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mice
magazine

MICE Industry
Expectation for 2015

JANUARY 2015

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Editor's Note

I could realize it to be the right time to discuss on the previous year's success and following year's strategic plans with the industry stakeholder. This took us to a number of opinion leaders to understand the rising and falling growth graphs and their understanding on the development of the sector in the year to follow. Hence, this issue is designed to elaborate on the potential destinations that are expected to bring about a change in the industry, in-line with the economical contribution to the global GDP. The approaching Expo 2020 is the topic in limelight these days and is being understood as a potential add on for the MICE growth in UAE which is anyway the most booming market in the world for now.

An opinion from the leaders gives an understanding of the MICE sector to boom in the year to follow. The industry is not just cashing on the new events and upcoming destinations, but a great focus has been on programs like green meetings are in the plan for the year to follow. Certain new concepts are expected to be incorporated in the strategy plans and have been budgeted for at large. The year is expected to bring about huge innovations in the world MICE forum.

I would also like to extend my heartiest wishes to all our readers, and wish them a very successful year ahead. I thank you all again for your kind support and valuable feedback.. **dm**

- Editor, Destination Mice

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Let's Re-View 2014 To View 2015

Let us hear from the opinion leaders, how it was in 2014 and what is expected ahead in 2015.

List of people who interviewed:

- **Kabir Bedi**, Famous International Actor and Presenter
- **Martin Kubler**: CEO, International Hospitality & Service Industries Consultant, Writer, Speaker, Innovation Specialist
- **Mike Lee**, Vice President of Sales, Marina Bay Sands
- **Trevor McCartney**, General Manager, Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre
- **Rajeev Kale**, President & COO- MICE, Domestic, Sports Holidays, Thomas Cook (India) Ltd.
- **Prashant Narayan**, COO and Head Leisure Travel Inbound Business, Thomas Cook India Ltd. and TCI.
- **Ranvir Bhandari**, Vice President South & General Manager, ITC Grand Chola
- **Mateusz Czerwinski**, Senior Marketing Manager, Warsaw Convention Bureau - Warsaw Tourism Organization



>>> Kabir Bedi



>>> Martin Kubler



>>> Mike Lee



>>> Trevor McCartney



>>> Rajeev Kale



>>> Prashant Narayan



>>> Ranvir Bhandari



>>> Mateusz Czerwinski

>>> Please tell us about your organisation?

• Kabir Bedi

I'm an international actor well known as a Master of Ceremonies for Corporate Events, presenting stage and television shows across the world. I have also set up a company, Bedimedia, for the production of films, starting 2015.

• Martin Kubler

Iconsulthotels is a boutique consulting firm headquartered in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. We support mainly small & medium sized businesses in the hospitality, leisure, tourism, and service industries with innovative operations, sales, marketing, and revenue optimization solutions.

• Mike Lee

As Asia's leading business, leisure and entertainment destination, Marina Bay Sands' iconic design and multi-dimensional offerings have transformed Singapore's city skyline and its tourism landscape since the integrated resort opened on 27 April 2010. Located in the heart of Singapore's Central Business District, the destination offers a luxury hotel, state-of-the-art convention and exhibition facilities, theatres, world class entertainment as well as the best shopping and dining in the region.

• Trevor McCartney

Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC) is the new home for business events and is perfectly suited to host international, regional, and national conventions, exhibitions and corporate meetings, creating a platform that can connect people through the exchange of knowledge. Our state-of-the-art venue will meet the demands of the most discerning global event organisers.

• Rajeev Kale

Thomas Cook (India) Ltd (TCIL) is the leading integrated travel and travel related financial services company in the country offering a broad spectrum of services that include Foreign Exchange, Corporate Travel, MICE, Leisure Travel, Insurance, Visa & Passport services and E-Business. The company set up its first office in India in 1881.

Our footprint currently extends to over 235 locations (including 22 airport counters) in 99 cities across India, Mauritius & Sri Lanka and is supported by a strong partner network of 110 Gold Circle Partners and 112 Preferred Sales Agents in over 133 cities across India.

• Ranvir Bhandari

The ITC group forayed in the hospitality business over 35 years ago with their flagship hotel in Tamil Nadu, which is this very hotel, redeveloped and renamed as ITC Grand Chola two years ago, is an epitome of luxury. ITC Grand Chola as the name suggests, recreates the grandeur and majesty of the legendary Chola dynasty. It is a 600 room premium integrated luxury hotel complex, centrally located in the midst of the Chennai business hub, offering the perfect gateway for both business and leisure. ITC Grand Chola also embodies ITC hotels ethos of "Responsible Luxury" and has earned the distinction of be-

coming the world's largest LEED platinum green hotel through efficiency in energy, water and waste management.

• Mateusz Czerwinski

Warsaw Convention Bureau, as a part of Warsaw Tourism Organization, is responsible for promoting Warsaw as an attractive and professional meetings destination. Our priority objective is to acquire significant congresses and events for the city, but we also provide impartial and expert advice on local venues, hotels, PCOs & DMCs to every meeting planner interested in the capital of Poland. Warsaw Tourism Organization is a public-private association established by Warsaw City Hall as a dialog and cooperation platform for local tourism industry.

>>> How was the year 2014 for your business?

• Kabir Bedi

Spectacular! Many big events. Recently presented the Lokmat Women's Summit, moderating every session, all day. Earlier, "Vande Mataram", India TV's highly rated series on the 2014 Elections. Even abig tv commercial in Italy. Currently shooting an English film in the West Indies, "SCANDALOUS!"

• Martin Kubler

2014 has been a good year for Iconsulthotels and saw us enter new markets such as Oman, and the USA, but also consolidate our position as the "consultancy of industry professionals for industry professionals" in our core markets, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

• Mike Lee

Our MICE-led integrated resort model has been extremely successful and serves as a winning formula that allows us to continue attracting major international and new-to-Singapore shows. Marina Bay Sands broke records in 2013 with over 70 tradeshow, compared to 51 in 2012. Since opening, the IR has also

brought in over 50 new-to-Singapore tradeshow, as well as multi-year contracts which saw many significant returning shows, such as Art Stage Singapore, World Cities Summit and World Retail Congress.

New-to-market shows: Since the start of 2014, we have already confirmed 15 new-to-Singapore shows for the year. These shows are bigger in scale and prominence. Some of the new-to-market shows hosted at Marina Bay Sands such as the art and design fair Maison & Objet Asia and security conference series Blackhat Asia. Being the venue of choice for these shows demonstrates our ability to deliver a quality platform for them to debut in Asia.

Returning/multi-year shows to Marina Bay Sands: Marina Bay Sands also saw many significant returning shows in 2014. They include ArtStage Singapore, Asia Pacific Maritime, World Retail Congress, World Cities Summit, Tax Free World Association (TFWA) as well as Singapore International Water Week. Communic Asia and Broadcast Asia have also returned to host their event at Marina Bay Sands for the fourth and second time respectively. ArtStage Singapore held its exhibition at Sands Expo and Convention Centre for the 4th time this year, since its debut in Singapore in 2011. Marina Bay Sands is also the Of-



ficial Hotel and Venue Partner for the recently concluded ITB Asia from 2014 – 2016.

Green Meetings: As an ISO certified venue, we are already greener than most MICE operators to begin with. We champion sustainable event planning under the Sands ECO3600 Green Meetings to help organisers achieve their green meeting goals.

At this year's ITB Asia, Marina Bay Sands worked alongside Messe Berlin to stage the tradeshow's first-ever carbon neutral event since the show started. ITB Asia 2014 also championed several sustainable firsts for a travel trade show of such magnitude. Under the guidance of the integrated resort's team of sustainability experts, the organiser exceeded its original 5 per cent target to record an impressive 34 per cent reduction in the overall carbon footprint, from 399 tonnes in 2012 to 262 tonnes in 2014. Total electricity consumed also saw a significant decrease of 34.5 percent from 2012. A total of 2.6 tonnes of brochures were also collected and recycled at the end of the event. The nature of such a recycling drive is a first for ITB Asia, as well as Marina Bay Sands.

• Trevor McCartney

Our efforts in 2014 were focused on raising awareness of the Sultanate and OCEC overseas by actively participating in international trade shows that address market trends that will shape the future of the meetings and conventions industry. We also networked and met with key organizations and potential clients to secure events in time for our opening in 2016.

• Rajeev Kale

We have witnessed impressive growth of sports tourism this year. For a cricket crazy nation, the IPL certainly holds much allure. When UAE had hosted matches during the summer holiday season this year, our teams at Thomas Cook India witnessed a delightful uptake of demand over 25% in comparison to 2013. Also, with Brazil playing host to FIFA 2014, we had seen a delightful 20% increase in queries, with bookings to Brazil commencing as early as June/July 2013.

Our teams at Thomas Cook India have reported a powerful growth of about 40-45% in this segment of hobby/interest enthusiasts. Travel around culinary/cuisine has been clearly trending, with a 20% upswing, while photography has seen a 15% Y-o-Y growth.

Also, requests for unexplored destinations has observed an impressive 20% rise. We have also seen luxury holidays take off extensively, even across tier II & III markets with them contributing approximately 25-30% to our luxury market share.

2014 has been the year of long weekends along with a number of festivals thus creating greater travel opportunities for the travel-hungry Indian. The Independence Day weekend saw a delightful rise in queries- up by 20% while the Dussehra-Puja and Deepavali by 26%.

New unexplored destinations and unique & engaging experiences will be the predominate factors for corporates undertaking MICE travel seeing a growth of 25% this year.

With over 25% YoY growth over the last 5 years, at Thomas Cook India, MICE segment form a critical element of our strategic plan. In fact, this year, our internal research and analysis teams reveal that the MICE sector has immense scope of growth and is anticipated to fuel not only the domestic market

but equally so from an inbound tourism market.

• Ranbir Bhandari

2014 has been a good year for us. As one of India's largest hotels, we have had the pleasure of hosting and being a part of various MICE activities. We have also been recognized as India's Best business Hotel by Lonely Planet, thereby gradually making our presence felt in the industry.

Guest feedback is most valuable to us. Guests are delighted with "our authentic to the region" offerings which brings about a feeling of a home away from home. For locals we are a delight and for the expat segment we are the preferred choice, be it stay or F&B.

Taking forward the concept of luxury and authenticity, our Food and Beverage team has put together a very special indigenous, breakfast menu which includes the very popular to the destination, dosa, idlis and vadas especially prepared for our guests, making it a natural choice for a locavore.

• Mateusz Czerwinski

In January 2014 Warsaw CvB was moved from the city hall structures to Warsaw Tourism Organization. Now that the year has past, we clearly see that there could be no better solution for a destination management organization like ours.

We have become more independent, more flexible and what is very important: more reliable for our partners and stakeholders. Our biggest success of 2014 was bringing MCE Central & Eastern Europe to Warsaw. The event that's going to be held in February 2015 is the most important B2B workshop in CEE, with huge promotion potential for the destination.

It's going to be first MICE event bringing more than 100 hosted buyers to Warsaw and we won the destination contest only because we are part of public-private organization, with all its mentioned benefits.

>>> Which all will be the potential destinations that will bring in valuable returns to your business as well as economy of the country?

• Kabir Bedi

The only destination I think about is where to transport the audience in their minds. How do I want them to feel? What do I need to convey? How can I entertain them best? Benefits for consumers, companies and the country all flow from successful accomplishments.

• Martin Kubler

UAE business will continue to be driven by Dubai, followed by Abu Dhabi, which will see the completion of some long-awaited mega projects and further infrastructure improvements. Sharjah is likely to continue shaping its presence in the niche MICE market and we also expect Ras al Khaimah to attract more MICE business. In the wider region, Oman is the destination to watch out for, with new airports and a new convention centre in its capital Muscat set for completion.

• Trevor McCartney

Oman is strategically located between west and east and close to important emerging markets, allowing us a wide appeal



across all industry sectors. In addition to our ongoing strategic efforts in Europe and Asia, we are now looking to further penetrate the US marketplace by attending exhibition and networking events.

• **Rajeev Kale**

Thomas Cook India's analysis predicts Andamans, Kashmir, Ladakh, Kerala, Rajasthan, North East, Goa, South India/Nilgiris, Himachal, Bhutan and Gujarat to be top favourites. A significant offshoot of the rupee movement has been impressive growth for our Domestic MICE business with uptake for India destinations such as Jaipur, Hyderabad, Agra, Bangalore, Kochi, Port Blair.

• **Prashant Narayan**

Prime Minister Modi's new government has ushered in a new era for Destination India courtesy its pro-tourism initiatives: phased launch of e-visa facility to over 43 countries, together with the introduction of Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) has built critical mass-momentum and infused much-needed demand into the under leveraged inbound sector (40 countries account for 90 per cent of FTAs-foreign tourist arrivals- in India; and the scheme already seeing an increase of 7% in FTAs for the period January-October, 2014).

The recent increase in hotel inventory at tourist locations certainly is an encouraging initiative. We consider this to be a positive development as this will lead to rate correction at tourist locations and spur demand, both from overseas and domestic. With the entry of newer carriers and Visa on arrival facility getting an approval, there is huge potential of creating a huge competitive space – both a challenge and an opportunity – overall a positive development with correction in pricing, rationalisation and a balanced perspective. Not only is it expected to see a surge from last minute travelers but also the demand for Meetings & Conventions has already been witnessing an increasing growth with the addition of good hotels with convention facilities

For the coming year, we at Thomas Cook India see countries like US, Canada, Russia, and Latin America continuing to be the driving sources inbound markets contributing returns to the economy of the country and China, South Korea and Far East adding to the numbers of the traditional source markets.

• **Ranbir Bhandari**

Other than Domestic market which is showing a robust growth, Far East Japan, US, Germany and France have a great potential of bringing in valuable returns.

>>> What would be the growth marketing and business development strategy for 2015?

• **Kabir Bedi**

For Events: to convince organisers that impressive Presenters make ALL the difference. They make an event memo-

orable. With all the same ingredients, only a great chef can cook you an unforgettable meal. Why settle for less? Plan for the best. Budget it.

• **Martin Kubler**

The key concepts here are segmentation, customization, and connectivity. MICE organisers and guests are getting increasingly used to being able to customize virtually all aspects of their destination and business experience and they require flexible meeting and accommodation solutions that deliver value for money. Technology will play a key role with better online booking experiences demanded and more innovative technology usage during meetings & events facilitating business and driving down costs.

• **Mike Lee**

Combining work and play: The intensely competitive Asian travel industry has raised the stakes for innovative ideas that provide a truly distinctive travel experience, such as one that combines accommodation, luxury retail, unique culinary and entertainment concepts into the MICE package.

As a one-stop destination for business, leisure and entertainment, Marina Bay Sands offers round-the-clock and multi-dimensional offerings for business and leisure travellers alike. We are constantly reinvigorating our leisure and entertainment offerings to ensure we deliver the best through our world-class venues and service.

Growing emphasis on green meetings: The industry is seeing growing emphasis on green meetings with more meeting planners looking to partner venues capable of helping them achieve their sustainable goals or giving back to the community.

As an ISO 20121 certified property, Marina Bay Sands has ready resources and knowledge to value-add to clients' specific green goals, for instance, by providing solutions for a carbon-offset meeting and offering sustainably sourced food. Under Sands Eco360, our global sustainability strategy, we have helped clients create carbon impact statements that provide

post-event reports of their sustainability initiatives.

Talent development: Marina Bay Sands places great emphasis on our workforce and we invest heavily in training. As a MICE-led integrated resort, having a team of well-trained staff will enable us to better assist our clients in designing unique meeting experiences for them.

Use of technology / social media to drive content and engage travellers: Technological advances and the rise of social media have presented the need for MICE operators to leverage on social media platforms to engage its target audience and build its online brand reputation. These social media platforms are also important in helping operators curate their content and personalise the online experience.

Social Media is increasingly important to Marina Bay Sands, and we reach out to our visitors through channels such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and recently, Instagram. We have garnered close to 400,000 likes on our official Facebook page, generating over 1.5 million unique visits. The social media platforms are powerful tools that not allow us to continually engage the travel/MICE communities..





>>> **Kabir Bedi,**



>>> **Martin Kubler**



>>> **Mike Lee**



>>> **Trevor McCartney**



>>> **Rajeev Kale**



>>> **Prashant Narayan**



>>> **Ranvir Bhandari**



>>> **Mateusz Czerwinski**

• **Trevor McCartney**

We will continue our research to find those international organisations and business that have not only the potential to meet in Oman but that fit with the country's 2020 vision. Working with local, regional and international businesses and organizations to extend our reach to the regional and international market, outlining the venue's outstanding spatial possibilities, its technological superiority and our spectacular destination.

• **Ranvir Bhandari**

Entire India is on a growth momentum with the Prime Minister gaining positive sentiments across the globe.

• **Mateusz Czerwinski**

We are going to focus mainly on acquiring big conferences and congresses for 2017-2020 as we believe it should be an ultimate goal of every DMO willing to increase the impact of MICE industry on local economy by building and developing sustainable relationship with its business stakeholders.

>>> **How do you see Expo 2020 as a growth prospect for your business?**

• **Kabir Bedi**

Dubai hosting Expo2020 will be a major catalyst for the entire South and West Asian region. Like Shanghai Expo 2012 was for North and East Asia. I would love to be Master of Ceremonies at some of their big events. Exciting thought!

• **Martin Kubler**

Although an important achievement in the history of the UAE, we do not see Expo2020 as the "be all and end all".

Rather, it represents a chance to concentrate and drive the future development of Dubai, but also the entire country, and position the UAE as the premier tourism, business, and MICE destination in the world. We expect to see robust growth in the UAE up to and beyond 2020, but also an increasing chance for UAE-grown businesses like Iconsulthotels to play a leading role regionally and internationally.

• **Trevor McCartney**


Expo2020 will attract over 25 million people to the region and place it at the centre of the global stage. We will promote OCEC as the venue of choice and a major player in the global meetings and exhibition industry.

Expo2020 will attract over 25 million people to the region and place it at the centre of the global stage. We will promote OCEC as the venue of choice and a major player in the global meetings and exhibition industry.

• **Ranvir Bhandari**

The hospitality sector is a highly competitive market sector. The expo 2020 is expected to be the largest ever. It is a place for making new connections, networking and is an ideal platform for brand advocacy. It will indeed be a boon for upcoming hotels too.

• **Mateusz Czerwinski**

For Poland World Expo has always been a unique opportunity to showcase its science, business and cultural potential to the most influential international audience. 2020 will definitely be special, as many development strategies are going to conclude that year, so Dubai is going to be a perfect place to present impressive results of fast yet stable development of Poland since regaining independence in 1989. 





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Lavasa International Convention Centre Exotic! Business! Leisure!

“Lavasa International Convention Centre (LICC) provides an amalgam of leisure in business conferences with its exceptional qualities”, says Hotel Manager, Sachin Malhotra.

>>> Please give us a brief overview of Lavasa International Convention Centre (LICC) and your journey with it so far?

Lavasa International Convention Centre (LICC) is a purpose-built convention facility at the planned upcoming cosmopolitan destination Lavasa and is spread over 1.5 acres of land offering 3,300 square meters of convention space. The property is Managed by Accor and It is an ideal venue to host conferences and events from 20 to 2000 guests. The centre is so designed that it embodies a huge pillarless area for events & exhibitions and has vibrant interiors to break the monotony of long conference sittings. The lake side view from its foyer adds to the leisure value of the Convention Centre. Referring to the innovation and technology, which we believe is one of the prime parameters of world class Convention Centre, has also been served to the core. Lavasa International Convention Centre (LICC) is a property that possesses state of the art facilities and world class services to stand tall as a competitive convention venue in Indian.

>>> Who makes up the bulk of your MICE guests at LICC?

Since the start we have been well received by the corporate business from all parts of India. LICC has witnessed events from industries with different expertise including, IT, Automobiles, Pharmaceuticals, Agriculture, FMCG, Banking and Insurance, Telecommunications, Public Sector Undertakings, Associations and Clubs etc. We often witness events of the leading companies from these sectors. The venue has also been a dedicated location for many advertising commercials, product launches, media launches and even Bollywood movies. We are not just confined to utilize the convention centre as a business



>>> Sachin Malhotra
Hotel Manager, Lavasa International Convention Centre (LICC)



conference or exhibition module; we have very innovatively used the special characteristics of our venue and have modified it as a wedding destination, offering some unique concepts like in-water floating setups and luxurious extravaganza for wedding ceremonies.

>>> What is the convention Capacity of LICC (in square meters)?

We have a main Convention Box with the total capacity is 1200 to 1500 guests along with 16 break-out rooms. In addition we have a full service Board Room, Business Centre, Media room and a Speaker preparation room. We also have a Promenade terrace on the Dasve Lake front to host events, exhibitions, gala dinners that can accommodate a gathering of up to 5000 people.

>>> How well equipped is LICC, in technological aspects?

In the today's growing MICE market, technology has become one of the major and primary parameter for a venue. Realizing need of a technologically advanced system, we designed LICC as a high-end, technologically equipped venue. Today, we possess exceptional AV systems with full services mounted on a wireless console complementing a wide range of services ranging from 6mtrs X 4mtrs drop-down ceiling mounted screens, ceiling support projectors of 15000 lumens and a network of ceiling mounted speaker system. The network of rigging points in the ceiling along with a full Cat work above the false ceiling provides another technological advantage. We have dedicated Cisco tele-presence facility, 8 language simulcast interpretation console, ceiling mounted high definition cameras for live Web casting, video conferenc-



ing facility an all other aids to execute a world class convention. We strongly believe in exceptional and up-to-date technological advancements at our venue. We also possess a wide network of floor points containing video projection points (VGA), telephone, internet and sound outputs points. The complete venue is WiFi with a provision of expanding the dedicated band width based on event demand. In addition, our digital infrastructure and event setups are managed by an experienced and qualified internal team who ensures that our guest capitalise on the latest technology and equipment available to achieve their event objectives to the best.

>>> **How does your venue stay competitive in the globally booming MICE market?**

In the past few years we had joined hands with international convention bodies like ICCA, AIPC and ICPB for higher promotional value to our property and sharing of best practices. We organize FAM trips with airline companies and participate in all trade & MICE fairs. LICC is very dedicated to work hard in upholding a world-class multipurpose convention competence that facilitates to be an appropriate one-stop convention solution for any meeting essentials. The worldwide sales network of Accor also helps us stay abreast with the industry directions and expectations. We recurrently keep improving on our technological facilities maintenance of the venue. LICC is a malleable venue due to its location and design, having said that, we offer an ideal location, modern facilities and professional servic-

es to host a wide variety of arrangements, ranging from international conferences to grand wedding celebrations, product launches and banquets. We also have the facility of a 130 key Mercure Lavasa, to accommodate delegates and guests attending programs at LICC.

>>> **What is the major challenge that is faced by Lavasa as a destination for MICE?**


Lavasa is a beautiful and unique venue with international standards of meeting facilities. LICC provides an amalgam of leisure and business conferences with its exceptional qualities. The lake, the mountains, wilderness and year round pleasant climate are certain specific attractive features of the destination which makes us incomparable with any other facility in India. This is a huge advantage and is usually our niche proposition. The only area of development or challenge that we can think of is the below par capacity of Pune Airport and its limitation for international flights. With this area expected to improve soon, we defiantly look at a more promising future.

>>> **What do you think are the major challenges faced by the industry due to growing technology centric webinars that create a virtual platform?**

I don't accept technology to be challenge for the MICE industry. The events and conventions are organized with just 2 major objectives, first the need to communicate with like-minded and similar interest persons and to showcase your business to explore expansion possi-

bilities. The face to face interaction will always be a necessity for any business module. Rather, I believe that these virtual platforms have enhanced the scope and participation of opinion leaders and influencers in the conventions and meetings happening all across the world. With the introduction of such facilities the world has become an even smaller place for the participants and speakers with travel limitations or restrictions. Now you could attend multiple important events across the globe without travelling. I appreciate these innovations as they are making the MICE activates more fruitful as well as rich in content.

>>> **Any message you would like to share with the Industry?**

LICC's offers best in class assistance to its clients. We offer some very innovative and exclusive concepts with copious assistance, assurance and support to ensure the success of all events. It is a single window shop for all your convention needs supported by trained and skilled expert of delivering successful events. LICC, is not just confines to only professional conferences, but is also a leisure destination for incentive travel groups. LICC provides a bouquet of pre and post conference facilities that are customised to the client's needs. Lavasa gives our clients to explore and practice unmatched branding options on Air, Water and Land. We hope that you will have the chance to experience the unparalleled resources and services that we offer and look forward to being the venue of choice in this region. I solemnly invite you to visit LICC and experience for yourself the discrete hospitality. 

TheMICEworld: On and Only Global Platform Specialized in MICE Tourism

TheMICEworld is the one and only global Platform specialized in MICE Tourism. We are a “MICE Promotion Hotel searchengine”. We put together in one search the best and most exclusive “MICE Promotions” & “Meeting Packages” worldwide, from the main urban and vacational Hotels, that are suitable for MICE Events.

TheMICEworld also suggests, in each research result, different options of local and global DMC’s who can help you in the different destinations. We also provide the direct link and contact information of the corresponding Convention & Visitor Bureau.

Also, and if you are looking for inspiration about experiences for groups, take a look at our “MICE Experiences”! They are also associated to their pertinent destination.

The MICE Industry has been a very tumultuous period during 2014. Unfortunately, we already have countries immersed in an economic crisis. Even though, most of them are showing recovery signs. There are a few destinations where we can find a very satisfying business growth as Istanbul, Singapore, Bangkok, and overall Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

TheMICEworld had a fantastic year, as we have grown in many strategic destinations, adding Hotels, DMC’s, Cvb’s, specially in Europe, UAE, South America and Asia. On the other hand, we have



>>> Raúl Guerra
Director of Sales & Marketing,
TheMICEworld

TheMICEworld also suggests, in each research result, different options of local and global DMC’s who can help you in the different destinations. We also provide the direct link and contact information of the corresponding Convention & Visitor Bureau.

increased our Platform’s functionality and utility.

In my opinion, the main reasons why the “MICE business” has grown are the following:

- Best Quality of our Emerging Destinations
- Best Hospitality Quality (new hotels or renovation)
- New Technology Development (Tools that will facilitate the Meeting Planner functions)
- Collaboration between Public-Private investments on the different tourist initiatives development.

The tourism of business trips, events, conferences and incentive travels will show a moderate growth for 2015 as a consequence of a moderate global economic growth. The areas of Asia, the Middle East and Africa is where the growth will be most noticeable. This data makes us think we should keep on working to achieve better and bigger objectives.

As a global company, we consider different destinations that are going to be the most recurrent in the MICE Industry for our users/clients, when planning their events: Bangkok, Singapore, Seoul, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Istanbul, Madrid, Paris, London, Barcelona, Macao, New York, Miami, Las Vegas, Sao Paulo and Cartagena de Indias.

Without any doubt, this exhibition is a great opportunity for everyone in the MICE Industry. The main beneficiary will be of course the destination of Dubai, which will receive people from all over the world; but in our case, it will also be a great opportunity to strengthen this destination throughout our platform, thanks to the exclusive promotions of our hotel members. Dubai is at the moment one of our most searched MICE destinations. This will also be a great opportunity for Dubai to show and introduce the world its excellent properties, detailed service, culture, gastronomy, etc. **dm**





GLOBAL HSE Dubai, UAE

GLOBAL HSE CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION
22-26 February, 2015, Dubai World Trade Centre

Theme: Driving Change, Creating Value

Carbon Neutral Event

In Association with:



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Global HSE 2015 Event Info

After the great Success achieved by the first edition of the conference under the support of Cairn Energy India in September 2013, The second edition is launched in Dubai with an platform for international and regional experts under the driving theme "Driving Change, Creating Value"

Achieving world class HSE performance is a key success factor for any business aiming to achieve operational excellence. Businesses across sectors are adopting proactive and uncompromising commitment towards HSE problems. Issues concerning HSE will assume paramount importance as the Middle East countries emerge and evolve as the fastest growing economies and the drivers of energy demand across the globe.

Global HSE-2015 will bring organizations to adequately address the risk of occupational health and safety of employees with HSE professionals for knowledge sharing, high level learning and networking. Experts from Global industry, government, and academia will attend to share insights and best practices.

Mobile Application



Exhibitors : 150+ from over 50 countries (Expected)

Delegates : 800+ from over 50 countries (Expected)

Visitors : 5000+ from over 50 countries (Expected)

Exhibition Area : 2000sqm+

www.globalhseconference.com

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European Tourism Association Partners OTOAI at WTM to woo Indian buyers to its March Marketplace 2015

The European Tourism Association (ETOA) has formed a new partnership with the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) to cooperate on the promotion of the UK and Ireland's visitor offer to the Indian market. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on ETOA's stand at the World Travel Market held in London.

The main subject of the MOU is OTOAI's support of ETOA's March Marketplace (MAMA) business networking workshop, taking place on March 16-17, 2015 in London. The first day of the B2B workshops is dedicated to selling the UK and Ireland, followed by a day dedicated to selling London.

Guldeep Singh Sahni, President, OTOAI said, "It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the signing of an MOU between ETOA, the leading trade association for tour operators and suppliers with business in European destinations and OTOAI – a national, not for profit organisation comprising of India's lead-



ing outbound operators, NTO's, airlines and overseas suppliers wishing to do business in India. Our two regions have a long history of political, trade and travel links and we also have excellent flight connectivity. Europe and UK are very strongly represented in India by their various tourism boards already but signing an MOU with ETOA to promote MAMA 15 and UK with Ireland to begin with to our almost 300 active members, who collectively would influence travel business decisions globally to the tune of around 15 million USD, is an excellent initiative. We feel that mutual coopera-

tion between ETOA and OTOAI would be immensely beneficial to the membership of both associations and MAMA 15 would showcase a multi layered destination experience in UK & Ireland to Indians who already have a fondness for and a pre-disposition to choose the UK for work, leisure and higher education. The benefits of the new transit visa regimen for UK with effect from December 2014 should also push up short term and transit traffic, which can have pleasantly surprising results on a destinations visitor economy. I congratulate ETOA on this initiative and wish your team all success in our future joint endeavour."

"India is an origin market of enormous importance to us" said Tom Jenkins, CEO, ETOA. "More than 1.8 million visitors come from India into Europe and this is predicted to grow at a compound rate of seven percent in the near future. The affluent Indian consumer is becoming more used to travelling over here and more comfortable exploring what Europe has to offer."

Oman Tourism organizes networking evening for corporates and wedding planners

In order to promote Oman as a MICE and Wedding destination in the Indian market, the Sultanate of Oman, Ministry of Tourism recently organized a networking evening called 'Discover the opulence of Oman: The emerging MICE and Wedding destination' at the Trident, Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai.

Over 70 representatives from the FMCG, insurance, banking and healthcare sectors attended the event where Oman's diverse landscape, rich heritage and culture, state-of-the-art infrastructure, museums and shopping options were showcased. The evening also saw a panel discussion being held on the 'USP of an emerging destination for organizing MICE Events and Destination Weddings'. The panelists consisted of Lubaina Sheerazi, India Representative, Ministry of Tourism, Sultanate of Oman; Sushil Wadhwa, Founder & CMD, Platinum World Group; Hriday Daswaney, Director, Viwaha Dreamz and Bhupesh Kumar, Senior Vice President, Aon Global Insurance



Brokers Pvt. Ltd while the moderator of the session was Sheldon Santwan, Editor, TravelBiz Monitor.

Ms Lubaina Sheerazi, India Representative, Ministry of Tourism, Sultanate of Oman said at the event, "Oman is a short-haul destination being just three hours away from India and is an unexplored, quaint and beautiful destination in the Middle East. It is a destination for the discerning and evolved travelers who want to experience something uniquely different. Oman has a beautiful communion of modernism and old-world charm that

gives the country its unique character."

Talking about why Oman will appeal to the corporates in India, Mr Sushil Shamlal Wadhwa, Founder & CMD, Platinum World Group, said, "Many corporates who have done several international trips are looking for new destinations and Oman meets this criterion and also offers some new experiences. Good venues to host events and great connectivity with India make Oman an ideal destination for corporates."

Ms Hriday Daswaney, Director, Viwaha Dreamz spoke about destination weddings and said, "Every family that is planning a wedding is looking to do something different. This is the main factor why families are moving towards destination weddings. They are trying to find new destinations where people have never been to as guests lose interest in coming for a wedding if it's a destination they have already travelled. For guests it becomes an all-in-one holiday where they may even extend a couple of days before or after the wedding and enjoy the destination. From that perspective Oman is brilliant for weddings as it gives the entire "new feel" to destination weddings."

South African Tourism to Conduct Annual 4-city Roadshow in Feb 2015

South African Tourism's biggest travel trade engagement initiative, the 12th annual roadshow will start across four cities in India in the presence of over 60 South African suppliers in February 2015.

Hanneli Slabber, Country Manager, South African Tourism, said, "In order to sustain our growth and widen our audience reach in the country, we continue to focus on bringing in different South African products and expanding our reach to newer markets every year through this trade engagement initiative. The 12th Annual Roadshow will certainly develop and strengthen business opportunities among Indian and South African partners."

Starting from Mumbai on 2 February, the roadshow will travel to Ahmedabad on 4 February, Bengaluru on 5 Febru-



ary before culminating in New Delhi on 6 February 2015. Representatives of Franschhoek Wine Valley, Turnberry Boutique Hotel, Gary Kirsten Travel & Tours, Paarl & Wellington Tourism, Cango Wildlife Ranch, Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism, and Double Tree By Hilton Cape Town are among those who will make their presence at the annual property.

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Key business makers had a glimpse of New Zealand for major events

Tourism New Zealand, in partnership with The Australasian Society of Association Executives (AuSAE) and Air New Zealand, hosted nine association executives in New Zealand in a bid to grow the number of Australian business events in New Zealand.

The group, which represent leading Australian associations, were hosted in Rotorua for three days at the New Zealand AuSAE Leadership Symposium.

The executives then experienced bespoke itineraries across Auckland, Wellington and Queenstown showcasing each destination for future conference opportunities.

International Business Events Manager Bjoern Spreitzer says this was a great opportunity to showcase what New Zealand has to offer to key association decision makers in Australia.

"The group were able to experience itineraries tailored to their associations and to meet with key local thought leaders relevant to their field of expertise."

In June this year Tourism New Zealand announced a marketing agreement with AuSAE, aimed at growing the number of Australian business events in New Zealand.

AuSAE represents over 10,000 individual leaders working in not-for-profit organisations throughout Australia and New Zealand.

The two-year agreement formalises a commitment from AuSAE to promote New Zealand as a business events destination to their members and improve the capability of New Zealand associations to host an international conference.

The symposium is a key piece of activity under the agreement and was a great opportunity to showcase what New Zealand can offer these associations as a business events destination.

"Australia is an important market for the business events sector in New Zealand and we are excited to be working collaboratively with AuSAE on activity like this, to promote the benefits of holding events in New Zealand to key decision makers," says Bjoern.

The group represent organisations such as the Australian Veterinary Association, Australian Institute of Office Professionals and the Australian Institute of Professional Photography and Professional Video Production.



SULTANATE OF
oman
Ministry of Tourism

GCC tourists prefer Oman for short breaks

Oman has been ranked as a top travelling destination for GCC tourists who are looking for short holidays, a senior official of the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) said.

This comes after Oman has emerged as one of the most preferred destinations among GCC travellers, registering a 17 per cent increase in GCC citizens at the end of third quarter of 2014.

According to the latest statistics by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, over 701,311 inbound tourists from the GCC visited the Sultanate until September 2014.

Salem Adi Al Mamari, Director General of Tourism Promotion, Oman Ministry of Tourism, said that compared with other countries, Oman offers a wide range of variety in its geographical features, making it an attractive destination for all-year-round tourism. "From ancient forts to most modern hotels, beaches to mountains, cuisines to spas, and recreation to relaxation, we have something to satisfy the needs of even the most discerning travellers. Besides, the Sultanate boasts of the world-class airports, wide network of highways, superior ports to make the travel inside and outside the country more smoothly. We have partnered with Oman Air to offer economical and interesting travel packages to attract potential travellers to see our country as well as remind the existing travellers to visit again."

The proactive measures undertaken by the Omani government to sustain the seamless expansion in the country's tourism sectors have complemented this growth. The country has witnessed a spurt in developing activities in its infrastructural facilities, including airports, roads and rail networks, and maritime sectors.

To attract more tourists during the upcoming tourism season, MOT in collaboration with Oman Air, the national carrier airline of Oman, recently held a promotional event at the Conrad Hotel Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The event aimed to reinforce the joint venture between both parties to promote Oman as the leading tourist destination for short breaks.

IBTM Africa Now Accepting Hosted Buyer Applications

Hosted Buyer applications are now being accepted for ibtmafrica 2015 (www.ibtmafrica.com), a highly targeted, exclusive event for Africa's incentives and meetings industry, taking place at the Cape Town Convention Centre from 13-15 April 2015.

ibtmafrica offers an exclusive opportunity for top level international decision makers to connect and engage with African and Indian Ocean exhibitors including destinations, venues, hotels, DMC's and MICE support services over three days of one-to-one pre-scheduled appointments, networking and education.

In addition to their diary of up to 36 pre-scheduled business appointments with MICE exhibitors, qualified buyers will benefit from complimentary accommodation and transfers as well as a substantial contribution towards international flights to Cape Town and will have the opportunity to apply to attend a post event tour.

Shinu Pillai, Exhibition Manager for ibtmafrica, comments: "Africa holds enormous potential for the MICE industry with great investment in infrastructure. The rapidly growing demand for meetings industry suppliers within Africa has been reflected in



ibtm™ africa
cape town, south africa
13 - 15 april 2015

the unprecedented interest witnessed from international Hosted Buyers who applied to attend the first ibtmafrica and is expected to pave the way for the 2015 event."

Suresh Puri, Spice Travel, India who was a Hosted buyer at last year's show commented: "It's very well organised and full of quality and I see it on both sides not only as a buyer but also the exhibitors, who are representing the region very adequately. So my impression is that the intimate one-to-one sessions give buyers an opportunity and an insight into the products the region has to offer, my compliments to Reed Exhibitions."

Meetings and incentives professionals who apply to attend this event as Hosted Buyers will be qualified under strict criteria including their purchasing authority, their

annual MICE business, their annual budget and future business to place in Africa. They will also be first-time attendees at ibtmafrica. Successful applicants will be senior decision makers from the Middle East, Europe, Asia Pacific, North America, South America and Russia, therefore representing a cross-section of the most senior meeting and incentives planners in the industry.

The second edition of ibtmafrica, taking place in Cape Town (13-15 April) as part of Africa Travel Week, will bring together up to 60 African and Indian Ocean suppliers and international buyers over three days for business, networking and education.

To find out more about ibtmafrica or to register to attend as a Hosted Buyer, please visit www.ibtmafrica.com

DCVB and Local MICE Suppliers Ramp Up Green Efforts

The Daegu Convention and Visitors Bureau (DCVB) along with local Meeting, Incentives, Conferencing and Exhibitions (MICE) Suppliers continue to make progress in furthering sustainable and environmentally friendly efforts. The two groups have done so by improving the venues that house events, reducing paper/food waste and taking better care of its surroundings. Progress from the city of Daegu itself further amplifies these efforts.

The "Be a Green Man" and "Green Zone" campaigns are at the forefront of their efforts. In conjunction, they allowed the DCVB and MICE Suppliers to substantially lower the effect large-scale events had on the local environment.

"Be a Green Man" was an initiative to directly involve participants in a broader environmental responsibility mission while the "Green Zone" was an area located in the lobby of major events typically near the registration desk or on the exhibition floor. It was a highly visible space aimed at showing delegates, exhibitors and visitors how they can be more environmentally responsible.

Specifically, these two sought to not only educate but also to enact tangible change. The reduction of paper materials and implementation of reusable products has perhaps made the biggest



difference. Banners, flyers, nametags, lanyards and signs are reused as often as possible. Drinks like coffee and tea are offered in ceramic glasses that are returned by attendees and then washed for future use, drastically reducing paper waste.

Paper waste is reduced even more with greater digitization of materials. Online brochures, the increased use of NFC (Near Field Communication) and scanning QR (Quick Response) Codes to transmit documents and information have led to a precipitous decline in wasted paper.

In addition to the aforementioned "Green Campaigns", significant efforts were made to better event venues. The EXCO (Exhibition and Conven-

tion) center houses nearly all major MICE events. Therefore, it's of the utmost importance that it be a physical beacon of sustainability. It is equipped with the largest solar power system in Korea for an independent building. Furthermore, a large-scale energy regeneration system was installed in 2011 making it the world's best "Green Convention Center".

Recently, the DCVB and Daegu MICE Alliance held a MICE Day that brought many of these efforts to light. Online invitations were used in lieu of paper. Ceramic and glass cups were offered instead of disposable ones. Nametags were recycled as participants exited. Lunch boxes were made of locally sourced organic ingredients with some of the profits donated back into the community. Even the event's Christmas tree was donated to a children's center at the end of the day.

Moving forward, as Daegu becomes an increasingly sought after host to MICE events, the DCVB, in conjunction with local MICE suppliers, will continue to ramp up efforts to become more environmentally friendly. Additional support and forward thinking from the city of Daegu will also foster gains. Sustainability is a top priority for all involved and even better results can be expected in the future.

ITE & MICE Hong Kong 2015 - HKWMA to step up Co-operation on Honeymoon and Overseas Wedding "HOW" in Travel Expo

To facilitate promotion and deliverance of overseas wedding services, HKWMA will organize, in the coming ITE & MICE Hong Kong, its members particularly the wedding planners to attend Business Matching (networking) and trade seminars, and visit related official pavilions / stands. HKWMA will also help inviting counterparts in China particularly those in Guangdong to visit ITE & MICE.

According to HKWMA, its members are particularly interested in learning more about overseas wedding facilities (heritage and culture venues etc), legal requirements and procedures for foreigner's marriage application, and supports and incentives (FAM tour etc). And meeting or establishing contact with potential business associates overseas (travel agent and wedding professional etc) is also a priority.

With over 2,000 members from related sectors such as wedding and travel planner, hotel, ceremony, and photography etc, HKWMA has been supporting the popular theme pavilion of Honeymoon & Overseas Wedding (HOW) in ITE & MICE since 2013.

Respectively 24% of the 12308 trade visitors and 14% of the 75300 public visi-



tors of ITE & MICE 2014 were interested in HOW. Also present were 650 international exhibitors from 47 countries and regions, which included many popular destinations such as those island paradises, hotels, and travel agents catering for overseas wedding etc.

"Wedding marrying with Travelling can result in exciting services like Destination wedding, Pre-Wedding Photography, Honeymoon travel and Group Wedding event. 12 million china wedding couples in 2014 spends average \$170,000 on wedding and 8.5% percent go to destination wedding services generate an approximately 173 billion dollars marketplaces." said Ms. Angel Kwong, President of HKWMA, and "there is mas-

sive space for sustainable business development". HKWMA deems it rewarding in co-operating on HOW with ITE & MICE!

"We welcome HKWMA continues expanding the cooperation on HOW, and would thank their efforts to bring in more wedding planners from Hong Kong and Guangdong to attend our travel expo" said KS Tong, Managing Director of TKS Exhibition Services Ltd, which organizes the annual Hong Kong International Travel Expo (ITE) and the concurrent MICE Travel Expo known collectively as ITE & MICE.

ITE & MICE 2015 will be held from 11 to 14 June 2015 at Halls 1A to 1E at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre, with first two days for trade and the last two open to public. It is supported by China National Tourism Administration, Hong Kong Tourism Board, Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong and Macau Government Tourist Office, trade associations of travel agents and event industries from Hong Kong and in the region.

For expo's details and market news, please visit www.itehk.com while the website for public, www.travelexpo.com.hk will be available in mid May. For enquiry of exhibiting and visiting, please send email to travel@tkshk.com or contact the Organizer, TKS at (852) 3155 0600.

IACC Unveils New Global Directory for MICE Planners

IACC CEO Mark Cooper has announced the launch of a new website at IACCmeetings.com. "The primary goal of the website which offers the only a global directory of IACC-certified conference venues is to provide a streamlined experience for Meeting Planners who are searching for their next conference venue" according to Cooper.

One of the major features of the new design is the separation and distinction of the venue directory, which is designed specifically to accommodate Meeting Planners who want an easy to use search tool, which they can review IACC conference centres specialising in meetings. This separation is designed to provide an improved online environment for both meeting planners and



members who have their own landing page at IACCOnline.org.

The site has been designed to provide the "ultimate user-friendly experience" said Cooper, with improved navigation and functionality throughout to allow meeting planners the ability to access detailed product in-

formation and videos with the option to share information across all major social networking sites.

IACC spent considerable time engaging the meeting planner community in the design process to make sure the site would provide a simplified navigation with richer online content that is easier to navigate and share. This feedback allowed IACC to present a new website with full functionality over desktop, smartphone and tablet devices and will offer the Meeting Planners stronger search options when seeking their next conference centre.

Cooper also continued, "Our members are equally important and to better support them, it was important to develop the IACC member website to more efficiently provide our members access to important industry data and services. Separating the two websites was important because we wanted to achieve the best service for both audiences."

Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau Invites Travelers to “#LethawaiiHappen”

As part of an innovative social media engagement program being launched this month, the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB) is encouraging residents and visitors to show how the best part of traveling throughout The Hawaiian Islands can often be those wonderful unplanned moments of a “planned” vacation.

Certainly, enjoying familiar, iconic sites and activities in Hawaii are a can't-miss for any itinerary. But more travelers are discovering the unexpected pleasures that await them when they fully embrace Hawaii and let the magical aura of the islands lead them to treasured new experiences.

HVCB is inviting travelers to tag #LethawaiiHappen in their social media posts to share these personal Hawaii vacation memories with the rest of the world, and also to see how others enjoyed their days and nights across the islands.

“While everyone knows that The Hawaiian Islands are rich in natural beauty, the oftentimes untold story is that the real beauty of this incredibly rich destination, with its unique culture, traditions, experiences, and activities, are those special memories that couples, families, and friends create throughout their stay as they hang-loose and go with the flow,” said Jay Talwar, HVCB's chief marketing officer. “#LethawaiiHappen aims to let residents and fellow visitors alike show their friends and family what Hawaii is all about through their personal images as they weave their stories of having fun as they #LethawaiiHappen on their own journeys throughout The Hawaiian Islands.”

Outrigger in Phuket Adds CSR Options for MICE Clients

The Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort in Thailand has added a choice of community help programs for its meeting clients.

The main project is on-going support for the Ban Bang Rong primary school in the rural northeast of the island. Outrigger global staff attending an internal conference in September last year pledged support to the village school. Outrigger staff planted vegetables in the school garden, painted the toilets and canteen, re-arranged the library, and donated educational games and materials to the school.

These CSR activities, and more, are now being extended to corporate conference groups meeting at Outrigger who want to show their support for the school or for other projects in the greater Phuket community.

“The primary school has many on-going needs,” says Tony Pedroni, General Manager of the Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort. “In recent weeks we have made repairs to the drinking water filtration system and have installed a playground for the younger kids. Outside of the school however there are several opportunities to provide much need island wide community and environmental project support. Ultimately our aim is to work with clients so that they can give something back to our community in a meaningful way that has lasting benefit.”

In November, the 255-key Outrigger unveiled its Similan Ballroom, featuring natural light, three breakout rooms and innova-



tive team building options.

Named after the beautiful Similan Islands in the Andaman Sea near Phuket, the Similan Ballroom measures 716sqm; the Tongfah 158sqm; the Tawan and Talay breakout rooms are 77sqm each. The new facilities further boost Phuket's considerable business events reputation and credentials.

The full technical spec of the Similan Ballroom and the three breakout rooms can be found here.

The Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort will be represented at AIME, which takes place in Melbourne, 24-25 February 2015

Santa Monica Convention & Visitors Bureau Launches Local Pop-Up Gallery at Main Street Visitor Center Location

Santa Monica Convention & Visitors Bureau (SMCVB) announced today the launch of a pop-up gallery featuring artwork and products by local artist Gonen Yacov at the Main Street Visitor Center now through Dec. 31, 2014.

“Santa Monica's creative vibe is truly what makes our community unique and we are thrilled to offer that experience within our visitor center,” said SMCVB President/CEO Misti Kerns. “If you haven't finished your holiday shopping, Yacov has created some incredibly authentic Santa Monica-inspired pieces that will make a special gift for loved ones and clients.”

Yacov lives in Santa Monica and is the founder of GY Creative Studio, a boutique design house that exemplifies the marriage between graphic design and fine art. A graduate of the prestigious Shenkar Academy of Engineering and Design in Ramat-gan, Israel, Yacov came to the US in 2007 to refine his skills and offer a new approach to design. His art reflects his appreciation for the natural beauty of Southern California.

“As a Santa Monica artist, it is really exciting for me to be able to show and sell my various collections on Main Street,” Yacov emphasized. “I am grateful to SMCVB for this opportunity and

laud them for being such a supporter of the arts in this community. It's this type of cooperation and recognition from the business community that will help sustain such a vibrant artist culture in Santa Monica.”

Items for sale include graphic t-shirts, acrylic art, 3D shadow box wall art, and oil canvases.

This marks the beginning of a new initiative to incorporate local artists into the Santa Monica visitor center experience. An official pilot program and application process will be announced in the first quarter of 2015 for local artists who are interested in participating.

AIME 2015: Registration is Open

With a brand new program promising to inspire, AIME (Asia-Pacific Incentives & Meetings Expo) 2015 is now open. Industry members from the travel, planning meetings, conference and special events sectors are encouraged to pre-register online from today to secure free entry to the event. Delegates who do not register can still purchase tickets on the door for \$25.

Scheduled for 24 – 25 February 2015 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, AIME is set to showcase 700 Exhibitors from around the world from the business events, global destinations and travel industries. Stallholders will showcase their most innovative products and services on the newly re-designed floor.

After going under review and being re-structured, the new floor plan has been implemented with a community strategy in mind, with easy access to social networking events, new business & networking areas and the opportunity to access the latest, most relevant industry information available with the new AIME Knowledge program.

“The new community strategy reflects the need to continually refresh our offerings in addition to the results of last years’ feedback from our attendees,” said Jacqui Timmins, Exhibition Director AIME & CIBTM. “On the show floor,



the brand new layout will also make life easier for those in attendance, with hotels and products and services grouped together, to ensure attendees can easily find and access the suppliers they want to engage and network with.”

The vast majority (94%) of Trade Visitors classified AIME 2014 as a ‘must attend event’, a claim that was officially recognised when AIME was awarded Best Exhibition at the Australia Event Awards in November this year.

To celebrate its 50th anniversary this year, AIME has collaborated with Saxton to bring together an impressive collection of more than 25 speakers, including Ita Buttrose, Mike Munro, Mark Bouris, Craig Davis and Vinh Giany for the “Australia Speaks- celebrating 50 years with Saxton” dinner on Tuesday 24 February.

This is just one of the interactive online and offline networking experiences scheduled for AIME 2015, which aims to keep those in the industry connected and inspired and encourages the community to have fun, be creative and foster valuable industry connections.

World Travel Market Africa
15-17 April 2015
Cape Town

WTM Africa Expands to Become a 3-day Event

World Travel Market (WTM) Africa 2015 has been expanded to a three-day event, following the hugely successful inaugural show. WTM Africa launched in spring 2014 as a two-day event in Cape Town, immediately established itself as the leading B2B tourism event in Africa. The inaugural event saw almost 4,000 industry professionals negotiate deals worth \$314 million (£189 million).

Furthermore, WTM Africa 2015 exhibition floor space will be 50 per cent bigger due to increased interest from both private and public sector companies around the world looking to take part.

The 2015 show will again take place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) and will run from April 15-17.

MICE world’s new meeting point: ACE of MICE Exhibition 2015 – February in Istanbul

Organized for the first time in 2014 “ACE of MICE Exhibition” is the leading regional event for the meetings, incentives, conferences, events and business travel industry which brought MICE industry professionals from Turkey and all around the globe in a splendid event.

ACE of MICE Exhibition is a 3-day event and the program activities include exhibition (with B2B meetings), seminar sessions, networking events and the ACE of MICE Awards Ceremony, which is attended by 3,000 senior meetings and tourism industry individuals from all around the world. AIME reached on 2014 9,856 visitors (1053 international and 8803 local) and 3,725 B2B pre-scheduled appointments were organized with 579 hosted buyers from Turkey, North & Latin America, European Countries, Middle



East Countries, Africa and Asian Countries.

Excellent opportunity to strengthen business relationships by meeting significant MICE companies and buyers from both Turkey and abroad. Turkish buyers and visitors comprises major corporate companies, agencies and expanding associations with an increasing potential and interest to international destinations. AIME 2015 will gather 300 international and 500 local buyers at a splendid event.



SATTE Gears Up for 2015 Edition

South Asia’s leading B2B travel trade show is around the corner and, as a brand that grows year on year, it is geared up to outdo its previous editions. The show, to be held from 29-31 January 2015 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, expects to cross its 2014 attendee numbers - 11,500+ across three days, and is well on its way to achieving that goal with an impressive 75 per cent jump in pre-registered visitor numbers vis-à-vis the same period last year. Furthermore, the 22nd edition of SATTE will be spread over 17,500 sqm gross, thus making it India’s biggest travel and tourism event, and expects to feature over 650 exhibitors and the representation of over 50 countries.

ITHS 2014 Ends on a Successful Note

The International Travel and Hospitality Show (ITHS) 2014 and Oman Tourism Summit ended on a successful note on 16th December 2014. More than 30 exhibitors participated at the ITHS Exhibition which attracted a total of 1150 visitors. Besides the Exhibition and the Summit activities, the Exhibition concluded with an ITHS Tour organized by OITE and sponsored by Oman National Ferries Company. The Tour promoted relationship building outdoors among 70 exhibitors and visitors who had the opportunity to experience the scenic Muscat coastline. Some of the exhibitors share their experiences at ITHS 2014 and the Oman Tourism Summit.

“Participating at ITHS was a lucrative opportunity for Golden Tours Oman to discuss opportunities for furthering business and reaching agreements with companies we met at ITHS. I strongly recommend that fairs like ITHS be conducted to promote the tourism scenario in the country” says Mr. Humaid Al Mujaini, General Manager, Golden Tours Oman

Rally Royale is a VVIP premium auto rally venture focused on lifestyle Grand Tours that relaxes, revives and engages all the senses. In the autumn of 2015, Rally Royale will bring up to twenty-six classic cars from all over the world to enjoy the most spectacular driving conditions that Arabia has



to offer. “Rally Royale has a very specific niche, it targets groups of people around the world who collect classic cars, and enjoy driving them around the world as part of a new cultural experience. I think ITHS is a great platform for networking, the Summit has been informative about the region, where the tourism industry is blooming and where there is huge scope for investment” says Ms. Ruba Jurdi, Founder/Director, Rally Royale.

As part of their launch promotion for their new brand Novell L'Espresso, Desert Rose Diamond had a special promo-

tion on their Espresso coffee machines. “We were really happy because we had a lot of customers and got some orders, which is great because we are launching our brand for the 1st time in the Omani market. ITHS was an opportune platform to promote Novell L'Espresso because we have different product ranges for the hospitality sector, the retail sector or just about anyone looking for a good cup of coffee” says Ms. Roser Biosca, Managing Director, Desert Rose Diamond

From a visitor's perspective, Mr. Abdul Rahman Awadhi, Executive Director, Awadhi Co. who is an entrepreneur from Bahrain said “I'm here because I love Oman and respect and appreciate the way they handle their tourism. It's a very unique strategy and my personal goal is to look at investment and employment opportunities in this sector. I see a lot of interesting tourism projects coming up, and it's very admirable where the country is going.”

Speaking about the ITHS Exhibition he continues “Having gone around the booths, it's really nice to see a lot of entrepreneurs my age. They look really passionate about their country and what they do. You can tell that there's a lot of potential for SME's in Oman, to set up new businesses or look into prospective affiliations, and credit is due to all those involved in spurring this activity.”

Reactivation of the Torun Convention Bureau

Torun Convention Bureau announce that Torun appeared on the Polish map of the regional Convention Bureaus after an interval of several years.

Torun Convention Bureau is starting its operations in the structures of the Local Tourist Organization in Torun in connection with the formation of the tourist - business cluster. It is an initiative of the entities associated with the meetings industry, such as hotel and conference facilities or the organizers of meetings and events. By undertaking joint initiatives Torun CB will promote the city as a venue for events thanks to the existing and emerging investments.

I am glad that by noticing a common goal of the stakeholders associated in LTO Torun it was possible to appoint a body responsible for pro-



motion and attracting events to our city. I believe that the jointly implemented activities will seriously affect the perception and significance of the city in terms of the meetings industry- says Ryszard Kruk, President of the Local Tourist Organization in Torun.

MPI EMEC 2015 in Poland!

The MPI European Meetings and Events Conference will be organised on February 1-3, 2015 in Krakow, Poland. EMEC is an annual meeting organised by the Meeting Professionals International, which brings together more than 20000 planners and suppliers from more than 90 countries around the world. So far, the conference has never took place in Poland.

Its every edition is attended by over 300 representatives of the meetings industry. This is an excellent opportunity for Poland to establish business contacts, which may bring tangible benefits for our country in the future. In addition to its educational value, EMEC is an event aimed at building a strong brand of a country in the international arena.

MPI prioritises strong promotional activities of each host country, which in this case involve: promoting Poland during the most important trade fairs preceding EMEC 2015, i.e. IMEX, IMEX America,



EIBTM and World Education Congress. The presence of Poland in social media of the association, as well as the use of different MPI channels will be an additional advantage to promote Poland.

"The offer prepared with the cooperation of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, Krakow Convention Bureau, ICE Krakow Congress Centre, MPI Poland Club and Poland Convention Bureau PTO intrested the association and magical Krakow was chosen as the host city EMEC 2015. It will be the perfect opportunity to show that ICE Krakow is ready

to welcome the organizers from around the world" – says Krzysztof Celuch, head of PCB PTO and chair of the local organizing committee.

"It is a great honour for us to host such a prestigious event as EMEC 2015 in Krakow at the ICE Krakow Congress Centre. I am convinced that our city will delight its organisers and participants, and that the modern facility of ICE Krakow will meet all their expectations." – says Izabela Helbin, Director of the Krakow Festival Office, which is the operator of the ICE Krakow Congress Centre.

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CCB-IC Holds a Chiba Seminar at its first PCMA Convening Leaders Conference

The Chiba Convention Bureau and International Center (CCB-IC) will be attending its first Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) Convening Leaders Conference in Chicago, USA, from January 11th to the 14th, 2015. PCMA is an association for meeting organizers and event industry suppliers, such as convention bureaus and convention facilities. Hitting the ground running, the CCB-IC will be holding a "Chiba Seminar" to introduce PCMA members to Chiba Prefecture and Japan as a convention destination.

The PCMA Convening Leaders Conference will have 1,200 meeting organizers and 2,300 industry suppliers in attendance, for a total of over 3,500 attendees.

Meeting organizers have a lot of influence on the decision making process. The CCB-IC will be working to promote Chiba Prefecture as a convention destination to the meeting organizers in attendance at the PCMA Convening Leaders Conference by introducing them to not only Chiba's convention facilities

and accommodations, but to Japanese culture as well. January is Japan's big-est holiday season, so the CCB-IC will have participants play some traditional Japanese games as an ice breaker in hopes of making the event both educational and enjoyable.

Going forward the CCB-IC will continue to take initiatives to make the Chiba a more well-known destination for conventions and business events.



Mississippi Gulf Coast Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau Erects Way-Finding Signs

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau has erected the first way-finding signs in Hancock County.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Regional CVB, in partnership with Powell Construction Services, has begun placing way-finding signs along the Coast beginning with Hancock County. The numbers on these signs will coincide with the numbers located on the map inside the Dining and Attractions Guide Book available in print and at gulfcoast.org and will extend through Harrison and Jackson counties at Highway 90 intersections. Way-finding signage will make navigating the Gulf Coast easier for our visitors as well as our locals. Each circular sign is blue with white text decorated with an orange shrimp and 24" in diameter. There are more than 270 signs total at 79 locations along the Coast.

"The Dining and Attractions brochure will assist locals and travelers alike by using the exits off I-10 and way-finding signage on Beach Boulevard to find restaurants, attractions, casinos and golf courses along the Coast," explains Renee Areng, Executive Director of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Regional CVB. Funding is made possible by a grant from the Gulf Seafood Tourism & Promotion Fund. The Mississippi Gulf Coast Regional CVB has worked with MDOT to ensure the design and placement are consistent at each signal.

Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong Celebrates February With Abundant Offering

Every Lunar New Year spells a new beginning and Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong celebrates the Year of the Goat with the introduction of a new pudding: Sugar Cane and Earl Grey. Nail polish enthusiasts can usher in happiness and great fortune with a nail colour and art to match one's Chinese zodiac designed by the skilled technicians at the newly opened Nail Bar. For those who wish to make special moments last longer on Valentine's Day, Double Suite Happiness is an irresistibly sweet option.

Chinese New Year Puddings

This year, Chinese Executive Chef Chan Yan Tak infused the traditional New Year pudding with Earl Grey tea and sugar cane for an exquisite combination. Chef Tak's pudding balances the mildly bitter flavour of black tea and distinctive citrus notes of bergamot with the delicate sweetness of sugar cane for an aromatic, modern take on this New Year classic.

Coveted by regular patrons and local guests, Lung King Heen offers three more traditional puddings, all handmade and produced in small quantities by the star team helmed by Chef Tak.

Chinese New Year Puddings

To express gratitude for bountiful blessings, the Lung King Heen Chinese New Year Hampers are perfect for gifting. Guests can choose from Lung King Heen Gourmet, Lung King Heen Deluxe and Lung King Heen Ultimate, priced at HKD 2,988, HKD 3,988 and HKD 13,888 respectively. All hampers include a fine selection of auspicious gourmet treats that represent good luck, prosperity and health. The Ultimate hamper has a total of 24 lavish items, including deluxe black mushroom, 30 to 40 heads dried fish maw, Guyue Chen Hua Diao 20 years wine, six heads South African abalone and more.

All puddings and hampers are available to order from January 12, 2015 and will be ready for collection from February 12 to 18 at the Four Seasons Boutique from 12:00 noon to 8:00 pm.

Hotel industry in US recorded positive results in the week ending on January 3

The U.S. hotel industry recorded positive results in the three key performance measurements during the week of 28 December 2014 through 3 January 2015, according to data from STR, Inc.

In year-over-year measurements, the industry's occupancy rose 10.4 percent to 51.7 percent. Average daily rate increased 5.6 percent to finish the week at US\$125.11. Revenue per available room for the week was up 16.5 percent to finish at US\$64.71.

Among the Top 25 Markets, Nashville, Tennessee, reported the largest occupancy increase for the week (+19.6 percent to 63.4 percent). Atlanta, Georgia, followed with a 19.3-percent occupancy increase to 53.6 percent. Detroit, Michigan, experienced the largest occupancy decrease, falling 12.9 percent to 40.2 percent.

Five of the Top 25 Markets recorded a double-digit ADR increase: Orlando, Florida (+16.6 percent to US\$142.96); Atlanta (+14.6 percent to US\$84.73); New Orleans, Louisiana (+13.9 percent to US\$187.38); Miami/Hialeah, Florida (+12.5 percent to US\$330.43); and Oahu Island, Hawaii (+10.3 percent to US\$341.59). Philadelphia, Pennsylvania-New Jersey reported the largest ADR decrease, falling 7.4 percent to US\$102.78.

Three markets experienced a RevPAR



increase of more than 25.0 percent: Atlanta (+36.7 percent to US\$45.41); Norfolk/Virginia Beach, Virginia (+28.6 percent to US\$25.52); and Nashville (+27.3 percent to US\$73.17). Detroit experienced the largest RevPAR decrease during the week, falling 19.1 percent to US\$32.58.

New Hotel Star Classification System Introduced in Greece

A ministerial decision introducing a new mandatory star rating system for hotels in Greece was published on Friday in the Government Gazette.

The decision focuses on hotel services and other technical requirements that hotels in Greece must fulfil, particularly those of higher categories.

According to the decision, hotels in Greece will be ranked on a scale of 1 to 5 stars. Each hotel is classified into one of the five categories if they follow the minimum standards and collect the minimum number of points required for classification.

Among other things, the decision specifies the plot plan minimum requirements for hotel construction in accordance with general and specific planning provisions.

Access to hotels, as foreseen by the law, must be via a private or public road measuring at least 3.5 meters.

Also, hotels are now obliged to provide rooms designed for guests with a disability or reduced mobility. The minimum number of rooms for guests with disabilities is set at five percent of



the total capacity of the hotel.

Greek hoteliers should be informed that the special seal, issued through the previous classification system, automatically ceases to apply on December 31, 2017. By this date all hotels in Greece are required to have a rating certificate in accordance with the provisions of the new decision.

Rove Hotels, Dubai's Smart New Hotel Brand for the Modern Traveller, to Roll Out in 10 Central Locations by 2020

Rove Hotels, Dubai's Smart New Hotel Brand for the Modern Traveller, to Roll Out in 10 Central Locations by 2020. Modern, cosmopolitan, smart and cultural, the essence of Dubai's identity, finds an unmatched expression in a contemporary new mid-market lifestyle hotel brand, Rove Hotels that will roll out 10 properties across central locations in Dubai and the region by 2020.

Developed by Emaar Hospitality Group, the hospitality and leisure subsidiary of global developer Emaar Properties, and Meraas Holding, a Dubai-based leading development company, Rove Hotels celebrate the very heartbeat of the city with its unique approach to deliver value hospitality experiences for the young and young at heart global traveller, who explores without borders.

Meaning 'to traverse,' Rove infuses 21st century innovation with sophistication and historical enrichment to deliver an unparalleled experience. Drawing inspiration from both Dubai's heritage and its remarkable leaps of achievement, the properties serve as tech-savvy, social and cultural hubs for international explorers.

Stylishly designed by incorporating contemporary and Arabesque features, smartly configured and effortlessly connected, Rove Hotels are for the modern, attentive, value-conscious and socially networked generation as well as families who cherish reliable, modern, fuss-free and friendly guest experiences assured through effortless check-in and late check-out at 2pm, among other amenities.

Providing all essentials and incredible value across all touch-points, Rove Hotels will appeal to the savvy traveller, who leads a fast-paced urban life, keeps things simple and is constantly on the go. The properties integrate the value and simplicity and leverages smart connectivity to provide efficiency and authenticity, always.

Philippe Zuber, Chief Operating Officer of Emaar Hospitality Group, said the new hotel brand complements the Dubai Tourism Vision 2020 announced by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, to welcome over 20 million annual visitors by the turn of the decade.

"To be set in central destinations and bringing a distinctive new lifestyle inspired value hospitality experience, Rove Hotels will also support the preparations and hosting of the World Expo 2020. We have made significant progress with our first project -



Rove Za'abeel - while five other properties will open in the coming years in Al Wasl, Port Saeed, Al Jafiliya, Oud Metha and Dubai Marina," added Mr. Zuber.

The rooms are spacious at 26 sq metres and feature a 42 inch TV screen complete with media hub, designer mattresses and a modern bathroom. Nearly half the rooms are interconnected making Rove Hotels a family-friendly destination, allowing families comfortable yet affordable accommodation options.

- **Developed by Emaar Hospitality Group for the joint venture of Emaar**
- **Properties and Meraas Holding to support Dubai's Tourism Vision 2020 and World Expo 2020**
- **Designed as cosmopolitan and smart cultural havens, Rove Hotels reflect the pulse of modern Dubai to assure lifestyle-inspired value hospitality experiences**
- **For the young and young at heart, Rove Hotels define a new niche in the hospitality sector offering reliable, modern, fuss-free, efficient and stable service**
- **Rove Za'abeel, the first property, marks significant progress in construction**
- **Upcoming Rove Hotels properties in Al Wasl, Port Saeed, Al Jafiliya, Oud Metha and Dubai Marina**

Innovative services include an e-Concierge application provided on smartphones and a self-check-in station eliminating waiting time in addition to the convenience of late check-outs. A 24-hour gym, a welcoming pool and sun deck cultivate a relaxing ambience.

Regal Kowloon Hotel won the Pineapple Award by Preferred Hotel Group

Regal Kowloon Hotel was named this year's Pineapple Award Winner in the Overall Category, which is part of the GIFTTS initiative by the Preferred Hotel Group (PHG). This achievement recognizes the significant acts of selfless giving that the hotel and associates have demonstrated throughout the years.

It is the first time for the hotel to receive the Pineapple Award which states that the hotel embraces community and social responsibility by supporting local communities in the areas of philanthropy, community service, sustainability and education. This accomplishment has demonstrated our outstanding participation across the four categories.

With the corporate themes of "We Love Our Planet" and "Love Our Community" these two years, the hotel has launched a series of environmental and social responsibility campaigns, encouraging guests, business partners, associates, friends and families to participate. On the community services, the hotel has spent over 616 hours this year on different charity activities and raised donations for Hong Kong Federation of Handicapped Youth, Salvation Army and Children's Cancer Foundation, etc. For the

sustainability, the hotel continued to implement eco-friendly measures focusing on 5R (Recycle, Reuse, Reduce, Replace and Refuse), like the establishment of an in-house organic herb garden, donation of surplus food to Foodlink Foundation, recycling used materials and adopting energy saving practices. With all these efforts, the hotel has attained several green certifications such as the internationally-recognized EarthCheck Silver Certification to reward our active participation in environmental protection as well as Indoor Air Quality Certification Scheme – Good Class by Environmental Protection Department, in recognition of our superior air condition on guest floors. On the education aspect, the hotel provided talk and hotel tour for the schools and partook in career days to provide employment opportunities to the graduates.

GIFTTS (Great Initiatives for Today's/Tomorrow's Society) is one of PHG's most important programs, serving as a global platform to promote and reward hotels around the globe in philanthropy, community service, sustainability, and education. PHG has established a tradition of honouring the hotels' contributions in these areas with Pineapple Award to commemorate winners' efforts.



Baha Mar opening doors to New Era of Luxury

Baha Mar, the new \$3.5 billion resort, will introduce a new era of luxury, glamour, gaming and excitement to The Bahamas when it begins hosting paid guests on March 27, 2015, at Baha Mar Casino & Hotel, Rosewood at Baha Mar and SLS LUX at Baha Mar. Grand Hyatt at Baha Mar will open shortly after. "Baha Mar will bring a new level of sophistication and resort experience to one of the most sought-after travel destinations in the Caribbean with its March 27 opening. We are thrilled to welcome our first guests to 'The New Riviera' in time for the peak spring travel weeks," said Paul V. Pusateri, chief operating officer for Baha Mar.

Baha Mar will feature 2,200 luxury guest rooms across four hotels – Baha Mar Casino & Hotel, Rosewood at Baha Mar, Grand Hyatt at Baha Mar and SLS LUX at Baha Mar – along with the Caribbean's largest casino, a 100,000 square foot masterpiece featuring a full array of the latest slots and table games. In addition, the resort's TPC at Baha Mar Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course, ESPA spa, pools, beach experiences, and many restaurants and luxury shops will be part of the highly anticipated resort experience upon opening.

5 Reasons Why You Can't Miss the 2015 Hotel Association of Canada's National Conference

While the plunging price of oil puts more money into the pockets of the average consumer, 2015 promises to be a challenging year for the tourism industry as consumers try to figure out whether their cheap gas will come at the expense of the economy.

Stakeholders will once again look to the Hotel Association of Canada for advice and guidance on how to position themselves for the year ahead as they gather at the 100-year-old association's annual conference on February 2-3 at the Hilton Toronto Hotel.

The association, which represents more than 8,500 hotels, motels and resorts in Canada's \$16.7 billion lodging industry, will offer invaluable insight to the trends that will shape the year ahead. Here are five reasons you can't miss the 2015 Hotel Association of Canada's National Conference.

The future, now: Few business leaders can offer the depth of insight provided by Sean Moffitt, the managing director of Wiki-brands. He'll delve into 30 of the most pragmatic ideas you need to understand over the next 12 months if you're going to be successful. Storytelling and transparency are at the core of his talks that inspire action.

Survey says: This annual session is a snapshot into the Hotel Association of Canada's Travel Intentions Survey. Get a



glimpse into potential business volumes for 2015, get a head's up on possible challenges and find out how to book more business for your hotel in the year ahead.

Innovation 101: There's a lot to learn from the world's most innovative companies. Douglas Stephens, founder of Retail Profit and a leading market researcher, will give an inspiring talk about the surprising links between the world's most successful businesses and provide plenty of tips on how others can emulate their success.

Millennials: It's time to take millennials seriously. This digital generation is notoriously hard to reach, despite their near-constant use of technology to communicate and their voracious online appetites. Find out how to win them over.

The Bottom Line: No profit, no hotel. Find out what it takes to find success in any economy, as experts provide insight into the real day-to-day decisions managers make that affect the long-term sustainability of any operation.

Starwood Capital Group Acquires Blythswood Square, Bonham Hotels in Scotland

Starwood Capital Group, a leading global private investment firm, announced that it has acquired, through a controlled affiliate, one of Scotland's leading independent hotel groups, The Town House Collection, for an undisclosed sum.

The transaction will see Glasgow's only luxury five-star property, Blythswood Square, and an award-winning, boutique hotel in Edinburgh, The Bonham, transfer ownership immediately.

The Town House Collection was founded by renowned Scottish hotelier Peter Taylor in 1989. He stressed that selling had not been on the agenda for 2015, as both hotels continued to perform exceptionally well. "The approach captured our attention, the deal was right, and the timing will allow me to focus on new challenges, knowing that the company and, most importantly, our team

members will be in safe hands," said Mr. Taylor.

The Town House Collection employs 270 members of staff across the two properties and has revenue of approximately £12 million. Managing Director Hans Rissmann and Finance Director Russell Hynd will continue to work alongside the new owners in a consultancy capacity to ensure a smooth transition.

The transaction adds to Starwood Capital Group's U.K. hotel portfolio in Scotland, which includes the historic George and Roxburghe in Edinburgh, together with the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow. With the acquisition of Blythswood Square and The Bonham, Starwood Capital Group's U.K. portfolio comprises 53 owned and leased hotels with 7,455 keys.

"We are thrilled to add Blythswood Square and



The Bonham to our rapidly expanding collection of U.K. hotels," said Cody Bradshaw, Senior Vice President and Head of European Hotels at Starwood Capital Group. "We have become intimately familiar with the vitality and potential of Glasgow and Edinburgh through our management of the George, Roxburghe and Grand Central, and believe that this acquisition perfectly complements our strategy of purchasing prime hotel assets in the region's top-performing markets."

Courtyard by Marriott World Trade Center Officially Opens Doors in Abu Dhabi

Global hotel brand, Courtyard by Marriott, today opened the Courtyard by Marriott World Trade Center, Abu Dhabi, marking the first Marriott-endorsed hotel in the capital. Crowds gathered to celebrate the opening which saw the first guest, Saeed Al Romaihi, Assistant Vice President of Human Resources at AD-GAS, who is also a Marriott Rewards Platinum member, checking in and becoming the hotel's first-ever customer.

Courtyard by Marriott World Trade Center, Abu Dhabi brings in a fresh concept that allows business travellers to be productive while still making room for some fun. Its first class facilities are packed with all the modern essentials 21st century guests need – including complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the hotel - and stylish and energetic places to hang out. Whether it's meeting friends and colleagues in the inviting neighbourhood Fifth Street Café or enjoying exquisite views of the city over a drink and light bites from the lively Up and Below rooftop bar, which will be opening soon and promises to be an exciting venue to watch out for.



Adjoining the World Trade Center Mall and Souk, Courtyard by Marriott World Trade Center, Abu Dhabi is perfectly positioned for business travellers and tourist alike who are looking for a central base in the city, with a bright and inviting atmosphere and an impressive Executive Team, headed up Richard Bleakley, who has taken on the role of General Manager.

Courtyard by Marriott has nearly 1,000 hotels worldwide and the brand celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2013.



Hotel Bouganville Launches May 2015 at Forte Village Resort, Sardinia

Hotel Bouganville at Forte Village, Sardinia represents a new generation of large deluxe bungalows, blending traditional Sardinian style with modern design.

Situated at one of the island's most scenic locations, the new hotel boasts a stunning white beach with crystal clear sea, superb cuisine prepared by renowned chefs, and first class entertainment for families, including Forte Village's renowned sports academies and beautiful cycling itineraries. The elegant and spacious bungalows (30sqm to 42sqm) are designed to suit both couples and families, sleeping up to five.

Each are concealed amongst lush hedges, tall palm trees and tropical flowers, giving guests a feeling of space and privacy. The bungalows have been designed to create a unique private Mediterranean space, with an open-air garden terrace.

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Holiday Inn Resort Phuket is perfectly located in the heart of Patong, Phuket's most famous beach.

Holiday Inn Resort Phuket is an oasis in the middle of Patong and is within walking distance to shopping, restaurants and night life and just steps away from the beach. 10 minutes away from Jungeceylon shopping center, Soi Bangla Nightlife, and Patong beach is just across the road.

Holiday Inn Resort Phuket is part of the world's most recognized upper mid-scale brands, and it offers a fantastic choice with seven different room categories, separated in two distinctive wings. The contemporary designed main wing is popular for its kids and family friendly rooms and facilities. The



Busakorn wing with Thai design offers spacious rooms with pool view or pool access in a tranquil pool and tropical garden environment appreciated by couples seeking a more intimate resort experience.

Holiday Inn Resort Phuket is well known for its excellent breakfast buffet and great value cuisine in the resort's 4 restaurants. Holiday Inn Resort Phuket provides daily guest activities and dedicated kids facilities. A refreshing spa and several pools in tropical gardens give choices to relax or be active.

At the heart of Patong, Holiday Inn Resort Phuket offers guests a warm Thai welcome, friendly service and total ease, simply Patong's best choice.

Boeing Delivers Etihad Airways' First 787-9 Dreamliner

Boeing delivered Etihad Airways' first 787-9 Dreamliner sporting the airline's new "Facets of Abu Dhabi" livery which was revealed at a ceremony earlier this year. The colors are reminiscent of the desert landscape, inspired by the culture, Islamic design and architecture motifs of the United Arab Emirates.

The airplane is the first of the 71 Dreamliners that the national airline of the United Arab Emirates has on order which includes 41 787-9s and 30 787-10s. Etihad Airways will also be the first airline in the Middle East to operate the 787-9.

"We are confident that the additions of the 787 Dreamliner to our growing fleet will enable us to continue to add vital long-haul destinations from our Abu Dhabi hub," said Peter Baumgartner, chief commercial officer for Etihad Airways. "We will first use the aircraft on routes to cities such as Dusseldorf, Washington D.C., Mumbai, Brisbane and Moscow and will have over 70 within the fleet, once our order is complete.

"The aircraft meets our requirements



on these routes and will enable us to continue to provide the highest levels of customer service to the guests we welcome on board," he added.

In addition to bringing big-jet ranges to midsize airplanes, the 787 provides airlines with unmatched fuel efficiency,

resulting in exceptional environmental performance. The family uses 20 to 30 percent less fuel with 20 to 30 percent fewer emissions than the airplanes they replace. The airplane also has more cargo revenue capacity - a 20 to 45 percent advantage over replacement airplanes.

The 787-9 can carry 280 passengers 8,300 nautical miles (15,372 kilometers). The 787-10, launched in June 2013 and in development now, will fly 323 passengers up to 7,000 nautical miles (13,000 kilometers), or more than 90 percent of the world's twin-aisle routes.

"We are excited to see the 787 footprint grow in the Middle East with airlines such as Etihad Airways investing in the Dreamliner as part of their fleet strategy," said Marty Bentrutt, vice president, Sales for Middle East, Russia and Central Asia, Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "Etihad Airways has already made a considerable impact with its new and innovative interiors offering to passengers, and we look forward to the 787 playing a key role in delivering on its promise of quality and profitability."

Gulf Air Expands operations in Saudi Arabia Network with Two New Destinations

Gulf Air announced further growth of its network in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with services to two new destinations – Gassim and Taif, taking the total number of Saudi Arabian cities serviced by the airline to 6. Services to Gassim and Taif will begin from 10th January 2015 with 4 flights per week to each city.

Announcing the new destinations Gulf Air Acting Chief Executive Officer Maher Salman Al Musallam said, "Bahrain's relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a long-standing one and our national carrier's ties to our neighbour date back to our maiden service to Dhahran in 1950. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an important market for us and the launch of services to Gassim and Taif, supplementing our Dammam, Jeddah, Riyadh and Medina operations, further demonstrates our commitment to connecting people to various destinations across Gulf Air's network. I would like to extend our warmest thanks to the Saudi authorities for facilitating and supporting this new development that I am confident will be well-received by passengers," concluded Mr. Al Musallam.

OneSimCard Now Available on Malaysia Airlines



OneSimCard, a leading global provider of low cost international mobile roaming services for businesses and leisure travelers, announced today that Malaysia Airlines has begun offering OneSimCard during in-flight duty free sales. OneSimCard has partnered with Malaysia Airlines' Temptations Magazine Team and Inflight Sales Group to offer Malaysia Airlines' customers OneSimCards on international flights.

Standard international roaming rates offered by the major telecoms carriers are exorbitantly high. On average, international roamers should expect to pay over US\$2.50 per minute for both incoming and outgoing voice calls. Major telecom carriers also charge international roamers

extremely high internet data rates, often in excess of US\$10.00 per MB.

OneSimCard offers international travelers an average discount of about 85% off the voice, text messaging and internet data roaming rates offered by major telecoms carriers. OneSimCard customers enjoy FREE incoming calls in 160+ countries and outgoing international roaming calls beginning at US\$0.25 per minute. Internet Data rates begin at US\$0.13 per MB. OneSimCard comes with both a European and US mobile phone number, with additional phone numbers available in 65+ countries.

OneSimCard works worldwide in unlocked GSM devices and phones. The user simply replaces their domestic carriers' SIM card with OneSimCard when traveling internationally. All users can replace their own SIM cards in just a few seconds. OneSimCard provides international roaming services in over 200 countries. OneSimCard is a pre-paid service which does not require any contract and has no connection fees, subscription fees or monthly maintenance fees.

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South African Airways Launches “Go See Southern Africa” Campaign in North America Market

South African Airways (SAA), South Africa’s national flagship airline and the continent’s most awarded carrier, has launched the “Go See Southern Africa” campaign for both the travel trade and consumers in North America. “Go See Southern Africa” is a collaborative campaign with participation from leading tour operators, destination tourism organizations, hotels and safari lodges to generate increased awareness on travel to Southern Africa.

Southern Africa has been affected in recent months by misinformation concerning travel to the entire continent, which has created a hesitation for future travel planning. As the predominant airline from the U.S. to Southern Africa, SAA has taken a leading role in developing the “Go See Southern Africa” campaign to emphasize the great experiences and the great value that abounds for travel throughout the region. In conjunction with the campaign, numerous



SAA tour operators and travel service providers are promoting very affordable packages and unique value-added offers to South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia and other destinations in the region.

“Now is a great time to explore South-

ern Africa with the extremely favorable exchange rate for the U.S. Dollar and the very affordable offers that are being promoted by SAA and our participating tourism partners in North America,” said Marc Cavaliere, Executive Vice President for South African Airways in North America. “We invite travelers to experience the award-winning service of SAA and the wonderful travel adventures that await them in Southern Africa.”

The “Go See Southern Africa” campaign will be featured during 2015 with various offers by SAA and the participating travel partners being promoted throughout the year. For a list of participating tour operators that are offering special air-inclusive packages to Southern Africa, visit: www.flysaa.com/cms/US/GoSeeSouthernAfrica.html. The campaign will also be prominently featured in SAA’s advertising, marketing promotional programs and social media in 2015.

Ethiopian Airlines to Start flights to Tokyo

Ethiopian Airlines announced that it has finalized preparations to start new services to Tokyo Narita International Airport in April 20, 2015, in codeshare partnership with fellow Star Alliance member, All Nippon Airways, Japan’s leading airline.

The thrice weekly flight, the only direct connection between Africa and Japan, will be operated through Hong Kong with the ultra-modern Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft, which offers customers the best on-board comfort with the biggest windows in the sky, high ceiling, less noise than any aircraft with less carbon footprint, and higher cabin humidity ideal for long haul travel.

Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Airlines Group, Ato Tewolde Gebremariam, said: “As the only direct service between Africa and Japan, our flights to Narita will give our customers the best possible connectivity options and will be critical role in enabling greater people-to-people, investment, trade and tourism ties between a rising Africa, the second fastest growing region in the world, and a highly industrialized Japan, the third largest economy in the world.”



GOL Announces a Codeshare Agreement with Korean Air

GOL Linhas Aereas Inteligentes S.A, the largest low-cost and best-fare airline in Latin America, hereby announces to its shareholders and the market in general the signature of codeshare agreement with Korean Air, the biggest airline company in South Korea and one of the most important in Asia. This partnership is still awaiting approval of Agencia Nacional de Aviacao Civil (ANAC) and Conselho Administrativo de Defesa Economica (CADE).

“It is our tenth codeshare agreement and the first with a company in the Far East. For sure this partnership, when approved, will provide more convenience to passengers that have to do connections to all destinations served by GOL, especially in Brazil”, says Ciro Camargo, Alliances manager at GOL.

With this partnership Korean Air will include its code on GOL-operated flights giving its customers a greater number of connections



for destinations in Brazil and America. Korean Air currently has codeshare partnerships with 29 airlines on 188 routes worldwide.

The companies also entered into an agreement related to the Frequent Flyer Program (“FFP”), which will allow the members of their loyalty programs, Gol’s Smiles and Korean’s Skypass, the possibility to accumulate and redeem miles in all eligible flights operated by the two companies.

Qantas the World's Safest Airline for 2015

AirlineRatings.com the world's only safety and product rating website has announced its top ten safest airlines and top ten safest low cost airlines for 2015 from the 449 it monitors.

Top of the list again is Qantas which has a fatality free record in the jet era. Making up the remainder of the top ten in alphabetical order are: Air New Zealand, Cathay Pacific Airways, British Airways, Emirates, Etihad Airways, EVA Air, Finnair, Lufthansa and Singapore Airlines.

AirlineRatings.com's rating system takes into account a variety of factors related to audits from aviation's governing bodies and lead associations as well as government audits and the airlines' fatality records.

AirlineRating.com's editorial team, one of the world's most awarded and experienced, also examined airlines' operational histories, incident records and operational excellence to arrive at its top ten safest airlines.

According to AirlineRatings.com editor, Geoffrey Thomas, "our top ten safest airlines are always at the forefront of safety innovation and launching new planes."

"These airlines are a byword for excellence," he added. "There is no doubt that Qantas is a standout in safety enhancements and an industry benchmark for best practice," said Mr Thomas.

Over its 94-year history Qantas has amassed an extraordinary record of firsts in safety and operations and is now accepted as the world's most experienced airline. "Qantas has been the lead airline in virtually every major advancement in airline safety over the past 60 years," said Mr Thomas.

Responding to public interest, the AirlineRatings.com editors also identified their top ten safest low cost airlines.

These are in alphabetical order: Aer Lingus, Alaska Airlines, Icelandair, Jetstar, Jetblue, Kulula.com, Monarch Airlines, Thomas Cook, TUI Fly and Westjet.

"Unlike a number of low cost carriers



these airlines have all passed the stringent International Air Transport Association Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) audit and have excellent safety records," said Mr Thomas. "Low cost does not mean low safety."

Of the 449 airlines surveyed 149 have the top seven-star safety ranking, but almost 50 have just three stars or less.

Five airlines only achieved one star for safety from AirlineRatings.com. These are: Agni Air, Kam Air, Nepal Airlines, Scat and Tara Air.

Gulf Air Counts Down to Launch of New KSA Routes

Gulf Air began its official 3-day countdown to the highly anticipated launch of the airline's direct operations to Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Regional Airport (ELQ, Gassim) and Ta'if Regional Airport (TIF, Taif) scheduled to begin from 10th January 2015 with 4 flights per week to each destination.

At a press conference held at the Ritz-Carlton, Riyadh hosted by Gulf Air in collaboration with the airline's Saudi Arabia General Sales Agent, Al Tayyar Travel and Tourism Group, the airline celebrated the upcoming strengthening and expansion of its network which will see its existing Saudi operations to Dammam, Riyadh, Medina and Jeddah supplemented by the addition of services to Gassim and Taif, taking the total number of Saudi Arabian destinations serviced by the airline to 6.

Gulf Air Acting Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Maher Salman AlMusallam spoke at the press conference: "We are three days away from the launch of Gulf Air's newest route services that will further strengthen Gulf Air's Saudi Arabia network while extending our product and service offering to a broader passenger base across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. With a strong presence in this market dating back to 1950 (when Gulf Air launched its Dammam operations) and 1982 (when Gulf Air launched its Riyadh operations) we are delighted to provide superior travel solutions that, supplemented



by the support of our General Sales Agent Al Tayyar Travel Group, will cater to the travel needs of our Saudi passengers."

Al Tayyar Travel and Tourism Group Vice Chairman and Deputy Member Dr. Nasser bin Aqeel Al Tayyar commented: "The long-standing relationship between The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and The Kingdom of Bahrain is based on close ties between the two leaderships and the social, cultural, and political similarities between both countries."

Dr. Al Tayyar also emphasized Gulf Air's leading position in the Middle East. Boasting one of the largest Middle East networks with double daily flights to more than 10 regional cities and a network that extends to 41 destinations, Bahrain's national carrier is well positioned to link all of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's destinations to cities in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia through Bahrain International Airport.

Brussels Airlines teams up with Microsoft and ArrivalGuides to create a unique digital experience

Brussels Airlines inaugurates "The Loft" at Brussels Airport, a new business lounge centred around comfort, technology, design and Belgian gastronomy. With this new lounge concept, Brussels Airlines sets new quality standards in hospitality on the ground.

Brussels Airlines has teamed up with Microsoft and ArrivalGuides to create a unique digital experience for The Loft. Guests can borrow a Surface Pro 3 during their stay in the lounge. The tablet contains the new Brussels Airlines app 'Connected Lounge', which is a proper digital assistant: It allows the possibility to book a shower room, see the availability of the nap boxes or book a meeting room. The digital assistant also keeps passengers informed about the status of their flight and provide them with some great insight on the destination they are traveling to.

"We are very pleased about our partnership with ArrivalGuides, that has allowed us to offer updated and relevant destination content to all our guests, whatever their final destination," says Eric Kergoat, Head of Product Development for Brussels Airlines.

Marriott International First to Deploy New Unified Communications Hospitality Solution From Verizon Enterprise Solutions

Verizon Enterprise Solutions today announced that Marriott International Inc. has signed a multiyear agreement to deploy Verizon Hospitality Communications Express, which will help the premier hospitality brand fulfill its mission to provide a convenient and state-of-the-art experience to its hotel guests and employees.

Marriott is the first in the hospitality industry to deploy Verizon's new Unified Communications business solution designed specifically to meet the unique demands of the industry. Under the terms of the agreement, Verizon will become a strategic technology provider to the hospitality giant, which manages and operates hotel properties throughout the world.

Marriott properties will benefit from a fully managed cloud-hosted enterprise voice solution that reduces the need for on-site hardware and IT support; offers an easy replacement for aging PBX systems; seam-

less integration with hotel property management systems (PMS software); feature-rich UC functionality; low capital-outlay costs; and Verizon 4G LTE wireless failover for business continuity.

"Whether traveling for business or leisure, our guests have high expectations when they stay at our properties," said Steve Bearden, director of IT for voice, mobility and unified communications for Marriott International. "Verizon's innovative cloud technology solutions, world-class network quality and expansive global capabilities make them an ideally suited business partner as we continually strive to reduce costs and improve efficiencies by moving our technology to the cloud. This solution brings productive collaboration tools to our employees and gives Marriott new technology that will improve overall guest service."

Michele Dupre, vice president of retail and hospitality with Verizon Enterprise Solutions, said: "We are proud to be part-



nering with Marriott International to help streamline hotel operations and improve the customer experience. We've built our business on helping organizations across all industries, including hospitality, embrace innovative technologies that deliver efficiencies and create new opportunities such as the operating model that will result from implementing Hospitality Communications Express."

Hilton rolls out digital check-in to Middle East

Hilton Worldwide's digital check-in and room selection technology is now live across more than 4,100 hotels worldwide, including 53 hotels in the Middle East and Africa region.

Guests who are members of the group's loyalty programme, Hilton HHonors, will be able to check-in and choose their rooms from digital floor plans or lists on their desktop, tablet, or mobile devices. Members will also be able to request upgrades or make special requests.

The group has also updated the Hilton HHonors iOS app for Apple devices to coincide with the global roll out.

Hilton Worldwide global head of digital Geraldine Calpin said: "Digital check-in and room selection puts our guests in the driving seat and gives them unprecedented choice and control across their entire stay. Never before have guests been able to check-in, select their room from a digital floor plan and customise their room ready for arrival. We are truly revolutionising the industry and this is just the tip of the iceberg for digital at Hilton Worldwide."

Virgin Hotels Introduces "The Know"



Virgin Hotels, the lifestyle hotel brand by Virgin Group founder Sir Richard Branson, announces the launch of The Know a hotel preference program. Members of the program will receive personalized service and recognition, and be the first in "the know" about what is happening with Virgin Hotels and its partners.

To become a member of The Know, guests need to visit virginhotels.com. A short questionnaire gives guests the ability to share their pet peeves, allergies, even their dog's favorite treat. Plus their cocktail and snack of choice, and what should and should not be found in their mini bar.

Enrolled guests will also receive special benefits such as: Prearrangement of activities

before arriving at hotel Complimentary room upgrades (based upon availability) Exclusive offers on rooms, food and beverage, and brand partnerships (including other Virgin companies) Invitations to special events at Virgin Hotels Birthday, anniversary and special occasion surprise and delights, "Our goal with The Know is to exceed our guests' expectations, surprise and delight them and grant them access to exclusive offers that only Virgin can deliver," said Doug Carrillo, vice president of sales & marketing for Virgin Hotels. "Virgin Hotels is about creating an environment of genuine, heartfelt service, mixed in with a wink and a smile."

Virgin Hotels' first property will open January 15, 2015 in Chicago, and located in the heart of the Loop district in the historic Old Dearborn Bank Building at 203 N. Wabash Ave. The 27-story Art Deco building, a Chicago landmark designed by C.W. and George L. Rapp Architects in 1928, will offer 250 guest rooms, or as we call them Chambers, including 40 one-bedroom suites and two penthouse suites. Additionally, the hotel will feature meeting spaces, restaurants, lounges and other public areas that reflect the Virgin brand's stylish and functional legacy.

Travelport Announces 'Agent of the Future' for 2014



Travelport, a leading Travel Commerce Platform providing distribution, technology, payment and other solutions for the \$7 trillion global travel and tourism industry, today announces its 2014 winner of the prestigious Agent of the Future program.

Sarah Evans, who recently completed her Certificate III in Travel & Tourism at TAFE Queensland North, was announced as the 2014 Agent of the Future, recognising her as the most outstanding travel and tourism student across more than 60 tertiary colleges in Australia and New Zealand that offer training courses on Travelport's Travel Commerce Platform. As the winner, Sarah has won accommodation and return airfare to Ireland courtesy of Air Tickets and Tourism Ireland.

Travelport's Agent of the Future program has been underway for 13 years, with the aim to help students prepare for a career in the travel industry by reaching high standards of excellence in their studies. Teachers are invited to nominate outstanding students for the award, and the winner was selected by an expert judging panel appointed by Travelport.

Kaylene Shuttlewood, Travelport's General Manager, Pacific, says, "We were thrilled to see the calibre of candidates nominated for this year's award. Travelport is dedicated to the ongoing development of our industry talent and are committed to supporting students who are preparing for a career in travel."

Sarah Evans, Travelport's Agent of the Future winner, says, "I am very proud to be recognised through Travelport's award. Completing my course was a huge accomplishment and this award is the perfect way to end what has already been a memorable year for me. Having just started a job at Cairns Domestic Airport, I am excited for a career in the travel industry."

Travelport is also pleased to announce the winner of the Instructor of the Year Award, Cheryleigh-Anne Lazarus from TAFE Brisbane. Cheryleigh-Anne has received two round-trip flights to Cairns and a 5 night stay at the Sheraton Mirage Port Douglas, courtesy of Sheraton Mirage.

The announcement of the winners follows a week-long series of Learning and Development Forums hosted by Travelport with educators in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Travelport would like to thank Carnival Australia for sponsoring the venue for the Sydney forum, which took place on board the Carnival Spirit, as well as Air Tickets, Marriott, Tourism Ireland and Wynwood Estate for their generous support in this year's program.



Sabre signs retailing solutions agreement with Alaska Airlines

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR) was selected by Alaska Airlines (NYSE: ALK) to provide technology solutions to enable its retailing strategy in all sales channels, including through some of the carrier's interline partner airlines.

By late 2015, Sabre's suite of solutions will give Alaska the ability to offer customers ancillary products and optional services through travel agencies and some interline airline partners. Sabre's interline ancillary capabilities will also enable Alaska's interline partners to market and sell their ancillaries in Alaska's sales channels. By using Sabre's inventory control features, Alaska Airlines will be able to efficiently track and monitor inventory of ancillary products.

"Sabre has been a long-time technology provider for Alaska Airlines, delivering capabilities to help power their growth," said Hugh Jones, president of Sabre Airline Solutions. "Alaska has led the industry by pioneering new and innovative technologies so we are thrilled to continue supporting their technology needs."

Alaska Airlines also uses Sabre's reservations system.

"Our top priority is to provide our customers with options so travelers can purchase the optional products and services they value most and Sabre has been an important partner in helping achieve this goal," said Andrew Harrison, senior vice president of planning and revenue management for Alaska Airlines.

Corinthia Hotels launches 2015 "Win Back Your Stay" competition

Five-star hotel group, Corinthia Hotels, has launched an exciting competition to run throughout 2015 where guests are able to win back the value of their hotel stay. Guests booking through corinthia.com will be given the chance to "Win Back Your Stay" by using Facebook connect upon confirmation of booking. The cost of the winners' reserved room nights will be fully refunded upon their arrival at the hotel.



Through this campaign Corinthia not only rewards its customers but adds value to their hotel experiences. By connecting bookers to Corinthia Hotels' social channels, customers can take advantage of dedicated assistance via social media before, during and after their stay.

To redeem the refund voucher, guests must make contact via facebook.com/corinthiahotels or any of Corinthia's social channels.

The competition awards one lucky winner per month in any of Corinthia's exciting locations (London, Budapest, Prague, Lisbon, Malta, and St. Petersburg), winning back stays of any duration.



Benchmark Names Erik Dombroski Director of Sales & Marketing of Snow King Resort in Jackson Hole, WY

Benchmark Hospitality International®, a leading U.S.-based hospitality management company, has named Erik Dombroski director of sales & marketing for Snow King Resort. Geoff Young, Benchmark's general manager for the property, which is located in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, made the announcement.

"It is with pleasure that I welcome Erik to Snow King Resort and back to Jackson," said Mr. Young. "He comes to our property with tremendous all-season resort and destination experience. We look forward to his leadership in our sales and marketing programming as we continue repositioning this remarkable property."

Erik Dombroski's new appointment marks his return to the Jackson market. Though he previously served as director of sales for Topnotch Resort and Spa of Stowe, Vermont and following this, held the title of director of sales and marketing for Gateway Canyon Resort and Spa of Gateway, Colorado, Mr. Dombroski began his hotel career in Jackson Hole with Snake River Lodge & Spa.

Mr. Dombroski launched his hospitality career working as restaurant manager for Stonewood Tavern & Grill of Tampa, Florida. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration from the University of Florida at Gainesville. Mr. Dombroski has relocated to Jackson Hole with his family.

Located in the heart of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Snow King Resort is the town's largest full service, year-round resort offering comfortable Western lodging at the Snow King Hotel and luxurious accommodations at the Grand View Lodge condominiums. Snow King provides a variety of amenities and extensive conference and catering facilities. Mere blocks from Jackson's Town Square, Snow King sits adjacent to the Bridger-Teton National Forest with spectacular mountain views and the hotel's own Snow King Ski Area, which opened in 1939 as Wyoming's first ski resort. Snow King is also gateway to Yellowstone National Park and provides easy access to the area's many recreational opportunities.

New Management Appointments at InterContinental Hong Kong



Claus Pedersen



Philippe Langlois



Trevor Owen

Claus Pedersen, Director of Food and Beverage, joined the InterContinental Hong Kong team on February 1, 2005. With a wealth of international experience, Claus most recently served as Director of Operations at the Hilton Oturu and as Director of Food and Beverage at Hilton Nagoya in Japan.

Philippe Langlois, the new SPOON Manager, joins InterContinental Hong Kong from South Beach in Miami, Florida where he was Restaurant Manager of the Blue Door at Ian Schrager's Delano Hotel. Philippe's career includes experience at some of the world's most prestigious restaurants, including the tremendously successful Café Boulud in New York where he was in charge of hiring staff and operation management.

Trevor Owen, the hotel's new Director of Marketing, joins InterContinental Hong Kong from Madrid, Spain, where he spent the past year as Area Director of Sales for InterContinental Hotels Group, overseeing 20 hotels in Spain, France, Italy and Malta.

Pacific World has appointed Ruby Serra as Director, Global Sales North America



Ruby has more than 25 years experience in the Business Events industry, working for the Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau as well as Destination Asia. Ruby brings with her a wealth of experience in DMC Sales & Marketing, developing new approaches to client servicing in the North American market.

"I am excited to join Pacific World and start the next phase in my career," said Serra. "I am looking forward to bring a set of new solutions to the market and broaden my horizon to more than 100 worldwide destinations in Asia, Europe, the United States, the Middle East and Africa."

Herve Joseph-Antoine, Global MD of Pa-

cific World commented, "We are pleased to welcome Ruby to the Pacific World team. Not only she has a great track record, but she shares our values, especially the innovative spirit, performance drive and team values."

Harsha Krishnan, Strategic Development Director at Pacific World commented, "Ruby joining Pacific World is fantastic news as we are deploying globally the first truly global solution for clients in the destination and event management space, together with our alliance partner ACCESS Destination Services. Her experience of building client solutions will be key for us to implement our new combined approach, and she will team up with Natale Patterson and Adam Kimball of ACCESS Destination Services global sales team."

To enable this new phase of development, Pacific World has decided to end the commercial cooperation with World Marketing Group from January 1, 2015. Herve Joseph-Antoine commented, "Both companies have grown together during more than 30 years, and the joint achievements will remain forever in both companies memories as remarkable. We wish WMG all the best for its future development."

Seychelles Readies Itself for Annual February Eco-Friendly Marathon Challenge

The 8th edition of the Eco-Friendly Marathon “should be your New Year’s resolution or challenge, towards a healthier lifestyle.”

This is the vision of Miss Giovanna Rousseau, Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles National Sports Council and Event Coordinator.

The organizing committee is hoping to set records, targeting a much bigger number of participants this year. Three thousand to be exact.

“The marathon helps to bring Seychelles to the attention of more travelers and contributes to lifting the Seychelles brand around the world. The islands can expect to receive some 1,200 overseas participants, on top of more than 1,300 local participants,” says Julie Kim, the Regional Manager of the Seychelles Tourist Office in Korea.

This will practically double the 1,464 amount of the 7th edition.

Seychelles Eco-Friendly Marathon, taking place on Sunday, February 22, has become an annual fixture on the Seychelles calendar of events. It is organized jointly by the National Sports Council, Seychelles Tourism Board, and INOCEAN M&C (South Korean company headed by Seychelles Honorary Consul General Mr. Dong Chang Jeong).

The event will take off with the marathon and half marathon at 7 a.m. at the Beau-Vallon promenade. As for the 5 and 10 km, they will start at 7:45 a.m. There is also the walking option for those who want to take it easy.

This marathon falls in line with the Seychelles President’s 2015 theme “I love Seychelles,” because, by running this marathon, participants will not only be testing their physical prowess in terms of how far and how fast they can push their bodies, but it will also be an opportunity for the local and international participants to appreciate their beautiful surroundings around the northern and northeastern areas of the main island of Mahé, as well as Victoria.

The advantages of running with nature as a backdrop, taking in the fresh breeze, can never be compared to the stiff confines of a gym.

And if the nature reward does not suffice, there will be medals and prizes of a range of values for the grand international and local marathoners that this event is hoping to attract.



The 1st Seychellois male and female marathon and half-marathon winners will also get the chance to participate in the Namseungryong Marathon in South Korea.

As for all those who are simply content with completing the marathon, they will not be going home empty handed either; they will also have a t-shirt and an official time certificate to prove their achievement.

The participants will get the chance to let their hair down and socialize in a gala evening organized by the Seychelles Tourism Board alongside their sponsors. Apart from the distribution of prizes and medals, there is also a Korean-themed dinner and display.

“Register early so as to avoid disappointment. If you do so before January 31, you will only pay half price,” advises Ms. Rousseau.

Successful PATA Hub City Forum Held in Chengdu, China

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and Chengdu Culture & Tourism Development Group are pleased to have co-hosted the 2014 PATA Hub City Forum: Chengdu at the Sichuan Jinjiang Hotel in Chengdu, China on December 22, 2014.

The purpose of the forum was to analyse current international travel trends, hold discussions on improving the market competitiveness and attractiveness of hub city tourism destinations, and explore the 72-hour visa free transit policy.

Delegates ranged from tourism destinations, hotels, airlines, online travel agencies (OTAs), and traditional travel agencies from the Sichuan province. The event included two main topics for discussion: Creating a Hub City - Air and Land Transportation, and How Can Traditional Operators and OTAs Help to Create a Hub City.

Former PATA Chairman and Honorary Chairman of the PATA China Panel of Experts, Mr Joao Manuel Costa Antunes, delivered the opening speech at the forum. Other speakers at the event included Mr John



Koldowski, Special Advisor to PATA CEO; Ms Sarah Mathews, Destination Marketing Senior Sales Manager APAC, TripAdvisor; Miss Nasanka Lei, Air Transport Officer of Air Transport & International Relations Civil Aviation of Macau; Ms Jennifer Lan, Business General Manager, Ctrip.com; and Miss Tang, Marketing Manager, Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport.

In addition, Ms. Yang Wenzhen, Former Director General of Department of Management and Department of Marketing of CNTA and Former Vice President of CITS, provided insightful analysis for building a hub city.


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