinski.com | www.kempinski.com/shanghaipudong

Bridging the gulf

Alex McWhirter charts the rise of the Middle East carriers – and ponders how their rivals are fighting back





Left: Three of Emirates' extensive A380 fleet

When I interviewed Emirates founder Sir Maurice Flanagan back in April 1986, his airline was starting life with a handful of

planes. The idea was that Dubai would have its own airline rather than rely on Bahrain-based Gulf Air for connectivity, so would be better represented on the world stage.

Nobody could have predicted that the following 30 years would see Emirates become the world's largest airline in terms of international mileage flown, and that Dubai would overtake London Heathrow as the world's leading international hub.

Gulf aviation has changed beyond all recognition. The region's three major airlines – Dubai's Emirates, Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways, and Qatar Airways – have built their fleets and networks at the expense of rivals in both Eastern and Western hemispheres. Together, these carriers have changed the travelling lives of millions of people around the globe.

POINT OF TRANSFER

The European carriers initially viewed the newcomers as irritants, just as they had with the emerging Asian airlines in the 1970s. But once the Gulf carriers gathered momentum, the Europeans became alarmed because they offered millions of passengers the opportunity to overfly Europe.

For many decades, Europe saw itself as the centre of world aviation. Previously, Indian nationals or expats heading to North America would route via Europe. Some still do, but increasing numbers are attracted to the Gulf carriers with their non-stop flights to either the US east or west coast.

Similarly, those travelling from North America's secondary cities to Africa, or vice versa, found it just as convenient to take Gulf routings rather than change elsewhere in the US and again in Europe. In

pre-Gulf days, Asian business travellers bound for Africa or Latin America had little choice but to route through Europe. Today, that's no longer the case.

The Gulf carriers weren't that innovative – they simply copied the business models of Dutch airline KLM and Singapore Airlines. They grew by targeting transfer rather than point-to-point passengers. In that regard, they were assisted by aviation-minded governments, beneficial geographical locations, the ability to operate 24 hours, and labour flexibility. In many cases they faced little, if any, competition.

The Chinese – and increasingly, the Japanese – are investing heavily in African infrastructure. But as yet not many Chinese or Japanese airlines fly there directly from their home countries, with only East and South Africa served infrequently. Equally, how many flights does British Airways (BA) operate from the UK, or Air France and Lufthansa from airports outside their main hubs?

The past six years have seen the Gulf airlines strengthen their networks by serving both main and secondary destinations. In Asia, they now fly from points as varied as Chengdu and Yinchuan in China, Nagoya in Japan, Angeles in the Philippines, as well as Phuket, Bali and Perth.

So if I am based in central China and want to fly to Lisbon in Portugal, do I take a one-stop flight via the Gulf or opt for a trickier routing via Hong Kong and London or Madrid? If an Italian business traveller based in Emilia Romagna wishes to visit Asia, do they trek north to Milan or south to Rome, or simply take Emirates from their local airport of Bologna? Does the Belgian exporter bound for a secondary Indian destination route through the Gulf, or undertake an Amsterdam or Paris trek followed by a plane change in Mumbai or Delhi? ▶



FEELING THE HEAT

It's true that some countries have sought to protect their national airlines by restricting the Gulf carriers. But it's highly political – take a look at the accusations on forums related to the current US electronics ban on flights – and they haven't always succeeded. In any case, no matter what some governments do, the Gulf airlines continue to expand.

Over the past six years, what impact have the Gulf carriers had on the voluminous traffic flows between Europe, Asia and Australasia? Market growth has mainly shifted to the Gulf carriers. One need only look at the vast number of wide-body flights operating daily between the Gulf, Asia and Australasia. Yes, there have been a few cases where the European carriers have started new routes but, on the other hand, some have been dropped.

For example, Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta have been axed by Air France and Lufthansa; Austrian Airlines and Lufthansa both scaled back their Gulf operations; Virgin



Clockwise from this page top: Qatar Airways A380-800; Hamad International Airport; Abu Dhabi air traffic control; Abu Dhabi Midfield Terminal; and Dubai International's new Concourse D

Atlantic cut Mumbai, Sydney and Tokyo; and BA's Australasian operation has been reduced to a single daily Sydney flight. Meanwhile, Qantas threw in its lot with Emirates – its London services now route through Dubai in place of Singapore, and although it still flies twice daily to London from Australia, its other routes have been handed to Emirates.

Some Asian airline weaknesses have been exposed. Thai Airways and Malaysia Airlines have both scaled back their European services. Philippine Airlines and Garuda

Indonesia returned to Europe with grand ambitions but failed to realise that the market had changed in their absence. Plans to resurrect routes to Paris, Frankfurt and Rome came to nothing.

Neither are the low-cost carriers immune. They're adept at wooing passengers from the established airlines, but flying long haul is a different matter. They find it hard to compete with Gulf aviation when you add on the cost of ancillary fees and the fact that the Middle East airlines operate from more convenient airports.

Gulf airport growth



■ Abu Dhabi International

Total traffic for 2016 reached 24.4 million passengers, a 5.1 per cent increase on 2015's figures. The most popular destination was Mumbai, which saw a 26 per cent rise in passengers when comparing June in 2016 with June 2015. Etihad placed its A380 on the route in May. The new Midfield Terminal, until recently slated for completion this year, has now been delayed by two years – a blow since when complete it will increase the airport's capacity by 30 million passengers per year.

■ Dubai International

The world's top airport in terms of international passenger traffic and number three for total passenger traffic (as reported by Airports Council International). Traffic reached 83.6 million passengers in 2016, up 7.2 per cent on 2015, with the top five countries in terms of total passenger

volume being India, Saudi Arabia, the UK, Pakistan and the US. Ten new A380 stands are due to be added at Concourse C by the end of 2018, taking the overall figure to almost 50, as part of a project to increase the airport's capacity to nearly 120 million passengers by 2023.

■ Dubai World Central

Passenger traffic at Dubai's second airport increased by 84.5 per cent during 2016 to 850,633 passengers, mainly driven by Flydubai, which, in addition to its operations at Dubai International, operates 35 weekly flights to five destinations from DWC. The airport is served by 27 passenger carriers, operating an average of 108 flights weekly to 44 international destinations.

■ Hamad International, Qatar

The airport served 37.3 million passengers in 2016, a growth of 20.5 per cent on the previous year, with the top routes being Dubai, London, Bangkok, Bahrain and Colombo. It has two dual-capacity runways (used for take-offs and landings at the same time), an airside hotel, two airside squash courts, a gym, a 25-metre pool and a spa. Last year eight more gates were opened in concourses D and E (bringing the total to 41 gates), 130,000 sqm of extra space was added, and Qatar Airways connected Doha to 14 new destinations through the airport.



The budget market is price driven; it has no loyalty. So if a member of the Malaysian community in Glasgow wanted a cut-price trip to visit family in Kuala Lumpur, it meant a choice between Emirates and Air Asia X. The cost and inconvenience of getting to London – let alone the cost of the ancillaries – meant Emirates won.

Air Asia X threw in the towel and retreated to Malaysia. To be fair, fuel prices at the time were much higher and the budget airline was operating inefficient aircraft. Whether or not Air Asia X returns to Europe with more fuel-efficient planes remains to be seen. In the meantime, SIA's Scoot plans to fly to Europe next year with a Singapore-Athens service. With low fuel prices and a leisure-based

product, it might just work... but don't hold your breath.

Some airlines are not just losing passengers. Kenya Airways has also lost staff. The generous (by Kenyan standards) salaries paid in the Gulf have prompted a brain drain that has led to its technical department being significantly understaffed.

Still, some carriers are fighting back. The Lufthansa Group has formed joint ventures with fellow Star Alliance members Air China and Singapore Airlines, while Skyteam members Air France, KLM and Delta want to form a joint venture with India's Jet Airways. So far it's too early to say how effective these partnerships will prove. In any case, it may take only the return of high fuel prices, political unrest or an economic downturn for the situation to change yet again. ■

Downtown Shanghai is a fascinating spectacle – two time-warped cityscapes divided by the snaking Huangpu River. On the west bank, The Bund's magnificent colonial architecture forms an impressive façade to Puxi, the historic and cultural centre, while across the river futuristic skyscrapers signal the gleaming new metropolis of Pudong.

The younger eastern district has captured the lion's share of modern business activity, thanks to key infrastructure and financial institutions such as Shanghai Pudong International Airport, the Lujiazui Finance and Trade Zone and two of three Shanghai Stock Exchanges, plus international facilities including the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition and Convention Centre.

But the landscape is set to shift again as a new CBD starts to emerge. Back in 2009, the government began planting seeds for a new international business hub to ease the pressures on Pudong. Fast-forward almost ten years and the Hongqiao central business district is starting to blossom.

The 86 sq km zone straddles four neighbourhoods to the west of downtown Shanghai – namely the Qingpu, Minhang, Jiading and Changning districts – and has been highlighted in both the 12th and 13th Five Year Plans as a special area of rapid growth.

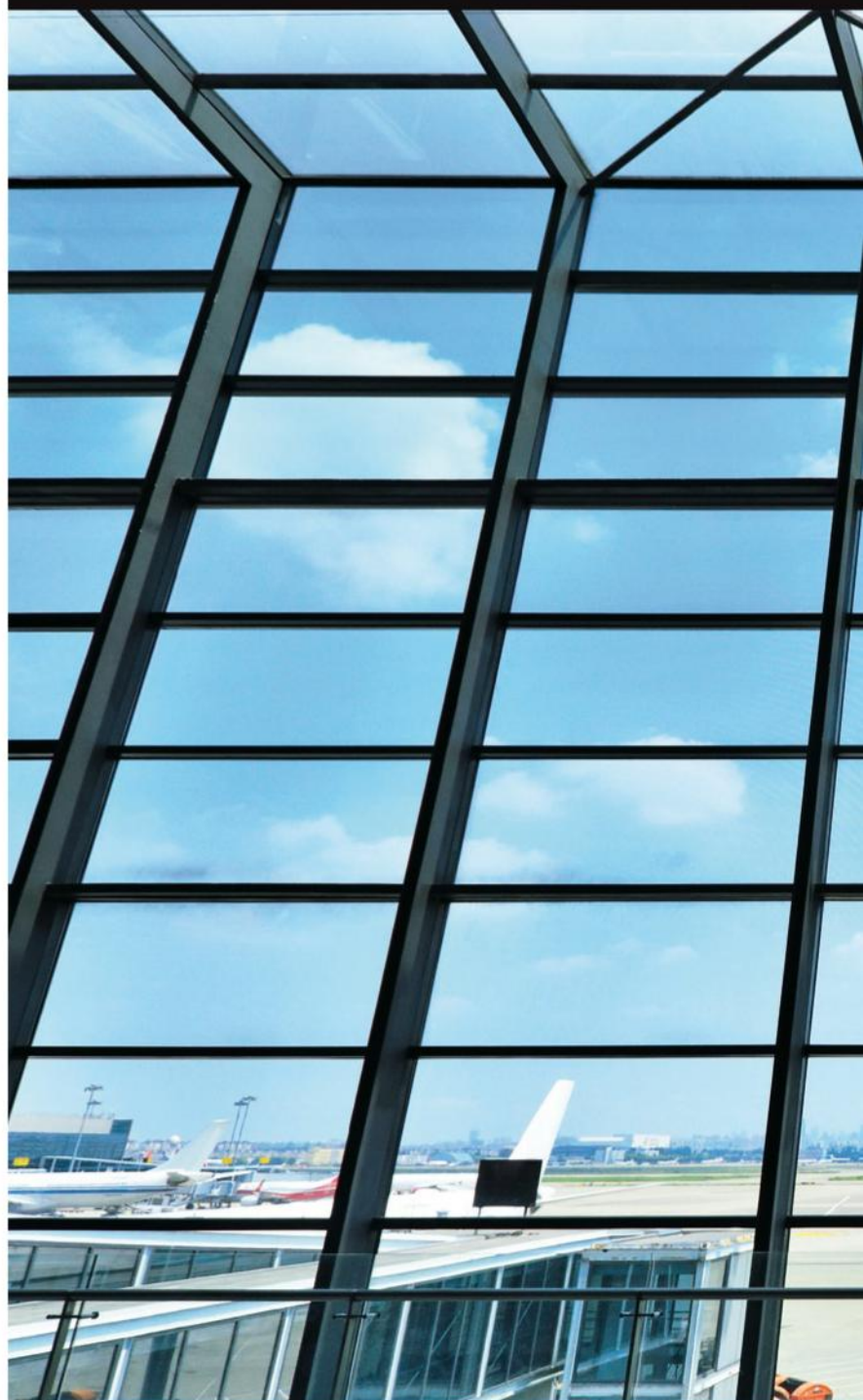
One of the aims is to create an economic gateway to the prosperous Yangtze River Delta region, encompassing powerhouse second-tier cities such as Wuxi, Suzhou, Hangzhou and Ningbo. But the area is also being tapped as a new international trade centre, with a modern service industry to attract business headquarters and financial organisations, and acres of modern office space in mixed-use developments like the Hongqiao Vantone Sunny World Centre.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Complementing these objectives is the third strategy to harness the area as a major transit hub and facilitate connectivity throughout the rest of China. It's no coincidence that the CBD takes its name from Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport (SHA) – the city's secondary airport is just ten minutes from Hongqiao's commercial centre and a major part of the area's appeal.

Primarily a domestic hub (though there are a few international services to destinations such as Korea and Japan operating from Terminal 1), the 80-year-old facility has been given a new lease of life recently with a planned series of soft upgrades. In March, Terminal 1 unveiled a revamped Building A, with updated check-in facilities plus more retail and F&B options, while further upgrades are due to be revealed in Building B and Terminal 2 by 2018. The Shanghai Airport Authority also announced it will build a new hangar facility for business jets at Hongqiao airport by April 2018 to cope with the rising demand. ▶

Room for



growth

The Hongqiao district in Shanghai's western sector is fast developing as an international business and transportation hub, reports Tamsin Cocks



Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport



Beyond air links, a key component in enhancing the region's transit prowess was the creation of the Hongqiao Transport Interchange (HTI), or Hongqiao Transit Hub, which opened in time for the 2010 World Expo. This is the world's largest multimodal transportation centre, connecting air, rail, road and subway in one giant facility. The complex directly links the (domestic) Terminal 2 of Shanghai's Hongqiao International Airport with Shanghai Hongqiao Railway Station – which operates three high-speed rail lines to Beijing, Hangzhou and Nanjing, as well as two metro lines (Lines 2 and 10) to downtown Shanghai and surrounding areas.

According to John O'Shea, Langham's Cordis brand vice president and managing director of the upcoming Cordis Hongqiao, the strategy is working: "A lot of corporations are now basing themselves out here. In the area where Cordis will be opening, Roche and Shell are going to be headquartered, and HSBC is opening up offices here too. A lot of corporates are moving out to Hongqiao just for the convenience of being able to get to places very quickly."

The *Shanghai Daily* reported that more than 650,000 employees are expected to work for enterprises based in the zone by the end of 2020. To accommodate professionals from both home and abroad, a number of residential communities have been planned and locals are viewing the potential housing boom eagerly.

"If you have the money, now is the perfect time to invest," advises Elyn Hu, Sofitel Shanghai Hongqiao's director of sales and marketing. "Residential sales of apartments are going up – three years ago the sale was about RMB40,000 [US\$5,795] per sqm, now it is RMB78,000 [US\$11,300] per sqm as confidence in the region grows and we see more residents."

Clockwise from top left: Hongqiao Transport Interchange; Intercontinental NECC; and Hongqiao Railway Station



ENTICE THE MICE

The opening of the Shanghai National Exhibition and Convention Centre (NECC) – in stages from September 2014 to June 2015 – was a watershed moment for the area. The enormous, silver four-leaf clover structure is the largest single-building event space in the world at 1.47 million sqm. Indoor space includes 13 large exhibition halls (28,800 sqm each), three small halls (10,000 sqm each), more than 60 meeting rooms of differing size and a commercial centre providing additional support in the form of VIP lounges, F&B facilities, entertainment and boutique shops.

Some of China's biggest annual shows have already shifted from Pudong to the NECC. In 2015, for example, a total of 928,000 visitors came to the 16th Shanghai International Automobile Industry Exhibition (Auto Shanghai), with more expected at the event's 17th edition (which happened last month).



The unusual clover shape of the NECC is both an architectural statement and a nod to the green initiatives that are being applied to the area, with the government committed to transforming the entire CBD into a low-carbon and green construction community.

Another example of this is the modern glass-fronted, mixed-use project being developed directly opposite the NECC – the Hongqiao World Center development from the Greenland Group, which has achieved LEED Gold certification. When complete, the development will house the five-star Primus and four-star Qube hotels, plus a luxury serviced residence, shopping centre, office space and other support facilities for the exhibition centre.

Mini Wang, director of marketing and communications for Greenland Hongqiao World Center Hotels, reveals even local-brand hotels like Primus are targeting international guests: “We’ve already seen big numbers of foreigners and international companies from the roadshows and activities in the NECC, and we’re hoping to capture an international clientele. Most of our management team have worked for international brands before, and we carry that culture to this Chinese-brand hotel.”

Hyatt and Grand Hyatt names, designs and related marks are trademarks of Hyatt Corporation. ©2017 Hyatt Corporation. All rights reserved.



HYATT ON THE BUND
上海外滩悦大酒店



GOOD GOES BIG.
GRAND GOES BEYOND.

Enjoy a spectacular view of Shanghai with Grand Hyatt service at Hyatt on the Bund.

PLEASE CALL +86 21 6393 1234 OR VISIT SHANGHAITHEBUND.HYATT.COM

HYATT ON THE BUND | 199 HUANGPU ROAD, SHANGHAI, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, 200080



This image and below:
Hongqiao World Center



ARQUINAUTA.COM

Perhaps the biggest indicator that the Hongqiao CBD is really starting to boom is the sudden wave of five-star international hotels flocking to the region. Last year saw the opening of Intercontinental Shanghai NECC, the Sofitel Shanghai Hongqiao, Le Meridien Shanghai Minhang, and Gran Melia Shanghai Hongqiao. This year they have already been joined by Hilton Garden Inn, with Langham's Cordis Hongqiao, Hyatt Place and Ritz-Carlton also set to open soon.

Leisure options catering to international travellers are also increasing. The Hub is one such example, a 62,000 sqm shopping complex located about a five-minute walk from Hongqiao Railway Station. The South Mall contains a six-storey shopping centre and performance hall, while the North Mall is mainly comprised of offices, high-end restaurants and a five-star hotel. It also provides an airport check-in and shuttle bus service – the only shopping mall in Shanghai to offer this function.

At present, more than 85 per cent of the planned Hongqiao CBD is under development or has been leased to various commercial tenants. In other words, the district is enjoying the final calm before the storm. The story of the next 12 months will no doubt be a whirlwind of new openings, international events, business development and economic growth. ■

Where to stay

■ **For convenience:** Intercontinental Shanghai NECC is directly connected to the NECC complex, so it's ideal for MICE delegates wanting easy access to facilities, and benefits from being just ten minutes from the Hongqiao Transport Hub. The hotel's 536 rooms and suites have an elegant, functional layout and are specifically tailored towards business guests with amenities like international power sockets. Event space at the hotel includes a 900 sqm divisible grand ballroom and ten meeting rooms, while other facilities include four F&B outlets, a business centre and a large, airy indoor swimming pool.

■ **For style:** The palatial Parisian-style architecture and interiors of the Sofitel Shanghai Hongqiao are absolutely stunning, echoing Shanghai's tagline as "the Paris of the East". The 354 rooms and suites are luxurious but utilise chic, European restraint. There are five F&B outlets, including international fare at Kwee Zee, Cantonese restaurant Le Chinois, Japanese restaurant Takara, a Spanish tapas and wine bar Ocho, and Le Bar. Additional facilities include a 25-metre indoor pool and a So Fit gym, plus seven meeting spaces covering 2,000 sqm including a grand ballroom. Star attractions are the two opulent private dining rooms, which feature large glass atrium domes that add serious style to a meal.

■ **For affordability:** Hilton Garden Inn is great for the no-nonsense business traveller. The midscale offering from Hilton is in the heart of the Hongqiao CBD – ten minutes from the airport and five minutes from the NECC. Smart rooms offer business-oriented details such as ergonomic chairs, while streamlined facilities cater to all the basic needs, such as buffet breakfast lunch and dinner at Garden Grille, or a 24-hour Pavilion Pantry for snacks or a quick meal.



Sofitel Shanghai Hongqiao



Shanghai NECC

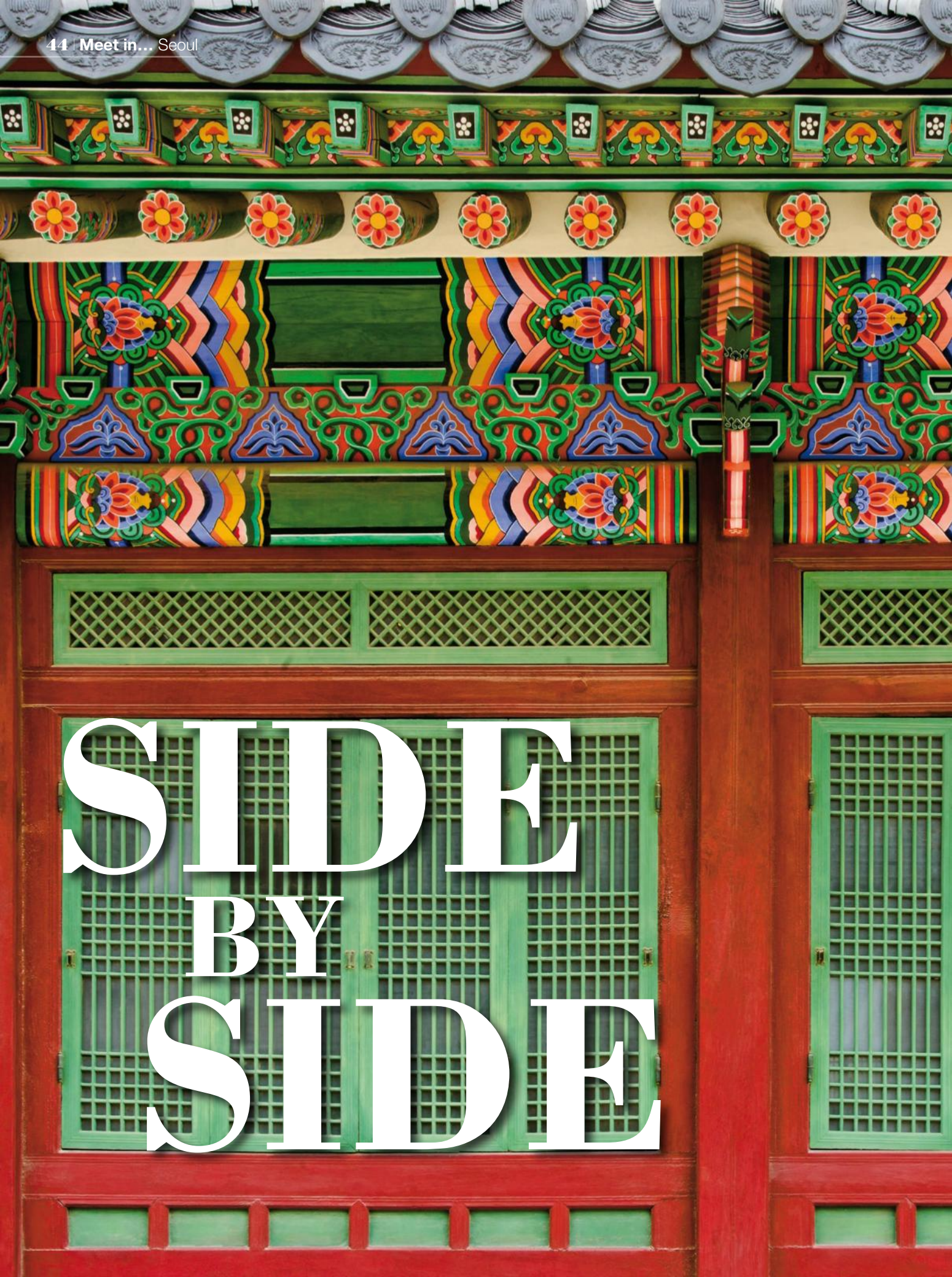
Seoul MICE Alliance

230 members, Moving mountains to ensure the success of your business events.

Seoul: Your Complete Convention City



A dense grid of logos representing the 230 members of the Seoul MICE Alliance. The logos are arranged in a roughly rectangular shape, filling most of the lower half of the page. The logos include various international and local brands such as SHILLA IPARK, THE WELCOME, COSMO-JIN TOUR, GLAD, Agility, A'REX, SANGSANGMADANG, HUABANG TOUR, powerPT, AW, TRADESCO, KOREALINX, THE PALACE, COEX AQUARIUM, MAYFIELD, opener, GRAND HILTON, THE SHILLA, MODE TOUR, Seoul City Tour, derencom, SETEC, KORAIL, ddp, SPC, MEd, VIP TRAVEL, K-TEC, TranMaster, INTERCOM, session, and many others. The logos are in various colors and sizes, creating a vibrant and busy visual effect.



SIDE BY SIDE

From the heritage-laden north side of the Han River to the more modern south, the two halves of Seoul offer a medley of attractions for event delegates with free time, writes Craig Bright

Seoul's list of tourist activities and attractions is long and varied, representing a deep well of opportunity for those intent on exploring beyond the conference hall. With exhibition venues and MICE-focused hotels spread throughout the city, Seoul's extensive subway network ensures delegates can easily traverse the sprawling metropolis to delve into its diverse offerings, from food, heritage and retail to pop culture or natural landscapes.

Divided by the intersecting Han River, Seoul has expanded in modern times from its old north-side cityscape to now include a modern area south of the river. A plethora of commercial, financial, retail and entertainment developments can now be found here, while the bulk of the city's history and heritage is located to the north.

"Many of our competitors are located in Seoul's southern area, but location-wise it's not the same," says Bruce Lee, general manager and president of the Grand Ambassador Seoul hotel in Jangchung-dong on the north side of the river. "We benefit a lot from our location, near to Namsan Park, Myeongdong, Dongdaemun and Itaewon. These are all areas many foreigners are keen to see."

Whether you're staying in the north or south of Seoul, however, visiting its many attractions is becoming increasingly easy. For starters, Seoul's main international airport at Incheon is undergoing a major expansion with the opening of its new Terminal 2 building at the end of this year, along with upgrades to its leisure options in the near future. These include a new entertainment and retail "airport city", integrated resorts and a second golf course all located nearby.

Meanwhile in July last year, the Seoul Tourism Organization (STO) together with the Seoul Metropolitan Government launched the Discover Seoul Pass, a 24-hour pass providing access to 16 of the city's most popular sites. While many delegates may be the recipient of another of STO's MICE initiatives – the Seoul MICE card, which functions as a partially pre-paid travel card for participants of qualifying events – the Discover Seoul Pass specifically offers a more leisure and downtime-focused function. Costing 39,900 won (US\$36) and connected to a downloadable app with site information and a countdown timer, it acts both as a travel card and entry ticket for tourist sites. (A brand-new 48-hour version was launched at the start of this month, costing 55,000 won/US\$49 and giving access to more than 20 attractions, plus discounts and coupons for 13 shops and venues.)

"Both MICE and leisure tourists benefit from the Discover Seoul Pass and One More Trip, an online platform allowing locals to sell unique experiences and tours while offering participants a memorable and different experience," says Park Jin-Hyeok, director of the Seoul Convention Bureau (SCB). "These include Korean brewery tours, traditional seal making and Korean barbecue tours, among others."

The most notable attractions included in the pass are Seoul's four major palaces, all located on the north side of the river. While Gyeongbokgung Palace – the largest – is perhaps the most popular, Changdeokgung and the directly connected Changgyeonggung Palace in Jongno district are also a joy to explore.

Built in 1405, Changdeokgung was named a Unesco World Heritage site in 1997. The palace buildings vary significantly in scale and style, with ornately designed interiors and large courtyards connected by winding, tree-lined paths. Beyond the palace buildings is the Huwon Secret Garden, which harbours bucolic ponds and streams (cdg.go.kr). Changgyeonggung is a smaller palace built in 1483 as a residence for wives and concubines. Here you can also wander freely through the smaller-scale buildings, courtyards and gardens with waterways and bridges (english.visitseoul.net).

To the southwest is another popular historic attraction: Dongdaemun Gate. One of the eight gates of the old Seoul City Wall (parts of which still remain and can be hiked along), Dongdaemun now sits somewhat incongruously in the midst of one of the city's top shopping and entertainment districts. The revitalised Cheonggyecheon Stream that bisects the old city centre passes close by; markets and 24-hour malls sell all manner of goods; and the Dongdaemun Design Plaza showcases exhibitions, forums and fashion shows.

Opposite and this page: Changdeokgung Palace



This page from top: Dongdaemun at night; Seoul Station 7017 Project; and Figure Museum W



Still on the north side of the river is one of Seoul's most popular districts, Myeongdong. This lively area is also a shopper's paradise, with vast duty-free stores (including the main branch Lotte Duty Free Shop connected to the Lotte Hotel Seoul in neighbouring Euljiro district), and cosmetics and fashion shops.

If retail therapy isn't your thing, though, Myeongdong has another of Seoul's greatest offerings in spades – street food. Getting acquainted with the city's culinary scene is at its easiest and most enjoyable here via the numerous street food stalls, with delicacies spanning the spectrum from twisty potato sticks and spicy *tteokbokki* rice cakes to more upmarket fare including grilled scallops and lobster with garlic butter. For those seeking a more sit-down affair, Myeongdong's abundant Korean barbecue, noodle and Korean fried-chicken restaurants are definitely worth sampling.

Out towards the west of the city is Hongdae, another busy street-market district albeit with a slightly younger focus owing to its popularity among students from the nearby Hongik University. Street performances are common here, with plenty of performers busking to sizeable crowds. Cafés, galleries, clubs and the artists' Free Market (freemarket.or.kr) can be found here, with Hongdae Mural Street (also known as Picasso's Street) a prime spot to see both graffiti and other artworks. Hongdae is also home to the Trickeye & Ice Museum, which provides *trompe l'oeil* artworks that visitors can step into and take 3D-effect pictures (trickeye.com).

Continuing south, Namsan Park in Yongsan district is home to both Namsan Mountain and the N Seoul Tower. A popular hiking area in the middle of the city, Namsan Park offers great views particularly from the tower at the summit. Reaching 480 metres above



Business Traveller Asia-Pacific
Best Airport Duty-Free in the World
(2011-2016)



Business Traveler US
Airport With Best Duty-Free Shopping
(2010-2016)



Business Traveller China
Best Airport Duty-Free in the World
(2013-2016)



THE SHILLA **duty free**



CITY DUTY FREE



ENTAS

sea level at its tip, the 236-metre tower is joined by a courtyard featuring cultural performances and a number of F&B outlets (nseoutower.com).

A short distance to the west of Namsan Park is one of Seoul's newest developments, the Seoul Station 7017 Project, also known as "Seoullo 7017". The core of the project is the rejuvenation of an almost one-kilometre-long elevated road to create what has been described as Seoul's answer to the High Line in New York City, anticipated to open this month (May 2017). The 45-year-old road was shut down in 2006 due to its poor safety rating, leading the Seoul Metropolitan Government to convert it into a pedestrian-centric "hanging garden" walkway. The aim has been to connect the underdeveloped area around Seoul Station to the city centre by turning it into a "centre of urban tourism and conventions" with space for cultural programmes (english.seoul.go.kr).

While many of Seoul's popular sites are concentrated north of the river, the city's more modern south is far from devoid of offerings. For a start, there's the Noryangjin Fisheries Wholesale Market in Dongjak district, just across from Yeouido (which is home to the International Finance Centre Seoul, the IFC Mall and Conrad Seoul hotel). First opened in 1927 on the north side of the river, Noryangjin market was relocated in 1971 and is now one of the largest seafood markets in the country. Things get going here very early, typically around 1am, and there are a number of intriguing sights, including a live fish auction at around 3am.

"For smaller groups, we've organised boat cruises on the Han, tours of the historical sites, but what's really popular is the fish market," says Mark Meaney, general manager of Conrad Seoul. "We bring people down to the fish market during the day, organise a tour and then guests can select their fish. They can have it cooked there, but we often bring it back to the hotel and have it as part of the meal."



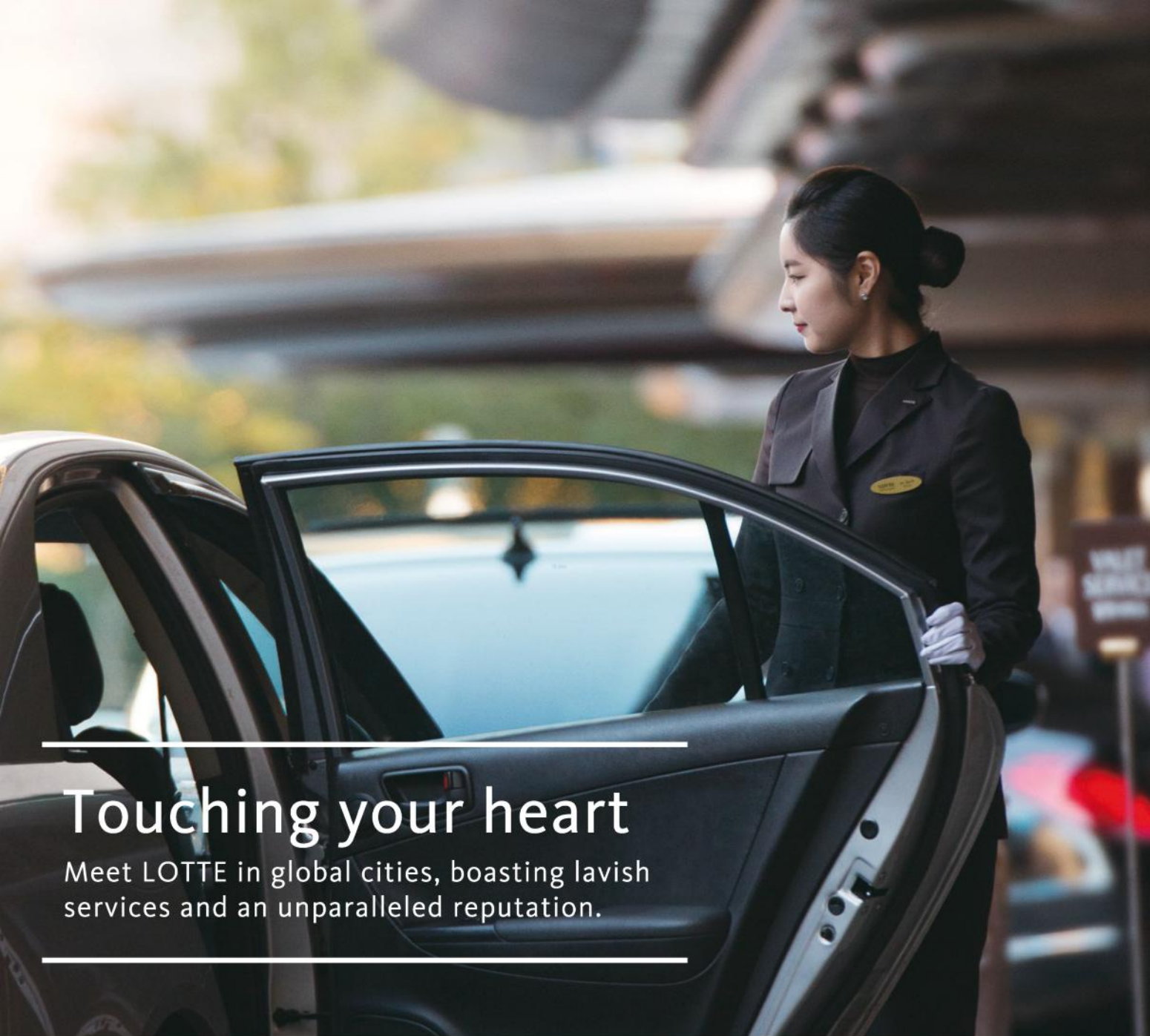
This page above and below:
N Seoul Tower and street food in Myeongdong

Also south of the river is the Figure Museum W in the increasingly popular Gangnam district. A haven for fans of science-fiction movies and comics, the museum features multiple floors filled with action figures from Marvel and DC comics, films, and Japanese and Korean manga comics. A particularly good stop for visitors travelling with children, the museum also includes a shop with experts offering advice for enthusiasts and seasoned collectors (figuremuseumw.co.kr).

Gangnam district is also home to the SMTown at the Coex Artium [sic], part of the Coex Center, which includes a convention and exhibition centre as well as a shopping mall. Here visitors can take a tour of studios, training rooms, and video and photo sets used by South Korea's K-pop stars. Classes led by professional choreographers and voice coaches are also a big hit with MICE groups, with experiences such as dressing up in K-pop outfits at Klive – in Euljiro north of the river – regularly incorporated into pre- or post-event itineraries (smtownland.com; klive.co.kr).

Finally, to the east of the Coex Center is the Lotte World Tower, one of the most recent developments in Seoul, which opened at the beginning of April. Standing at 556 metres and covering 123 floors (it's the sixth tallest tower in the world), its skywalk and observation deck provide some of the most expansive views available anywhere in the city. For those looking for an even more extravagant way to experience Seoul from a high altitude, the tower's ultra-luxury, 235-room Signiel Seoul hotel has fine dining and event spaces on the 76th, 79th and 81st floors. With European restaurant Stay by Yannick Alleno and the Michelin-starred Bicena Korean fine-dining restaurant both offering top-quality cuisine 342 metres above the ground, Signiel Seoul is a must for travellers looking to enjoy great food accompanied by fantastic views. ■





Touching your heart

Meet LOTTE in global cities, boasting lavish services and an unparalleled reputation.

LOTTE
HOTELS & RESORTS

Discover refined luxury and the best rates at www.lottehotel.com



Kuala Lumpur

Despite a freeze on the issuance of new hotel licences in early 2016, the city's hospitality sector seems as vibrant as ever

NEW

Element Kuala Lumpur

Opened: May 2017

The first of this hotel brand in Southeast Asia, Element Kuala Lumpur is situated in the 275-metre Ilham Baru Tower. Nearly half of this eco-themed property's guestrooms are suites (120 out of a total 252 rooms). starwoodhotels.com/element

Mercure Kuala Lumpur Shaw Parade

Opened: March 2017

The Mercure brand has debuted in the city with the Mercure Kuala Lumpur Shaw Parade hotel. Located in Bukit Bintang, the 213-room property features a number of distinctly local Peranakan touches – a common theme among Mercure hotels – and boasts a rooftop pool and fitness centre, plus three meeting and event spaces. accorhotels.com

Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur

Opened: February 2017

YTL Hotels' Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur is among the first

properties in Southeast Asia to join the Autograph Collection. The 184-room hotel is situated in the business hub on Jalan Kamuning, an area replete with 1940s shophouses once known as the Asian Heritage Row. ytlhotels.com

Cosmo Hotel Kuala Lumpur

Opened: December 2016

A midscale addition to KL's hotel scene, Cosmo Hotel's 347 rooms range from regular guestrooms to family-style and studio suites. Its location in the Leboh Ampang district near the Masjid Jamek Interchange Station – two stops from KL Sentral – makes it convenient for business travellers entering the city via the KLIA Express. cosmohotelkl.com

Other openings last year included **Oakwood Hotel & Residence** (October 2016, oakwoodasia.com) in the Jalan Ampang area, **VE Hotel & Residence, Bangsar South Kuala Lumpur** (June 2016, vehotel.com) and **The St Regis Kuala Lumpur** (May 2016, starwoodhotels.com/stregis), a

208-room luxury Starwood property located in the Sentral district. The same month also saw the launch of **Holiday Inn Express Kuala Lumpur City Centre** (ihg.com), while **Oasia Suites Kuala Lumpur** opened in April 2016, the 247-room hotel marking the brand's first foray outside Singapore, located next to the KL Forest Eco Park, the city's only surviving park with primary rainforest (stayfareast.com).



Clockwise from top: Element; The St Regis; Hotel Stripes; Mercure Shaw Parade; and Oasia Suites

COMING SOON

Accorhotels is set to open the 312-room **Sofitel Kuala Lumpur Damansara** in June this year, located in a western district of the city. Scheduled for an early 2018 launch is the 209-room **Four Seasons Kuala Lumpur**, which will reside in a 65-storey mixed-use tower offering a total of 242 Four Seasons-branded residences and 27 serviced apartments, plus a five-floor, 27,900 sqm luxury shopping complex known as Four Seasons Place Kuala Lumpur.

Meanwhile, just over the road from the Petronas Towers, the **W Kuala Lumpur** will open its doors on Jalan Ampang in March 2018, promising a luxury combination of art, design, music and fashion as well as its signature WET pool. Finally, set to open in the second quarter of 2018, Artyzen Hospitality Group's 198-room **Citizen M Kuala Lumpur** will be its third in Asia after upcoming properties in Taipei and Shanghai.

DOWN THE LINE

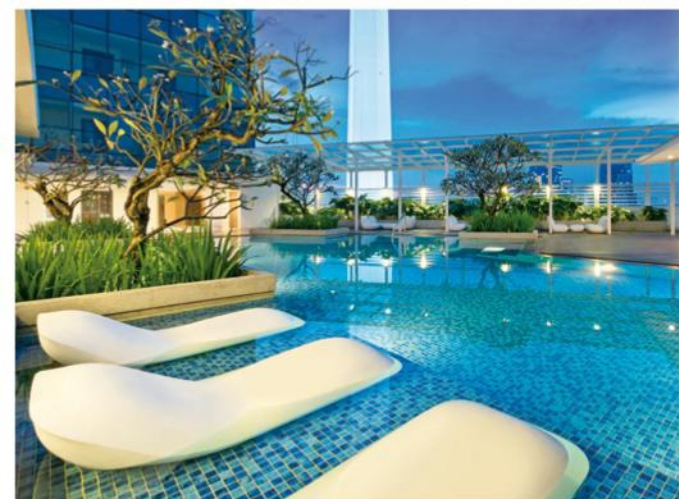
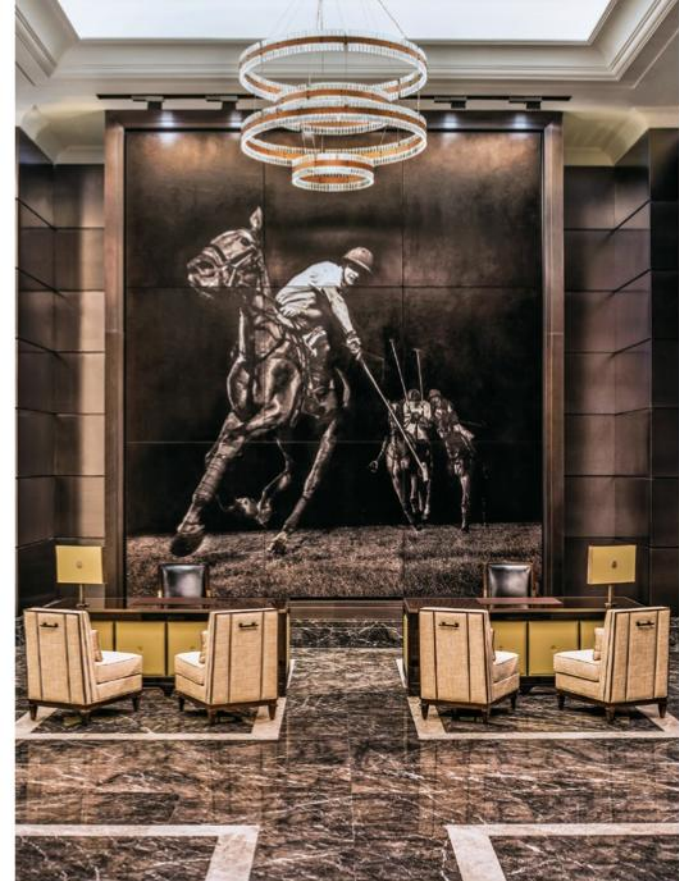
Originally scheduled to open this year, various issues have pushed back the completion and launch of the **Fairmont Kuala Lumpur**. Now looking at a 2020 opening, the 62-storey luxury hotel will offer 750 guestrooms along with

an executive lounge and Fairmont Gold, the brand's "hotel-within-a-hotel" offering. It will be located in the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) development, next door to the Petronas Towers.

Accorhotels' new So Sofitel offering comprises the **So Sofitel Kuala Lumpur Hotel** and the **So Sofitel Kuala Lumpur Residences**. Both are scheduled to open in 2020 and are situated a short distance from the KLCC. The hotel will offer 207 guestrooms while the serviced residence will include 590 units.

Intercontinental Hotel Group's **Crowne Plaza Kuala Lumpur City Centre** is currently scheduled for a 2021 opening, its location on Jalan Yap Kwan Seng and good meeting facilities appealing to business travellers looking for reliable midscale accommodation from an international brand. A total of 338 rooms, numerous speciality restaurants and a Sky Bar will be available.

Radisson Red Kuala Lumpur City Centre will be the brand's first in Malaysia when it opens in 2022, offering 166 rooms over 27 floors, with meeting and event spaces, a rooftop swimming pool and gym. The upscale lifestyle hotel brand focuses particularly on design, art and fashion. ■



Special leisure and business hotel deals, weekend breakaways and more

SINGAPORE

TOP PICK

The Fullerton Hotel Singapore has a Business Premium Package that includes accommodation in a Courtyard Room category (or above), international buffet breakfast for one in Town Restaurant, complimentary pressing of two pieces of clothing daily, a free Fullerton Merlion cocktail, complimentary departure transfer (for suite bookings), 30 per cent off on à la carte food bills in the hotel's restaurants after 6.30pm, 20 per cent off à la carte spa treatments, use of a Handy phone with unlimited mobile data and IDD calls to 15 countries, as well as a complimentary Fullerton Monument or Maritime Journey tour. A minimum of three nights must be booked, the package is charged according to best available rates at time of booking, and it is available until February 28, 2018. fullertonhotels.com



HONG KONG

The Park Lane Hong Kong, a Pullman Hotel has a Sunday Vibes package. Benefits include guaranteed upgrade to the next available room category and complimentary Sunday afternoon tea for two at Ebb & Flow. The offer is available when booking a Classic, Deluxe or Family room, with the stay period including one Sunday. Rates start from HK\$2,088 (US\$269) and the package is available until August 31, 2017. parklane.com.hk

The Upper House has created a Summer Chic package that includes Joyce fashion and beauty gift cards, a complimentary skin consultation, skincare sample set, a

75-minute signature facial treatment from Joyce Beauty, HK\$1,000 (US\$129) house credit, daily reward of 500 Asia Miles, daily breakfast for two at Café Gray Deluxe, complimentary car drop-off service on Hong Kong Island, upgrade to best available room, access to the loyalty members-only Pavilion Lounge at Pacific Place, plus an exclusive invitation to private events hosted by Joyce and the hotel. The package rate starts from HK\$4,500 (US\$579) per night, and the offer is valid until June 10, 2017. upperhouse.com

TOP PICK

Grand Hyatt Hong Kong is offering a Celebrating Romance package that allows Hong Kong and Macau residents with ID cards to enjoy benefits including HK\$2,500 (US\$322) credit per stay to be used on F&B or Plateau Spa treatments, one complimentary celebration cake, complimentary chocolates and strawberries, one bottle of champagne, complimentary use of a Handy smartphone with internet access, unlimited local calls and international calls to ten countries, as well as Grand Club Lounge access for two persons with complimentary breakfast, evening cocktails and all-day champagne. Rates for an executive room start from HK\$5,800 (US\$746), and the package is valid until December 31, 2017. hongkong.grand.hyatt.com

INDONESIA

JW Marriott Hotel Jakarta has a Business Room Package for visitors staying in a Deluxe room. Benefits include daily buffet breakfast at Sailendra, plus a daily hotel credit of Rp500,000 (US\$38) redeemable

for: F&B spending in all outlets including in-room dining and minibar; laundry services; spa treatments; business services such as printing, scanning and photocopying; or transportation services. The rates start from Rp1,500,000 (US\$113) and the package is valid until October 27, 2016.

marriott.com

MACAU

Mandarin Oriental, Macau is running a Bundle of Delights package. Guests can enjoy one night's accommodation and a choice of three privileges from the following: room upgrade to next category; in-room "bubbles and strawberry welcome amenity"; two spa treatments for the price of one at The Spa; breakfast for two at Vida Rica restaurant; a three-course MO Express set lunch for two in the Lobby Lounge; afternoon tea for two in the Lobby Lounge; and a complimentary Deluxe room for friends and family travelling together (applicable for suite bookings only). In addition, two complimentary round-trip Turbo Jet tickets between Hong Kong and Macau will be offered to guests booking a stay before June 9. The package rates start from MOP2,396 (US\$299) and are valid until June 30, 2017.

mandarinoriental.com

MALAYSIA

The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur's The Weekend Sojourn package includes accommodation in a Deluxe room (on either Saturday or Sunday night), buffet breakfast in The Cobalt Room, a three-course dinner in The Library, as well as complimentary parking and internet access. Rates start from RM1,199 (US\$271) and are valid until June 30, 2017.

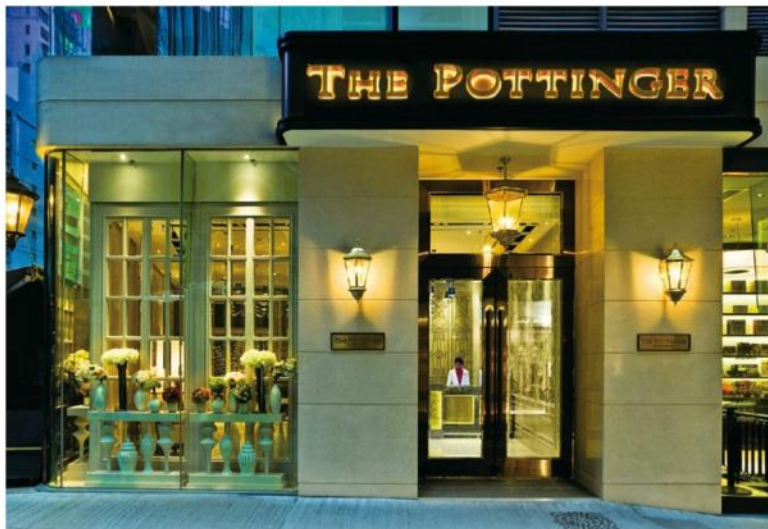
ritzcarlton.com

SOUTH KOREA

Lotte Hotel Seoul is running a Business Traveller Package that offers accommodation in a Superior Club room for one person, a universal travel adaptor (provided once), a Korean Air Limousine bus ticket to Incheon Airport, as well as Club Lounge access providing breakfast, light snacks, afternoon tea and cocktail services. Rates start from 250,000 won (US\$221), and the package is valid until December 30, 2017.

lottehotel.com

Airline and hotel scheme news and promotions



Sino Hotels offers bonus Krisflyer miles

Singapore Airlines joined with Fullerton Hotels in February to offer bonus miles to members of its Krisflyer programme for eligible stays at The Fullerton Hotel and The Fullerton Bay Hotel in Singapore. Now, the airline has expanded this promotion to include additional Sino Hotels properties located in Hong Kong.

For stays until June 30, Krisflyer members will be able to accrue 1,000 miles when booking a minimum of two nights' stay at a qualifying rate at one of six Sino Hotels properties in Hong Kong, along with the two Fullerton Hotels properties in Singapore. After June 30, members will be able to earn 500 Krisflyer miles per qualifying stay.

The Hong Kong hotels that are now eligible as part of the partnership include: The Royal Pacific Hotel & Towers; City Garden Hotel; Hong Kong Gold Coast Hotel; Island Pacific Hotel; The Pottinger Hong Kong; and The Olympian Hong Kong. sino-hotels.com

Club Carlson offers triple points

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group's global rewards programme, Club Carlson, has launched a triple point redemption offer available until June 30. Guests will earn 60 Gold Points (GP) per US dollar spent, rather than the usual 20 GP per dollar.

In addition, guests can also earn a bonus award of 5,000 points for each eligible Sunday and Monday night stay (or Saturday and Sunday night stay for Middle East properties).

A maximum of 100,000 bonus points can be earned during the promotional period. To be eligible for the promotion, members must register and complete a stay by June 30, 2017. clubcarlson.com



100,000+ travel experiences with Marriott and Placepass

Marriott International recently invested in travel activity price comparison platform Placepass, enabling travellers to choose from the website's more than 100,000 travel experiences in 800 destinations when they book through the hotel group's website or the Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG) loyalty programme website.

These additional experiences will be offered in addition to Marriott's existing activities available through its loyalty programmes, including SPG's Moments and Marriott Rewards' Experiences Marketplace. According to the hotel group, last year more than 6,000 travel experiences including music, sports, cuisine and culture were redeemed via its Experiences Marketplace.

Among the standout activities available are VIP visits to filming locations of British TV series *Downton Abbey*, wrestling with a retired sumo wrestler in Tokyo, and dune exploration by camel or 4WD vehicle in Dubai.

marriott.com

Hainan Airlines opens new Beijing lounge

Hainan Airlines has opened a new Prime Wings Lounge in Beijing Capital International Airport. The facility is located near gate 12 of the international terminal, and is open to Fortune Wings Club silver, gold and platinum cardholders, and business and first class passengers.

Created by Hong Kong designer Patrick Leung, its décor is inspired by the "nature and peace" of Hainan, with curving, high-backed furniture and soft lighting. The 726 sqm space can accommodate 150 guests, and is split into several zones, including a tea zone, reading zone, sleeping zone and shower suite zone. The lounge serves global cuisine as well as special local snacks, has Nespresso coffee machines and will introduce themed F&B from time to time. hnair.com



3rd Global Tourism & Hospitality Conference

5 - 7 June 2017 Hotel ICON, Hong Kong

INNOVATION • RESEARCH • EDUCATION



HONG KONG 2017 serves as a platform for academics, researchers, industry leaders, and students to exchange dialogues, research findings, and insights, related to innovations and trends of global tourism and hospitality industry.

Featured Speakers



Prof David Airey
University of Surrey
2006 UNWTO Ulysses
Prize Laureate



Prof Dimitrios Buhalis
Bournemouth University



Prof Richard Butler
University of Strathclyde
2016 UNWTO Ulysses
Prize Laureate



Dr Catherine Cheung
The Hong Kong
Polytechnic University



Prof Kaye Chon
The Hong Kong
Polytechnic University
2011 UNWTO Ulysses
Prize Laureate



Dr Jennifer Cronin
President
Macro Polo Hotels



Prof Eduardo Fayos-Solà
University of Valencia
2014 UNWTO Ulysses
Prize Laureate



Prof Donald Hawkins
George Washington
University
2003 UNWTO Ulysses
Prize Laureate



Prof Cathy Hsu
The Hong Kong
Polytechnic University



Prof Jafar Jafari
University of
Wisconsin-Stout
2005 UNWTO Ulysses
Prize Laureate



Prof Kit Jenkins
University of Strathclyde



Prof Brian King
The Hong Kong
Polytechnic University



Prof Sheryl Kline
University of Delaware



Mr Nazeer Aziz Ladhani
Aga Khan University



Prof Rob Law
The Hong Kong
Polytechnic University



Prof Anna Mattila
The Pennsylvania State
University



Prof Bob Mc Kercher
The Hong Kong
Polytechnic University



Prof Hanqin Qiu
The Hong Kong
Polytechnic University



Prof Chris Roberts
DePaul University



Prof Pauline Sheldon
University of Hawaii
2008 UNWTO Ulysses
Prize Laureate



Prof Haiyan Song
The Hong Kong
Polytechnic University



Prof Bruce Tracey
Cornell University



Mr Jeremy Tredinnick
Editor
Business Traveller
Asia-Pacific



Prof Eric Tsui
The Hong Kong
Polytechnic University

Registration Fee

USD 1 : HKD 7.8

Conference Packages	Basic Package	Full Package	Premium Package
Full-time Student	USD 420	USD 485	USD 550
General	USD 520	USD 585	USD 650

Remarks:

1. Only online registration is available
2. Valid student ID copy is required for full-time student registration
3. All dates refer to GMT+8
4. Full package and premium package are available on a first come first serve basis
5. For packages' details, please visit: <https://goo.gl/bSkTMb>

Sponsors

Diamond Hotel Partner



Platinum Sponsor



Platinum Media Partners



Gold Sponsors



Media Partner



Enquiries



+852 3400 2317



+852 2362 9362



info.hk2017@polyu.edu.hk



<http://hotelschool.shtm.polyu.edu.hk/www/hongkong2017>



HONG KONG 2017 GTHC



THE HONG KONG
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
香港理工大學

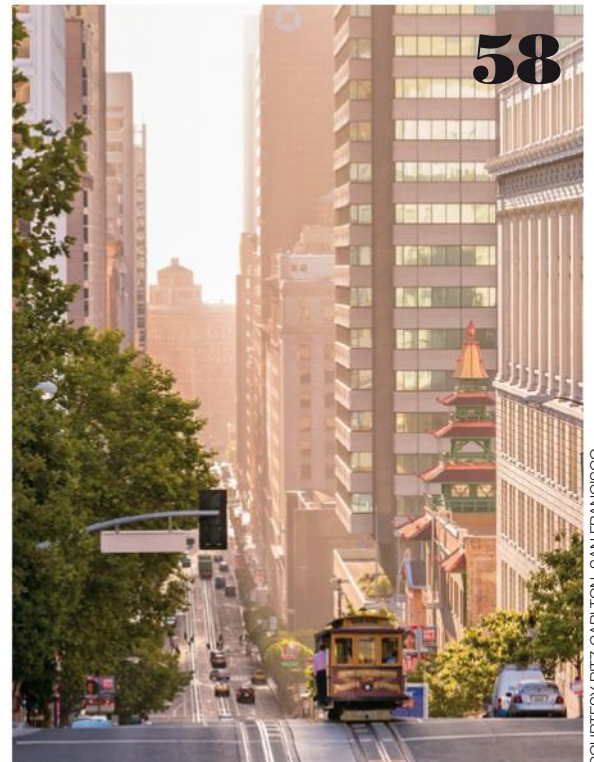
SCHOOL OF HOTEL AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT

Business Traveller

ASIA-PACIFIC

lifestyle

CONTENTS



58

COURTESY RITZ-CARLTON, SAN FRANCISCO

56 | LIFESTYLE NEWS

58 | SAN FRANCISCO

62 | BANGKOK

64 | CROWD-FUNDING

68 | CURRYING FLAVOUR

72 | SINGAPORE

74 | SNAPSHOT

68

ACTION



Jungle gym

THE newly opened Bali Jungle Adventure Park beckons thrill seekers and nature lovers alike. High-adrenaline activities such as whitewater rafting, zip lining and treetop assault courses are set in a lush, tropical hilltop in the east of the island. The new park also offers lazy river tubing and two restaurants overlooking breathtaking views. Packages start from US\$46, with advance booking available at balibta.com

CRUISE



“Dream” Japanese itinerary

GENTING *Dream*, the inaugural ship from luxury Asian cruise line Dream Cruises, has launched a new summer cruise itinerary to Okinawa in Japan. The five-night voyage sets sail from the dual homeports of Nansha and Guangzhou, before calling at the picturesque destinations of Naha and Miyakojima. Guests can enjoy a packed onshore itinerary taking in cultural and historical sights, or enjoy exploring beneath the waves with onboard submarines that carry up to four passengers. dreamcruiseline.com

STAY



Chinese Autograph

FACING Sanya’s idyllic Dadonghai Bay, The Shanhaitian Resort Sanya is the latest luxury property to open in the “Hawaii of China”, and the country’s first to be named in Marriott’s Autograph Collection. The 199-room hotel offers five distinctive gastronomy and bar experiences, as well as recreational facilities with specially designed zones for wellbeing, relaxation and rejuvenation, fitness, nourishment and fun. marriott.com/syxak



Beachfront bliss

A LUXURY coastal property has opened on Vietnam’s up-and-coming Cam Ranh peninsula. With 300 metres of pristine beachfront, fine-dining cuisine, a ten-treatment room spa, watersports centre and even a 3D cinema, the Anam is billed as one of the top coastal properties in the country. The stunning colonial design evokes a sense of the past, with manicured gardens, mosaic floor tiles and high-beamed roofs. The resort is home to 117 villas and 96 rooms and suites, with rates starting from around US\$200 per night. theanam.com

EXPERIENCE



Desert wheels

TRAIN alongside former Olympian David Millar and explore the desert topography of Dubai in a special cycling package from Jumeirah Al Naseem. Cycling enthusiasts can ride side-by-side with the former Team GB captain on exciting challenges such as the 100km Al Qudra desert cycle track, or Jebel Jais – the United Arab Emirate's highest mountain at 1,911 metres. After a gruelling day, unwind at the Madinat Jumeirah's private beach or indulge in a revitalising massage at the Talise Spa, before dinner with David Millar in one of the resort's 50 restaurants. The Ultimate Pro-Cycling Experience package takes place October 10-14, 2017, priced at Dhs15,000+ (US\$4,080+) for a four-night, full-board stay for two people. jumeirah.com

DRINK



High on whisky

PERCHED 240 metres in the air, Alfresco 64 – A Chivas Bar has opened as the highest outdoor whisky bar in the world. Located on the 64th floor of the Tower Club at Lebua in Bangkok, the bar offers connoisseurs a dedicated whisky degustation experience with stunning aerial views of the city and Chao Phraya River. The design is inspired by the sleek lines of a luxury yacht, and the bar will offer signature blends, including the limited-edition Chivas Exclusive Lebua blend, plus a range of experiences and a VIP event room. Open 6pm-1am every evening. lebua.com

SPA



Massage your jet lag away

THE Oriental Spa at Hong Kong's luxury Landmark Mandarin has launched a new spa treatment specifically designed to fight the effects of jet lag, from water retention to stiff muscles and insomnia. The restorative 90-minute experience includes a full body brushing with cactus sisal bristles to reveal glowing skin and improve sluggish circulation. This is followed by a rich essential oil body gel and massage that incorporates key stretches and pressure points, releasing tension, improving hydration and boosting circulation. Jet Lag Cure spa treatment from HK\$1,700 (US\$220). mandarinoriental.com/landmark



Creating a buzz

CHUAN Body + Soul, the new wellness sanctuary at the Langham Hong Kong, offers an exclusive range of treatments using bee venom-based products. The Abeetoxin line from Heaven by Deborah Mitchell harnesses bee venom for an instant anti-ageing effect, billed as the "natural alternative to Botox". Spa-goers seeking a natural facelift can try the Bee Sting Facial Therapy, or the Bee Peel Facial for a youthful glow. A range of other treatments are available in the calming, earthy oasis, which has been designed using the principles of *feng shui* with jade and bronze tones. Guests can also enjoy the rooftop swimming pool and health club. chuanspa.com.hk

Land of plenty

Jeremy Tredinnick samples the varied pleasures of cosmopolitan San Francisco before indulging in bucolic diversions in the Napa Valley

San Francisco has many reputations: its pea-soup fog is renowned, its Gold Rush history exciting, its hills and clanking trams iconic, while infamous Alcatraz and the towering Golden Gate Bridge stand prominently apart, but famously part of the whole. It's also one of the most urbane, progressive cities in the US – a magnet for international tourists and tech entrepreneurs (as well as down-on-their-luck Americans), all attracted to its benign climate and a diverse, cosmopolitan population that has resulted in a thriving arts and culture scene spread across a range of discrete, easily accessible neighbourhoods.

The morning I arrive the sun is blazing and there's not a wisp of fog in the air. My accommodation in the city is lofty both in geographic terms – standing near the top of the steep but stylish Nob Hill district – and in its position within the upper echelons of the hospitality sector. The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco is the city's only AAA Five Diamond-rated hotel, housed in a gorgeous neoclassical edifice that when it was built in 1909, housed the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Looking down California Street from the hotel's corner, a sliver of glittering water and a slice of the Bay Bridge can be seen between the skyscrapers.

The Ritz-Carlton's interior was renovated a couple of years ago, refurbished with a palette of steel blues and greys representing a weather theme for this city



This page from above: Chinatown; inside Alcatraz; and the new Museum of Modern Art
Opposite: A cable car climbs the hill from Fisherman's Wharf, with "the Rock" of Alcatraz in the distance

with its own unique microclimate. Lunch at the hotel's Parallel 37 restaurant is a stomach-bulging affair in the private dining room – Chef Michael Rotondo knows how to entice with seasonal and sustainable produce crafted into contemporary American dishes with a dash of panache.

As the jet lag hits, we retire to the hotel's Spa L'Occitane by the Bay, opened late last year and America's very first spa by the famous Provençal brand. A soothing traditional massage – its origins and ingredients from the South of France – is the perfect antidote to a 16-hour transpacific flight.

A walking tour of the city doesn't have to involve incessant hill climbing. We begin ours on a downhill stretch to Chinatown, North America's first and still its largest. Oriental gateways and hanging red lanterns let you know you're in an Asia-centric district, as do the packed sidewalks and kitschy souvenir shops.

Just south of Nob Hill is the shopping utopia of Union Square, and on the far side of Market Street we make time for the city's newest museum – the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (sfmoma.org) – which opened in May last year. MOMA has quickly become a hotspot for tourists and artistic locals alike;

OLAF BECKMANN; ISTOCK; JEREMY TREDINNICK





avant-garde artwork adorns its array of interesting spaces, from high-ceilinged galleries to sculpture gardens and an alfresco area next to a “living wall”.

Back on Market Street we queue for the Powell & Mason cable car that will take us up and over the hills to the north shore. A Citypass (citypass.com) is the way to go here: for just US\$89 you get free bus, train and cable car rides for seven days, free admission to a selection of four top attractions, and a booklet containing great discounts on dozens of sites and cruises.

The cable car clanks and rattles as it negotiates the steep hills – amazingly it still uses hand-cranked wooden brakes – and we alight at the top of a short but absurdly steep and winding section of Lombard Street. Within little more than 100 metres it makes eight hairpin turns through carefully manicured greenery – it’s one of the city’s most photographed landmarks.

The north shore’s Fisherman’s Wharf dining and entertainment district (fishermanswharf.org) buzzes with energy... except at one spot on Pier 39, where dozens of very large Californian sea lions lounge lazily on a handful of floating wooden platforms metres from the pier, bending their muscular necks in all directions, grunting, groaning and barking at each other, the pesky attendant gulls, and seemingly the world in general – a strangely captivating sight that has us lingering longer than we intended.

Any visit to the City by the Bay must include a trip out to “The Rock” – Alcatraz Island (nps.gov/alca), which served as the US’s most infamous maximum security prison for around 30 years in the mid-20th century. Al Capone, Robert “the Birdman” Stroud, Machine Gun Kelly and other nefarious individuals were locked up here, and the audio tape-assisted tour exceeds expectations, narrated by former prison guards and inmates who take you on an evocative journey through the cells and corridors of this forbidding place.

A new day brings a new adventure, as we drive across the famous Golden Gate Bridge and head north, past the towering redwood forest of Muir Woods, towards the US’s most famous wine country. The Napa Valley (visitnapavalley.com) holds the title and prestige of being America’s greatest exporter of fine wines. Labels such as Screaming Eagle or Harlan Estate are globally renowned, but sun-kissed Napa is home to hundreds of wineries offering tasting itineraries that can last a few hours or be incorporated into multi-day tours of top vineyards.

We drive north through the valley’s bucolic landscape, passing broad fields of neatly rowed vines encompassing Spanish-style ranches, and equally neat towns like Napa, Yountville, Oakville and Rutherford. Near the latter we turn up a long, straight driveway flanked by tall palm trees, at the end of which stands an attractive building housing the Round Pond Estate’s cellars, tasting rooms and restaurant.

This page from top: Meadowood Napa Valley from the air; and Round Pond Estate’s restaurant terrace
Opposite page from top left: Grapes hang heavy on the vine; Round Pond Estate’s premium Gravel Series wines; and a cultured game of croquet on Meadowood’s pristine lawns

Under a high, vaulted ceiling with thick wooden beams we meet Tim Byer, who will talk us through the estate’s wines. “Round Pond spreads out over 470 acres [190 hectares] of contiguous valley floor, with lots of soil types,” he enthuses while rustling up a tasty salad for us using Round Pond’s own delicious olive oil. “Eighty-five per cent of our grapes are Cabernet – Cab is king in Napa – and we produce 35,000 cases a year, but we also have one of only two olive presses in the region and our artisanal olive oils are famous.”

Over a supremely fresh and tasty lunch we taste three complex reds and a crisp white, before Tim takes us on a quick tour, stopping off at the olive oil press where I have my first tasting session of olive oil – an eye-opening experience that’s just as intricate as wine tasting. Some of the oils are so pure and strong that I find myself coughing like a first-time smoker,





while others are smooth as butter or infused with fruit essences.

Back at the main building we sample some of Round Pond's best vintages (2012 was a great year), with names like The Vow and Scholar's Gate from the premium Gravel Series, before picking up a bottle or two to take home – along with gift packs of small, round bottles filled with delicious olive oil and piquant red wine vinegar to wow friends and family.

We are a contented bunch as we say our goodbyes and make the short drive into St Helena, where we mooch around the sleepy main street with its mix of art deco and Spanish-style façades that lead into tasting rooms, arts and crafts stores and health-conscious coffee shops. The living is easy here, the weather balmy, the soil bountiful, the food and libations in the restaurants of the highest quality.

Our next stop proves that Napa has far more to offer

than just wine. Meadowood (meadowood.com) is a luxury resort in a stunning location, built into 250 acres (101 hectares) of forested hills and boasting its own three-Michelin-star restaurant, a nine-hole golf course, tennis courts, an all-suite spa, fitness centre with pools... even a croquet lawn. The guest cabins are scattered throughout the rambling property; mine is high up on the hillside, a luxurious wooden suite within the trees with its own outdoor patio, elegant white-painted interior and cosy fireplace. All mod cons are present, but the focus here is on seclusion and indulgence in your surroundings – nature in luxury mode.

Chauffeured cars are available to pick you up and drop you off if you don't want to walk down to the main building and other facilities. I choose to hike along the hill ridge in a large semicircle around the golf course. Signs warn that bears and cougars can sometimes frequent the woods, which adds a frisson of excitement to the mildly exerting walk, but I see only squirrels gathering nuts and birds feasting on berries as I take in the wonderful vistas across the valley and revel in the peace and solitude.

Over a delicious dinner created by estate chef Alejandro Ayala, director of PR Jennifer Chiesa explains the resort's vision: "Balance at Meadowood is key, and when one works hard, one should be able to play hard. We want each guest to feel their time on the estate is theirs to do with as they wish. Many come here simply to rest and decompress from busy and hectic lives, but it's also an ideal destination for incentive corporate trips, directors' meetings, private events and the like. Glens and gardens adjoin all the meeting rooms, and the wide range of on-site activities allows you to take advantage of the beautiful environment for both work and play."

Meadowood puts on a number of events and activities for guests, group teambuilding and incentives, such as cooking or cocktail-making classes, sommelier-led wine experiences, croquet or golf tournaments. We are lucky enough to have a lesson in croquet from the resort's resident pro, Mike McDonnell. Many imagine this game merely as an amusing bit of backyard fun, and while that's certainly one way to enjoy it, there's much more to it should you wish to get serious.

On Meadowood's pristine, putting green-quality lawn, all dressed in regulation croquet whites, Mike coaches us in how to hold the mallet and hit the ball, explains the resort's simplified tournament rules, pours us a glass of sparkling wine and lets us loose... the following hour is a joyous mix of laughter, concentration, competitiveness and clowning. By the time we finish half of us are hooked, pledging to seek out a croquet club in our respective hometowns. We leave Meadowood reluctantly for the drive back to the city, reminiscing already over this land of plenty, and plotting our return. ■

Cultural treasures, shopping highlights and leisure hotspots are easy to find in Asia's City of Angels

BUSY IN

NINARA



1 BANGKOK NATIONAL MUSEUM

While Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha) and Wat Pho (Temple of the Reclining Buddha) are constantly packed with tourists, not far to the north the Bangkok National Museum is also well worth a visit, providing a comprehensive overview of Thai history, art and culture. One of Asia's largest museums, it's split into three sections filled with ancient artefacts, religious statues, antiques and gifts given to the Thai royal family over the years. Access by Chao Phraya riverboat pier Tha Phra Athit/Banglamphu (N13).



5 BANGKOK ART AND CULTURE CENTRE (BACC)

Housed in a building reminiscent of New York's Guggenheim Museum, the BACC is a contemporary arts facility with exhibition and

performance spaces for events ranging across the artistic landscape, encompassing art, music, theatre, film and design. As well as a rolling calendar of exhibitions from both Thai and international artists, the centre is also home to an art library, bookshops, restaurants and a café. Access via National Stadium BTS station.

SHIH-WEN HUANG

2 CHINATOWN

One of Bangkok's most vibrant districts focuses on Chinese rather than Thai culture. The main streets of Charoen Krung Road and Yaowarat Road, and their myriad side streets, are filled with gold shops in heritage shophouse buildings, Chinese-Buddhist temples (check out the ornate Wat Mangkon Kamalawat), tasty seafood restaurants and streetside market stalls. It's chaotic and often overcrowded, but the food and shopping options are endless and the energy is contagious. Access by Chao Phraya riverboat pier Ratchawong (N5).



6 BANGKOK FLOWER MARKET

Colourful and fragrant, this is Bangkok's largest wholesale/retail flower market – though it also sells fruit and vegetables along the main road and the many *sois* or side streets, all the way down to the river's edge. Locally known as Pak Khlong Talat, the market is open 24 hours a day, but the best time to experience it is at night, when the artificial lights make the hues shine with a heavenly glow. Every imaginable type of flower is on sale, from rare orchids to hybrid roses and intricate floral bouquets. Access via Chao Phraya riverboat pier Memorial Bridge (N6).





3

DUSIT PALACE

To the north of the Grand Palace on Ratchawithi Road, the Dusit Palace was built at the turn of the 20th century to be the new residence of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). Having just toured Europe and been impressed by its palaces, with their broad boulevards and large parklands, he ordered some of its mansions and throne halls to show European influences, like the Renaissance-style Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall. Probably the main attraction is Vimanmek Mansion, the largest teak house in the world, now a museum dedicated to Rama V, with porcelain, glassware, old photographs and memorabilia from that era. Access via Chao Phraya riverboat pier Thewes (N15).

4 **ASIATIQUE**

The latest must-visit market in Bangkok, Asiatique benefits from a great riverside location and a combination of stalls and bricks-and-mortar boutiques housed in replica warehouses that hark back to this area's history as an international cargo port owned by the East Asiatic Freight Company. There are more than 1,500 shops selling handicrafts, jewellery and more, plus dozens of restaurants, so take your time, stroll down the pleasant riverside boardwalk, take in the city skyline on the Ferris wheel, and watch one of the cabaret or puppet show performances. Access via Saphan Taksin BTS Station.



CALYPSO BANGKOK

BANGKOK

7

CENTRAL EMBASSY

The new flagship mall of the Central Group is an architectural gem built on the site of the old British Embassy. Its dynamic, sinuous curves feature Thailand's first Park Hyatt property in the upper floors, and at the base a six-floor cornucopia of designer stores, fine-dining restaurants, a 5,000 sqm food hall and the city's newest and most advanced cinema. Add green sky terraces, hosted artwork collections and performances by world-acclaimed visual artists and musicians, and you can see why this is Bangkok's most happening locale right now. Access via Ploen Chit BTS Station.



DESIGNBOOM

8

PENTHOUSE BAR & GRILL, PARK HYATT BANGKOK

When it opens on May 12 in the top 24 floors of the Central Embassy building, the city's latest luxury hotel is bound to be an instant must-visit social, dining and entertainment venue for both the Thai elite and wealthy visitors. Designed by award-winning New York firm Yabu Pushelberg, its signature drinking and dining hotspot is the Penthouse Bar & Grill on the uppermost 34th,

35th and 36th floors.

Conceived as the fictional penthouse of a well-travelled British-Thai collector of fine art and vintage motor-racing relics, you can relax with an aperitif in the atmospheric speakeasy, enjoy a fine meal in the international grill restaurant, or head for the rooftop bar to soak up the panoramic city views, cocktail in hand. Access via Ploen Chit BTS Station. ■



Flying → start

Crowd-funding platform Kickstarter has breathed life into myriad products and ideas, writes **Craig Bright**

Today's world is more social and connected than it has ever been. Media such as Facebook or Twitter is the most universal manifestation of this, but crowd-funding platforms produce the most tangible results of communities coming together to create something new. Kickstarter is perhaps the most widely known and has helped bring to life numerous projects, from creative works to new inventions. More than a few travel-related products have sprung into existence as a result of successful Kickstarter campaigns. Here are just a few.

TRAVELERBUDDY

Development began: Mid-2015

Kickstarter goal: S\$10,000 (US\$7,000)

Funding achieved: S\$23,000 (US\$16,300)

Available to download free on App Store and Google Play

Travelerbuddy wasn't the first travel management app

to hit the market, but nonetheless it contains numerous helpful features. Combining a number of different applications, the app allows you to generate an itinerary by forwarding your bookings and information to the Travelerbuddy team, receive real-time travel alerts, make expense claims, sync with your calendar, and collate all your documents in one place for easy online or offline access. It even checks ahead of time whether your passport is out of date, and informs you of specific customs and health documents you will need for your destination. travelerbuddy.com



AIR BOLT

Development began: Mid-2014
Kickstarter goal: A\$50,000 (US\$38,000)
Funding achieved: A\$202,000 (US\$153,300)
Available now

A combination padlock and luggage tracker, Air Bolt managed to hit its Kickstarter target in a matter of days. Its creators eventually gleaned 400 per cent funding by the end of their campaign. Air Bolt can be controlled using a smartphone app, unlocking when a code is input or a smart device comes within Bluetooth range. As a security measure against theft, you can set the lock to sound an alarm when it gets too far away from your device. Crowd-sourced GPS also enables users to track their bags – the charge lasting a year before needing to be topped up via micro-USB. theairbolt.com



JETZY

Development began: January 2015
Kickstarter goal: US\$5,000
Funding achieved: US\$5,135
Available to download free on the App Store and Google Play

Travellers can claim rewards for a whole variety of things on the road, from hotel stays to flights to purchases at retail outlets. But user-to-user



social app Jetzy is taking this idea further by rewarding its users for posting photos, sending messages and referring friends to use the platform.

Jetzy is designed as a geolocation-based, user-driven platform for travellers to get instant local recommendations for hidden gems in a destination, meet new people and share their experiences while on a trip. The more they use Jetzy, the faster users can earn Jetpoints that can be redeemed for rewards such as spa vouchers, meals and free trips.

jetzyapp.com

AIR HALO

Development began: April 2015
Kickstarter goal: £35,000 (US\$44,300)
Funding achieved: £42,733 (US\$54,100)
Available now

Developed by Hong Kong-based A-Onetech Limited, Air Halo has been touted as the first cordless mobile air sanitiser powered by Plascide reactors, which use plasma to destroy germs. Essentially, this means that the thermos-sized sanitiser doesn't need to have its filters changed.

Good news for travellers concerned about rogue pollutants or germs in



their hotel rooms, Air Halo is able to run for three hours on a single charge, and can be charged using a USB plug. Two can also be combined in a yin/yang-style embrace to fit into a cup holder. air-halo.com

EVOLUS 3

Development began: Mid-2016

Kickstarter goal: €30,000 (US\$32,400)

Funding achieved: €65,837 (US\$71,000)

Available now

The Evolus 3 docking system was designed by Germany-based Enblue Technology to provide a multi-device charging station that won't become



obsolete the minute new sizes of Apple gadgets are rolled out. The system includes charging spots for an Apple Watch, iPhone and iPad, along with a separate USB port on the side. The height of the adapters that connect with the devices can also be adjusted so you don't need to remove any cases on your gadgets.

Specifically designed with travellers in mind, the Apple Watch charger can also be detached as a separate, smaller module, and with its own Lightning cable port can be used as a dual-charger for another device. There's also space inside the module to wrap up the cable.

eu.enbluetec.com

MOJOE

Development began: 2013

Kickstarter goal: US\$20,000

Funding achieved: US\$85,860

Available now



According to founder and CEO Joseph Hyman, "Mojoe is not here to replace your coffeemaker at home. [It] was designed to deliver a high-quality coffee experience when you are not at home."

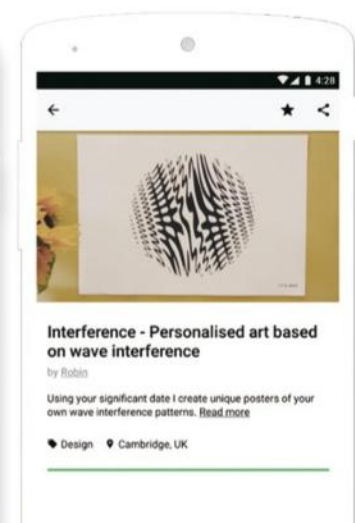
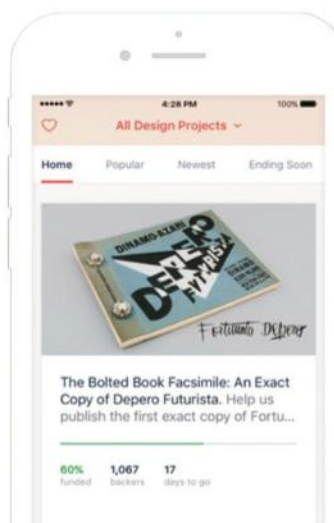
The brewer and mug combo uses vacuum and drip brewing to make the coffee. Users pour water of any temperature into the mug, add some coffee grounds, press a button and the device heats the water up to 93°C before dripping through the grounds. It doesn't need to be stationary in order to work, so it can brew in your bag, on a flight or in a moving car. Variable strengths of coffee can be set, while a reusable filter can also be bought to allow you to brew with your own ground coffee, tea bags or loose-leaf tea.

mojobrewing.com ■

**How does Kickstarter work?**

- An individual or company creates an online fundraising campaign on kickstarter.com
- They set a target for how much funding they require and set the duration of the campaign (Kickstarter suggests 30 days or less, as shorter campaigns tend to have higher success rates)
- The public, or "backers", pledge money towards campaigns that interest them – donations can range from spare change to hundreds of dollars
- Backers receive rewards – anything from early copies of the product to bonus features once it's been developed – depending on the amount they pledge
- When a campaign ends, projects that hit their target receive their funds, along with any additional funding above their initial estimate. Those that fail to reach their

kickstarter.com



TOKYO

22-23 AUGUST 2017

ACTE
GLOBAL

Registration is now open for Asia's leading global business travel event!

Tokyo education will build upon the travel manager as the supporting hub, with each of the spokes representing the various components that must come together in a unified fashion for a successful travel programme. Key focus areas within each of these spokes will surround the evolving expectations and needs of the modern business traveller, and support to the travel managers with both **today's challenges and tomorrow's future.**



Learn more and register today at:
www.acte.org

Spice of life

The story of curry – in all its diverse forms – is the story of globalisation, writes **Steve White**

In its countless forms, the humble curry is eaten by hundreds – if not thousands – of millions every day. Relatively few call it curry, however. The word itself is thought to originate from the Tamil word *kari*, meaning a sauce comprising meat and/or vegetables cooked with spices. While it is synonymous with Indian and Thai food in particular, its derivatives are regarded as native dishes to peoples around the world.

It helps that this aromatic blend, based on onions, ginger and (usually) garlic, augmented by a mix of herbs, roots and seeds, brings the perfect lift to the basic carbs that traditionally dominate most diets. Its sauce melds perfectly with rice; if bread is your staple, you can dunk your naan, chapati, dosa or puri – or even encase your curry within the bread; noodles – wheat or rice based – work too.

The base to any curry are onions cooked in oil or ghee (clarified butter), along with ginger and, often, garlic. Softened and translucent, the onions give a paler curry; cook until they caramalise to darken and sweeten the mix. Then in go the powdered spices.

In the West, many buy pre-mixed curry powder but this tends to produce more generic curries, with a lighter colour thanks to the large proportion of turmeric. Better is to have a range of favourite powdered

spices at hand to experiment with, but for the most flavourful results, nothing beats grinding your own spices with mortar and pestle. That way you don't lose any of the oils that seep out as you pulverise the whole seeds into grains.

Evidence of the use of a pestle and mortar in making spice mixes has been found in the ruins of the Indus Valley city of Mohenjo-daro, dating back to 2600BC. At first these blends would have been limited in scope, but the story of curry is the story of globalisation. As civilisations grew and developed, their merchants crisscrossed the great landmasses of Europe and Asia, bringing the scent of exotic spices to foreign lands and creating startling new flavours to titillate the tastebuds of nations eager to experience wonders from newly discovered worlds.

By the Middle Ages it had been noted that not only did spices taste great, but they actually seemed to help keep food edible longer – something we know is true today, with spices including cinnamon, cloves and mustard having antimicrobial properties. The discovery of the Americas led to the introduction of chilli peppers, brought to the Indian subcontinent and beyond, where they were quickly embraced to reshape the diet.







The British imported the curry habit as early as the 17th century, with London's first curry house opening in 1810. Meanwhile, the indentured labour from the Indian subcontinent that the Brits and others introduced to plantations and farms worldwide, brought their food with them. From the islands of the Caribbean, to East and South Africa, curry quickly entrenched itself, often "going native" over time by adding a pinch or two of local ingredients.

Today, the curry juggernaut continues to roll. The latest move on the part of the British to "own" curry is the annual World Curry Festival, started in 2010. Today, it straddles the neighbouring cities of Bradford and Leeds and lasts a full two weeks. Appropriately for a culinary tradition whose origins span the globe, the festival includes a "Faith in food" programme that welcomes all-comers to share a meal in a church, mosque, temple or synagogue.

It's the ideal recipe for understanding, you might say, for today curry is truly global: the shared taste for spicy food is a great leveller across countries and cultures. In short, curry has become a comfort food without borders.

CURRY'S GLOBAL HOTSPOTS

Britain: In today's UK, many would put Thai green curry and Indian tikka masala on a par with fish and chips as national dishes. Major royal anniversaries have been marked by the creation of Jubilee and Coronation chicken, both mayonnaise-based sandwich fillers, while those twin landmarks of fast food – the Chinese takeaway and the chippy – often offer a genre-busting curry sauce to accompany the more usual fare. There's also the balti, where the curry is cooked and served in a cast-iron pot, and the phaal, essentially a purée of chillis which owes more to late-night, beer-fuelled bravado than to any culinary tradition.



India: Myriad regional differences exist but broadly speaking, the north eats thicker curries with unleavened breads, while the south prefers rice and rice-flour breads with thinner, spicier curries. Countrywide, most dishes are water-based rather than using coconut milk – the palm-fringed coasts of Kerala being a major exception. Interestingly, vindaloo, a favourite of lagered-up curry fanboys, is thought to derive from the Portuguese words for its two original defining ingredients: wine and garlic. Other well-travelled recipes include rogan josh, a lamb dish from Kashmir coloured with chillies and the flowers of the cockscomb plant; and the korma, a slow-cooked dish using yoghurt. Once of the Moghul court and of variable heat, today it is curry-house shorthand for a mild, creamy curry.

Pakistan: Similar to northern Indian styles for the most part, with plenty of lamb and mutton dishes. *Karahi* is a local variety that is cooked in a wok-like pan, while districts closer to Afghanistan incorporate more dried fruit and nuts in their cooking.

Nepal: Far and away the country's most commonly consumed meal is *dal bhat*, a thin lentil soup



accompanied by rice that is also popular in neighbouring countries. *Tarkari*, vegetable curries, are also popular, often accented with asafoetida. Meat curries usually use chicken or mutton.

Bangladesh: Historically, most British curry houses have been run by Bangladeshis, and immigrants from Sylhet district in northeast Bangladesh are thought to have been the very first. The dominant style is Bengali, using mustard and mustard seeds.

Sri Lanka: While many dishes are similar to those across the water in southern India, the island's curries are often a little more fiery and more likely to feature seafood. So synonymous is it that the term "rice and curry" is used to mean a meal, though the rice may feature in the form of flour used in the native hoppers (pancakes) and string hoppers (noodles).

Maldives: Unsurprisingly in this island nation, fish is a major ingredient, with tuna curry, *mas riha*, being ubiquitous. Vegetarians beware: even some vegetable curries have a piece of fish added to lend a local tang.

Myanmar: Three forms dominate in different regions: the west follows more Indian traditions; the east hews to a Thai model; but in the centre of the country, around the traditional power bases, the two are blended into a sophisticated cuisine for royal palates that features plenty of sour and salty notes.

Thailand: The most famous trio of red, yellow and green curries is just the beginning, with regional variants and dishes that indulge the local love of sour tastes to balance the predominant coconut milk base. All start from a paste commonly featuring shrimp paste, lemongrass and coriander. Another characteristic of Thai curries is the use of more fresh vegetables and herbs instead of dried spices.

Cambodia: Though better known for soups and noodle dishes, *samlar kari* is a mild coconut milk curry with chicken and sweet potatoes often eaten at special occasions. Cambodians, like Thais, also use a paste of mixed spices, called *kroeung*, as the base of many dishes.



Malaysia: Pure traditions live on in the large ethnic Indian minority, but Chinese and Malay influences have produced amalgams of flavours that shift from town to town according to the mix of economic, religious and cultural forces at play. Staples range from the simple dipping sauce in *roti canai* to complex curries that typically balance sweet coconut milk bases with shrimp paste, turmeric, tamarind and chilli.

Indonesia: The archipelago's geographic extent provides room for many culinary traditions. Curry variations range from *kari ayam* (chicken curry) and *kari kambing* (lamb curry) to the iconic Padang dish rendang. Usually cooked until the sauce caramelises around the meat, it owes its fame in part to the portability and long shelf life this allows.

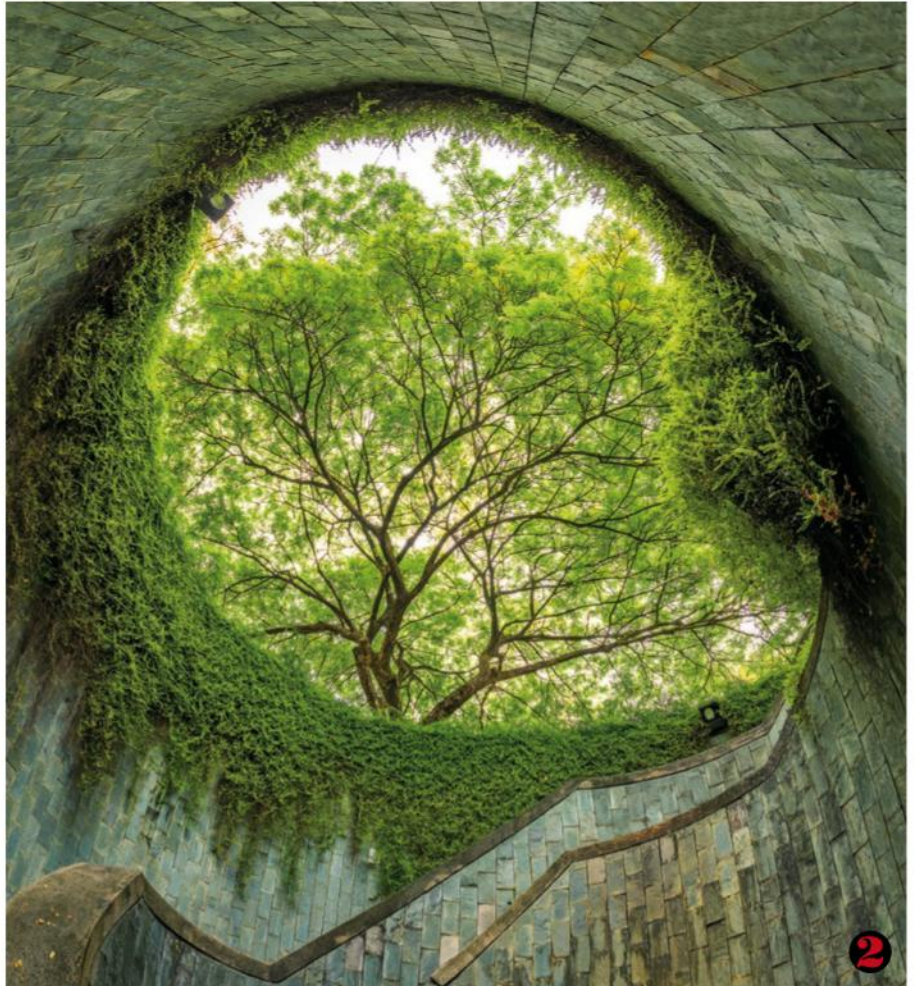
Japan: In the 1880s, a Japanese Navy doctor copied the British Royal Navy and prescribed curry as part of a more varied diet to guard against beriberi among sailors. Friday has been curry day on board all Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force ships ever since. The dish is now widely eaten, popular for its simplicity compared to more traditional dishes. The sauce is sold as solid blocks, powder and in vacuum packs, tending to be sweet and peppery. It's most commonly enjoyed over rice, but is also eaten with udon noodles or – Japanese ingenuity being what it is – sandwiched in bread and baked into doughnuts.

South Pacific: The Indian populations of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga have popularised spiced stews with coconut milk, typically with lamb, mutton or chicken.

South Africa: Natal has a curry tradition dating back even longer than that in the UK, with Durban curry a particular style, using garam masala and tomatoes. South Africans also ladle curry into whole loafs of bread to make "bunny chow". ■

Singapore

Jeremy Tredinnick crisscrosses the Singapore River along Boat, Clarke and Robertson Quays



ISTOCK

1 ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM

Start on Boat Quay outside the Fullerton Hotel, a grand colonnaded edifice near the mouth of the Singapore River that was once the city-state's General Post Office but is now an iconic luxury hotel. Cross the pedestrian bridge to the left bank of the river and another huge British colonial building stands ahead of you, home to the Asian Civilisations Museum. This 14,000 sqm repository of history focuses on the many ancestral cultures of Singapore's multiethnic population. More than 1,300 artefacts are displayed from all corners of the continent – it's a fascinating insight into Singapore's rich heritage. Open daily 10am-7pm; tel +65 6332 7798; acm.org.sg

2 ART-2 GALLERY AND FORT CANNING PARK

Follow the riverfront promenade upstream for five minutes, under Elgin Bridge and onto Hill Street, where the old police station has been turned into an arts and culture centre. Here you'll find Art-2 Gallery, which specialises in contemporary sculpture, paintings and ceramics, with bold exhibitions from regional artists featured regularly.

Right behind the building Fort Canning Park spreads out over rising ground. Stamford Raffles built his home atop the hill, which later became the British Army's Fort Canning barracks. Crisscrossed by walking trails shaded by enormous old trees – from banyans to kapoks and teraps – the park is both natural retreat and historical gold mine. There's an old Christian cemetery, the shrine of Sultan Iskandar Shah, and Fort Canning Arts Centre is a venue for many outdoor events, from ballet to music festivals.

Art-2 Gallery open Monday-Saturday 11am-7pm; 140 Hill Street; tel +65 6338 8713; art2.com.sg

3 CLARKE QUAY

Exit the park from one of its southwest gates and cross River Valley Road – you'll find yourself in Clarke Quay's main entertainment, dining and nightlife mall. The riverside area on both sides of the water was once a bustling commercial district with shophouses and godowns (warehouses for merchandise) lining the waterfront and alleyways. These were redeveloped and spruced up, and now play host to a glittering array (especially at night) of restaurants, bars, nightclubs and retail outlets. You can cross the water via the pedestrianised Read Bridge (Malacca Bridge) but the north side has more than enough options to keep you busy. Most places open around noon, and keep going until the early hours.

4 HONG SAN SEE TEMPLE

Back on River Valley Road, turn left and catch a cab for the short ride northwest to the Hong San See Temple in Mohamed Sultan Road. A tranquil break from the modern pleasures of the quay districts, this unpretentious Buddhist temple is more than 100 years old, set on a small, *feng shui*-friendly hill, and comprises traditional buildings set around

courtyards with colourful statues. Designated a national monument in 1978, it is a model of good cultural conservation. Open daily 7am-6pm; 29 Mohamed Sultan Road.

5 THE WAREHOUSE HOTEL

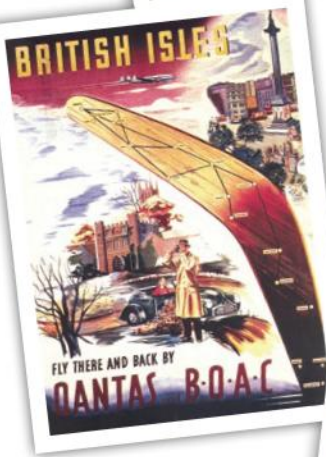
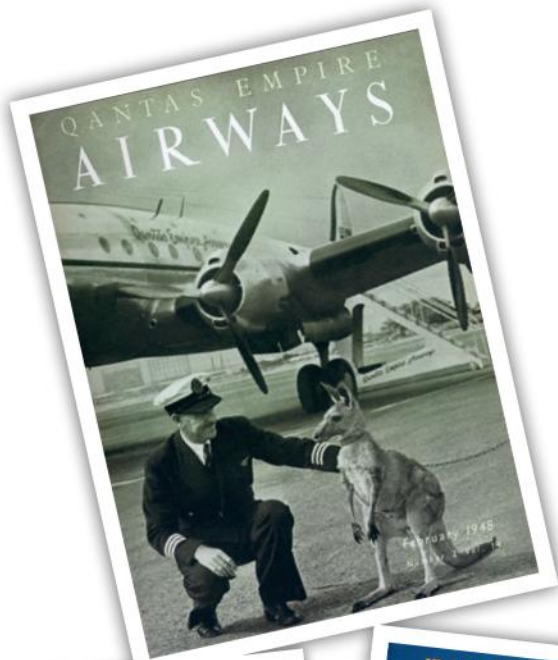
It's time to cap off your exploration with a refreshing drink or delicious meal. Head south down Mohamed Sultan Road and left onto Saiboo Street, cross the bridge over Robertson Quay and on the riverside to the right you'll see an attractive white building that blends Singapore's history with modern luxury hospitality. The Warehouse Hotel, which opened in January this year, is a converted 19th-century godown that cleverly combines industrial and heritage aesthetics with hip, luxurious comfort in its cavernous lobby bar and lounge and relaxed restaurant Po. Depending on the time of day and your appetite, either sip one of the hotel's imaginatively curated cocktails, or sit down for a hearty meal of classic Singaporean specialities cooked with an eye on authenticity – it's old-style local comfort food elevated to fine-dining standards. 320 Havelock Road; tel +65 6828 0000; thewarehousehotel.com ■



1947

Qantas starts Kangaroo Route

Alex McWhirter looks back at the launch of the carrier's Sydney-London service, which marks its 70th anniversary this year



Pictured: Kangaroo Route posters from the 1940s and 50s



It's generally understood that the "Kangaroo Route" refers to the many air services linking Europe with Australia via Southeast Asia. But, in truth, the term is a Qantas trademark. It applies only to Qantas services linking the UK with Australia via the Eastern Hemisphere.

Qantas began flying Sydney-London via the Kangaroo Route in December 1947 using a Lockheed Constellation. There were 29 passengers and 11 crew and the flight called at Darwin, Singapore, Calcutta, Karachi, Cairo and Tripoli. Overnight stops were made in Singapore and Cairo.

Over the years, flights became faster, passenger numbers increased and the route was shared with BOAC, later to become British Airways (BA). Today, the route has changed beyond all recognition. The past few decades have seen a big rise in airlines based in the Gulf and Asia. These indirect carriers now dominate the market, with many dozens of daily services to numerous cities Down Under, while Qantas and BA services are reduced to a total of three one-stop flights daily from London to Sydney and Melbourne.

Now Qantas plans to regain some of its lost Kangaroo Route prestige. It will inaugurate a Perth-London non-stop service in March next year using the B787 Dreamliner – a far cry from the noisy and slow Constellation of 1947. ■



ROBIN LI

CO-FOUNDER AND CEO
BAIDU

talk **asia**

Discover the personalities behind the newsmakers in the fields of arts, politics, sports and business on CNN's Talk Asia.

CNN's Matt Rivers talks to one of the most media-shy tech leaders in the world, billionaire **Robin Li**, co-founder and CEO of Chinese search giant Baidu. Get a rare look at Baidu's Silicon Valley Lab in California, where Baidu is pioneering artificial intelligence development right in Google's and Facebook's backyard.

CNN Talk Asia airs on:

Saturday, May 6 at 10:00am HKT
Saturday May 13 at 10:00am HKT
Saturday May 20 at 8:30pm HKT
Sunday May 21 at 12:30pm HKT
Monday May 22 at 11:00am HKT

**Air times are subject to change without prior notice*

 /cnntalkasia



AIRFRANCE



FRANCE IS IN THE AIR



PUTTING YOU AT THE CENTER OF OUR WORLD

BUSINESS CLASS Relax with a Clarins beauty treatment* in our dedicated lounge. Once aboard, savor a menu crafted by leading French chefs, and all from the comfort of a fully horizontal seat-bed.**

AIRFRANCE_KLM

AIRFRANCE.SG

*Departing from Paris-Charles de Gaulle Terminal 2E - Halls K,L,M, from New York-JFK and from London-Heathrow. **Available on selected long-haul Boeing 777 flights and Boeing 787 flights.