



# CACCI Tourism Newsletter

Volume 11

December 2013



## Message from the Chairman

It is with pleasure that I convey my good wishes to those who have provided valuable articles for the 11th volume of CACCI Tourism Newsletter.

Tourism being the largest civil industry in the world, with an annual growth rate of around 3 – 5%, requires new ideas to satisfy the customers' ever increasing needs. One of our intentions of printing this Newsletter is to share our ideas and new trends.

This Newsletter will provide members highlights on new trends and innovative steps taken by tourism authorities of various countries in the Asia-Pacific region to improve tourism in their respective countries.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to wish all our friends in CACCI member countries a Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2014!

My best wishes!

**Anura Samarawickrema Lokuhetty**  
Chairman  
Asian Council on Tourism

### Inside this issue .....

- ❖ Breakout Session on Tourism Attracts an Active Participation at the 27th CACCI Conference
- ❖ Manga artist unveils statue in Japan town to help boost tourism
- ❖ Taiwan rises to 33rd in travel competitiveness
- ❖ UNWTO and PATA Partner to Advance Tourism for Economic Growth in Asia
- ❖ Increase in NZ Tourism funding welcomed
- ❖ Routes Asia Awards 2013 Winners Announced
- ❖ UNESCO Joins UNWTO to Advance Silk Road Tourism Development
- ❖ Tourism Australia Now Hiring for "The Best Jobs In The World"
- ❖ Make Japan a tourism magnet to boost economy, national image
- ❖ Bumpy road forecast for Singapore tourism
- ❖ Philippine resort wins top global tourism award
- ❖ Fun Travel in Taipei app launches new function offering tourist maps
- ❖ Chinese overtake Germans as biggest-spending tourists
- ❖ Turkey's tourism industry anticipates boom
- ❖ Nepal seeks to attract more tourists from Asian nations

# Travelindex Expands Digital Footprint in ASEAN Region with Most Comprehensive Travel Resource

Travelindex has launched on October 8, 2013, in time for the 23rd ASEAN SUMMIT, its VisitASEAN.org, the first and only integrated travel information resource on all 10 ASEAN countries and their tourism industry. It actively contributes to promote tourism in the ASEAN Region and allows direct, commission-free marketing for all stakeholders. The travel website help businesses across the region to go online and connect with potential visitors and investors in just one click.

This is the fourth time that Brunei Darussalam has chaired ASEAN, having previously been the Chair in 1989, 1995 and 2001. In 2013, Brunei Darussalam will chair the 23rd ASEAN Summit on 9-10 October 2013.

Brunei Darussalam's theme for the Chairmanship is "Our People, Our Future Together". This theme stresses the role of the people in ASEAN Member States in advancing cooperation in the areas of political-security, economic and socio-cultural. It also asserts that the region's future is dependent on how the people of ASEAN move and work together to ensure progress for the development of the whole region.

Leaders of the 10 Association of South Eastern Countries (ASEAN), as well as China, Japan and South Korea, will be joined by Russia, the US and India in a major regional summit in Brunei in mid-October.

The summit provides a valuable opportunity for leaders to engage on key strategic, political and economic issues of common concern, with the aim of promoting stability and economic prosperity in the region. The meeting comes as ASEAN charts the future for the goal of a common market



through an easy to navigate interface allowing them to refine their searches according to criteria that matter to them, and quickly connect with resorts, hotels and travel operators in the region. VisitASEAN.org allows users the opportunity to provide reviews and feedback to help others make better, more informed travel decisions.

## About Travelindex

by 2015 as well as increased tensions over territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

ASEAN tourists can experience wild life to city life to snow – capped mountains to dense tropical rainforests; from serene beach life to a bustling city life. No two countries are the same yet their unity is impeccable.

The people of ASEAN live both a simple and complex lifestyle – a sight only to be admired. There are a multitude of ethnic groups inhabiting the region and many still live a traditional way of life. To an outsider, the traditional lifestyle may appear simple, but the cultural traditions, beliefs, attitudes and values are often very complex but suited to their respective environmental situation. In other parts of the region you will witness towering skyscrapers mushrooming in the cities with a dynamic way of life. Be among the privileged to witness the multitude lifestyle in this region.

At launch, VisitASEAN.org is the easiest access portal for researching, comparing and direct connecting with unique and difficult to find travel opportunities in the Asean Region. Instead of spending hours scanning the internet or hundreds of general travel sites, VisitASEAN.org enables users to quickly identify travel opportunities

*Travelindex is a specialized vertical search, information services and e-publishing company serving the travel and tourism communities. Travelindex users benefit from domain-expert search engines and a broad range of proprietary web-based content, helping them search for and locate hotels, destinations, tours and services and access comprehensive content with direct contact and booking links. A dedicated team constantly searches the globe to bring together thousands of unique, undiscovered and sustainable travel opportunities in an easy-to-navigate platform that helps users research, compare and contact directly these unique travel offerings. Travelindex has a team of experts in sustainability, technology, web search, consumer services and social media working to create a world-class research and booking experience. For suppliers, Travelindex offers highly filtered search results and marketing opportunities, product promotion and brand advertising platforms. Travelindex.com has been recognized for its unique market approach, product usability, and passionate management team.*

Source: Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), 10 October 2013



## Visas, Vaccinations and Weather: the top information corporate travellers can expect



Travelport, a leading distribution services and e-commerce provider for the global travel industry, has recently announced new findings on the information and added-extras companies give their corporate travellers.

Topping the list of information provided to business travellers is visa information (59%), followed closely by immunisations (41%) and weather (40%). Other information provided includes city maps (37%), restaurants (25%) and entertainment (10%).

Extra baggage and hotel Wi-Fi are the most commonly authorised

ancillaries, at 57% each. Advance boarding (45%), hotel breakfast (45%) and flight upgrades (39%) are also popular options provided. Of those surveyed, 26% corporations allow no ancillaries to be booked for corporate travel trips.

“We are seeing the range of destination services and ancillary options grow increasingly more complex,” explained Patrick Andres, Vice-President & Regional Managing Director Asia-Pacific, Travelport. “Within the ancillary mix, it becomes further segmented by organisations offering options such as upgrades and

lounge access only to select groups of employees.”

“Travellers’ needs are evolving. Generation Y and millennials expect customised content, intelligent itineraries and easily bookable ancillary content. Travelport’s differentiated product strategy, which includes its innovative merchandising platform, enables the distribution of new content such as lounge passes and baggage, in line with the needs of this new type of travel consumers,” said Andres.

*Source: Pacific Asia Travel Association, 19 September 2013* ■



## An Introduction to Tourism in Nepal

Nepal is well known as one of the best tourist destinations in the world. National Geographic Adventure has listed it among the top-draw adventure destinations in the world. A country where two great religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, are blended together, Nepal has a fascinating cultural and biological diversity within its borders. It has nearly 100 regional and ethnic languages within a geographical boundary of just 147,181 square kilometers. One of the major attractions is the great Himalayas. Eight of the world’s 14 highest peaks exceeding 8,000 meters, including Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, are in Nepal. Peaks over 6,000 meters exceed 200 in number. The country’s elevation ranges from 100 meters to 8,848 meters above sea level in an aerial distance of only about 50

kilometers.

Nepal has 10 World Heritage Sites, eight of which are cultural while two are natural. These include Kathmandu Valley (with its seven Monument Zones), Lumbini, the birth place of Buddha, Chitwan National Park, Nepal’s first wildlife park, and Sagarmatha National Park, the world’s highest park. About 15,000 sq km of the country, amounting to almost 18% of the total area, is protected. Nepal has nine national parks and protected areas (Chitwan, Sagarmatha/ Everest, Annapurna, Langtang, Bardiya, Rara, Khaptad Dhorpatan and Shey-Phoksundo), and three wildlife reserves (Shukla Phanta, Koshi Tappu and Parsa). The number of bird species in Nepal is larger than in Europe and Africa combined. Likewise, the Kali Gandaki gorge in Western Nepal is the

deepest gorge in the world.

Some potential tourism products in Nepal are adventure tourism, nature tourism (or eco-tourism), culture tourism, health tourism and convention tourism. Tourism products targeted at Buddhists and Hindus from around the world (including those in India, China, South-East Asia, the Republic of Korea and Japan) can be developed with a focus on Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, and Janakpur, the birthplace of Sita, wife of Lord Rama. Likewise, places like Rara Lake which have been untouched so far, can be developed as pristine natural beauty destinations. In 2010, the total number of tourists visiting Nepal was 602,855, which was an 18.2% increase over the previous year. There are several purposes of visit such as holiday pleasure (10%), trekking and mountaineering (12%), pilgrimage (17%), conference (2%), et cetera. The average duration of stay was around 12.7 days and foreign exchange earnings from the tourism sector was around \$ 330 million in 2010, which is around 2.4% of the country’s GDP.

*Source: Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI)* ■



# Lao Tourism Eyes MICE

More than 75 of Laos' top hoteliers, tour operators, and travel trade experts met at the 10th Lanith Symposium to learn how MICE tourism (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) can create "a world of opportunities for Laos," according to keynote speaker Dr Glenn McCartney PhD, an assistant professor at the school of Gaming and Hospitality at the University of Macau, who also consults integrated resorts, hotels, and casinos.

During the 30 August, Luxembourg Development-sponsored (Lux-Dev) event, held at Lao Airlines' new Wattay International

Airport Office with support from the German Development Cooperation (GIZ), Dr McCartney stressed that the MICE industry is a major revenue earner, while pointing out that meetings should be "green".

Also during the Lanith (Lao National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality) event, it was announced that the Lao Ministry of Education and Sports has officially accredited the Lux-Dev two-year Lanith Diploma degree initiative, which GIZ Laos Director Armin Hofmann called, "a major step ahead" for Laos' tourism industry.

Dr McCartney told the delegates that collaboration among all travel trade segments and the government is key in creating a successful MICE destination, regardless of the country's size. "Don't make excuses like, 'We're too small.' Macau is small and within 10 years of embarking on a MICE strategy, went from a rarely visited destination to the 5th top tourism revenue earner in the world."

To accomplish this level of success, Dr McCartney set forth a series of suggestions for Laos to

become a prominent player in the MICE business as well as a popular, higher-end tourism destination. Critical to this is maintaining Lao culture, even transportation mainstays like sam lors and sawng taews. "Do not do away with your cultural icons for modern things," he said.

"Also, though you need a master plan in place, at some point you must stop planning and start implementing. Don't just talk about it; do it."



Dr McCartney went on to list several reasons how MICE can greatly contribute to tourism revenue as well as draw investors from other industries. For example, MICE delegates spend more, stay longer, benefits several businesses beyond hotels and restaurants, encourages leisure travel, and can fill the low season void.

He emphasized that Lao must implement green policies such as recycling now to guarantee environmentally friendly MICE events. He added that China presents a huge market with more than 83 billion outbound travellers a year, though the Lao tourism industry needs to adapt to their requirements including food, language, and signs.

Dr McCartney stressed the necessity for expanding tourism and hospitality training, noting that the two-year Lanith Diploma is an excellent platform for launching bachelor degree and doctorate programmes.

Image perception that MICE bring plays another major role in marketing Laos as a tourism destination. "Many people don't even know where Laos

is," Dr McCartney said. "Everyone knows where Las Vegas is because it is one of the top MICE destinations in the world," and it is in the middle of a desert.

"Don't promote what everyone else has like ATM machines, he stressed. "Focus on what you have to offer that no one else has...And don't be afraid to serve authentic Lao food. Too often, restaurants present a less spicy or different version of traditional

Lao dishes, but foreigners want to eat an real Lao meal."

Also concerning marketing and promotion, Dr McCartney stated, "Say what you have and say it

loud...Turn up the volume...You offer authentic Mekong region experiences and an excellent location, but you cannot promote it alone. It takes collaboration among all stakeholders, including the government."

Dr McCartney further commented on how Laos' relatively high visa fees can have a negative impact on MICE and tourism in general. "I paid USD30 for my visa. This turns off groups as it is expensive, especially considering Thailand charges nothing." He emphasized that for sizeable potential MICE events, this can translate into thousands of dollars, and organizers are looking for the best deal.

He said the government really needs to be involved, as they can actually make more money by lowering visa fees, which will attract high-spending MICE and leisure tourists.

Dr McCartney concluded that offering incentive travel experiences such as team building or rewarding sales people could "be huge. Incentives are big and Lao could blow their mind." *Source: Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), 6 September 2013* ■



Rising enthusiasm for tourism factories among both domestic and overseas tourists will help the sector's revenues grow 25 percent in 2013 from a year earlier, the Ministry of Economic Affairs predicted on June 29, 2013.

The ministry's central regional office projected tourism factory sector revenues to rise to NT\$2.5 billion (US\$83.33 million) in 2013, up from NT\$2 billion in revenues last year.

Visits to tourism factories should also rise to 11.5 million this year, from about 10 million in 2012, the office said. The ministry has actively promoted the niche tourism sector

## Taiwan expects 25% growth in tourism factory revenues

since 2003 to provide a new source of income to manufacturers of traditional products that have been losing their competitive edge largely due to higher labor costs.

The project blends Taiwan's industrial culture and tourism by converting select factories into popular tourist destinations, the ministry said.

Under the program, run by the ministry's Industrial Technology Research Institute, the ministry screens existing old economy factories and selects a certain number every year to be transformed into tourist attractions.

The factories newly highlighted in 2013 are the Kuo Yuan Ye Museum of Cake and Pastry, which has branches in Yangmei, Taoyuan County and in Taipei, and the Zhong Xin Rice Castle, located in Changhua County.

Founded in 1867, Kuo Yuan Ye is one of Taiwan's oldest traditional cake and pastry brands. The brand set up the museum in 2001 to give the public a glimpse of its traditional pastry-making process.

The Zhong Xin Rice Castle, set up by Taiwanese rice brand Zhong Xin Rice four years ago, is a European style castle complex that hopes to give visitors a better understanding of the area's rice culture.

The ministry said it has worked with other government agencies to bring more resources to the project and applied information and communications technology to its promotion efforts to strengthen the quality of the tourism factory experience.

*Source: Central News Agency, June 29, 2013*

## Tourist court opens in Bangkok airport

Thailand on September 23, 2013 opened a special courtroom at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport to hear complaints from tourists.

The initiative will enable courts to deal with legal issues involving foreign visitors quickly and efficiently, authorities said.

"This is to provide convenience for tourists who are involved in minor cases because they have a short period to stay in the kingdom," said Sittisak Wannanchakij, a spokesperson for the judiciary.

Cases will be heard via video link at the nearby Samut Prakan provincial court. The aim is to reduce the number of crimes at the airport and improve the image of the country.

Thailand's interim President Pongsak Semsan was quoted by the Bangkok Post as saying that 1,980 crimes were reported at the airport from January to August, mostly petty.

Suvarnabhumi International Airport receives about 150,000 passenger

arrivals each day. It has been dogged by complaints of overpricing by taxis and scams at duty-free shops involving tourists falsely accused of shoplifting.

Thailand expects about 26 million tourists this year and depends on the sector to boost foreign-currency earnings and employment. It plans to open a total of eight tourist courts across the country.

On Sept. 5, the first special court was opened in the beach resort of Pattaya, 100 kilometers southeast of Bangkok, to handle minor cases involving tourists.

Pattaya, notorious for its seedy nightlife, was chosen for the first court because it attracts the most foreign tourists and is rife with complaints of cheating and scams.

Another tourist court is due to open in Phuket, a resort island 600 kilometers south of Bangkok, on Tuesday.

The move has been welcomed by some in the travel industry.

"I think it's a good thing. I would



say congratulations to the minister of tourism for making it happen," said Luzi Matzig, director of the Asian Trails travel agency.

"It seems the Pattaya court is working, now we have Bangkok and pretty soon Phuket. I welcome the idea. The courts can issue fines or arrest warrants if the people are found to be crooks, and then the tourists can leave."

He said the main scams targeting tourists in Thailand involve the hire of jet skis in Pattaya and Phuket, overcharging by taxis, and sales of fake jewelry.

*Source: Deutsche Presse-Agentur, September 24, 2013*

## India to expand on-arrival visas in bid to attract tourism, businesses

India is looking at issuing visas on arrival for visitors from 40 more countries, a minister has said, raising hopes it will overcome national security fears to boost its tourism industry.

A meeting of senior officials from the home, foreign and tourism ministries, as well as intelligence officers, concluded on October 7, 2013 with a consensus in favor of the sweeping visa reform.

“There was a consensus about initiating the process to make India a tourist-friendly country and extending the on-arrival visa facility to around 40 more countries,” Planning Minister Rajeev Shukla told the Press Trust of India news agency.

The new countries would include the United States and Britain — the source of about 25 percent of all tourists last year — as well as Canada, Brazil, Australia and most Western European nations including France and Germany.

Despite its cultural attractions, beaches and mountains, India attracts relatively few foreign holidaymakers — 6.58 million in 2012, which was about a quarter of Thailand or Malaysia, for example.



India currently issues visas on arrival to visitors from about a dozen foreign nations including Japan, Finland, Singapore, Indonesia, New Zealand and the Philippines among others.

The proposed relaxation of the rules, which is likely to take time to organize and would require cabinet-level approval, was hailed by The Times of India newspaper in an editorial.

The proposed changes would also make it easier for elderly visitors and those wishing to attend conferences, the Press Trust of India reported.

*Source: Agence France-Presse (AFP), October 9, 2013* ■

## Taiwan, Hong Kong sign letter of intent to promote cruise tourism

Taiwan’s Tourism Bureau signed a letter of intent on June 5, 2013 with its Hong Kong counterpart to jointly promote the cruise liner market in the Asia-Pacific region.

According to the terms of the letter of intent, the Tourism Bureau

and the Hong Kong Tourism Board will cooperate to promote cruise liner business in the region by introducing routes to Taiwan and Hong Kong, as well as various cruise liner travel products.

The two sides also announced that they have reached an agreement with Royal Caribbean International Cruises Ltd., with its liner, the Mariner of the Seas, adding routes between Taiwan and Hong Kong Oct. 29 and Nov. 2.

Wayne Liu, deputy director-general of Taiwan’s Tourism Bureau, said the focus of world cruise liners by 2030 will be on the Asia-Pacific market, with an estimated 11 million customers by that time.

As soon as 2015, it is forecast that there will be over 7 million cruise liner passengers.

“With this outlook, the bureau is happy to work with the Hong Kong Tourism Board to tap the Asia-Pacific market,” Liu said.

He said the two sides will work toward attracting passengers in the region, as well as those from Europe.

Peter Lam, chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, said the signing of the letter of intent is an important step toward tapping regional cooperation in cruise liner tourism.

He also expressed hope that more routes including Hong Kong will be developed.

*Source: Central News Agency, June 5, 2013* ■





# *Boracay lands on list of top destinations of Chinese tourists*

*By Doris C. Dumlao*

The Philippines' Boracay Island is one of the 20 most popular destinations among holiday-makers from China, the world's largest tourism spender, based on data from popular travel site TripAdvisor.

This is despite the territorial dispute between the Philippines and China that has triggered some unfavorable travel advisories against the former.

TripAdvisor released a list of the top 20 most popular outbound destinations for mainland Chinese travellers based on July and August 2013 figures on Daodao.com, a customized version of TripAdvisor designed specifically for Chinese travellers, according to a statement released from Singapore on Tuesday.

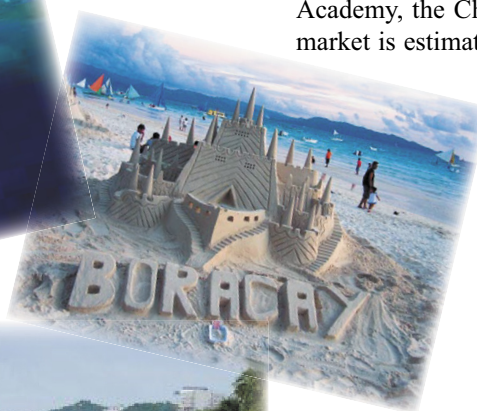
In July and August 2013, millions of unique visitors came to Daodao.com to research outbound destinations, representing an increase of over 250 percent compared to the same time last year.

Boracay, known for its white sand beach and vibrant nightlife, ranked 16th on the list, beating Kyoto, Kota Kinabalu, Hanoi and Kuala Lumpur but lagging Hong Kong, Phuket, Taiwan, Bangkok and Paris.

The data also showed a 360-percent rise in online inquiries on Boracay for the period in review.

Hong Kong topped the list of popular destinations among Chinese travellers, followed by Phuket in Thailand and Taiwan.

The top 20 most popular destinations for July and August 2013 based on Daodao.com are as follows: Hong Kong, China; Phuket, Thailand; Taiwan; Bangkok, Thailand; Paris, France; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Macau, China; Seoul, South Korea;



Singapore; Bali, Indonesia; Rome, Italy; Chiang Mai, Thailand; New York, United States; London, United Kingdom; Jeju Island, South Korea; Boracay Island, Philippines; Kyoto, Japan; Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia; Hanoi, Vietnam and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The data also showed that of the top 20 destinations, Kyoto (Japan), Kota Kinabalu (Malaysia), Hanoi (Vietnam) and Jeju Island (South Korea) exhibited the highest year-on-year growth at high triple digits.

Outside of the top 20, destinations on the rise with over four times year-on-year growth include Siem Reap

(Cambodia), Pattaya (Thailand), Sabah (Malaysia) and Berlin (Germany).

In 2012, China overtook the United States and Germany to become the world's largest source market for outbound tourism by expenditure. As such, capturing a share of this growing market has become a top priority for tourism boards and travel suppliers alike.

According to the China Tourism Academy, the Chinese outbound travel market is estimated to reach 94 million trips in 2013, up 15 percent year-on-year. These travellers are estimated to spend a combined \$117.6 billion on their trips, up 20 percent year-on-year.

"This new generation of Chinese outbound travellers is making their own decisions about where to go, where to stay and what to do by doing their own research online, going beyond the old stereotype of big buses of group tourists," said Lily Cheng, managing director at TripAdvisor China.

"These travellers are savvy, sophisticated and do make an effort to understand and respect the local culture by doing a lot of online research before their trip. As they explore outside of mainland China, they are deliberately seeking out websites that have an established international presence to find more deals and more content," Cheng said.

*Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer, September 24, 2013* ■



## PH hotel room gap seen widening

By Chino Leyco

Despite the rise in the number of hotel establishments across the country, the Department of Tourism (DOT) has projected that room gap between this year until the end of the Aquino administration would reach 37,352.

Data from the DOT showed that the latest 162,704 rooms available across the Philippines and the 15,021 rooms that are in the pipeline are not enough to accommodate the projected 10.7 million tourist arrivals by 2016.

The central part of the Philippines that covers the primary tourists destinations is expected to incur the biggest room gap at 20,757 by 2016, followed by northern areas with 16,025 and southern part with 570.

DOT said the current accommodation development in the pipeline covers only 40 percent of the room requirement in the country.

According to the DOT, central Visayas is a critical cluster destination



as room demand in that area is projected to reach 41,402. Of that demand, 27,447 rooms are now available, while 2,124 are in the pipeline, which brought its room gap to 11,831.

After central Visayas, Metro Manila and the Calabarzon areas (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) have the second biggest room gap in the country with 10,177. Demand is expected to reach 54,818 by 2016, but available and in the pipeline rooms are only at 44,641.

Meanwhile, Bicol will require building additional 7,125 rooms by 2016 to accommodate more tourists. To date, 15,804 rooms are available in that area and 130 rooms are in the pipeline.

Cordillera, on the other hand, also



needs 2,890 additional accommodations to address its room gap. Room demand in that area is projected to reach 9,851 by 2016, however, current available rooms are only 6,855 and 106 are in the pipeline.

In 2012, the DOT data showed that there were 6,873 room establishments in the country. New major accommodation facilities were Fairmont Hotel and Raffles Suites, Quest Hotel and Conference Center Cebu, Calyx Center-Cebu, Bellevue Resort-Bohol, Tunes Hotel-Cebu, Luxent Hotel-Quezon City, Dohera Hotel-Cebu and Microtel Acropolis-Quezon City.

Source: Manila Bulletin, September 29, 2013

## Maldives enters culture war as it opens to backpackers

By Adam Plowright

The Maldives is one of the world's most exclusive holiday destinations but it has quietly opened up to backpackers in the last five years through reform that has upset religious hard-liners.

Most visitors arrive at the country's airport island, take a speed boat or seaplane to their expensive coral-fringed private resort and spend the next week relaxing in blissful ignorance of the country around them.

It has been this way for decades, the result of a deliberate policy of keeping wealthy vacationers — mostly Westerners and often newlyweds — on uninhabited islands separate from the local Muslim population.

The Islamic republic applies

different laws for both: Travelers are free to drink alcohol, eat pork, and for those not on their honeymoon, enjoy pre-marital sex; elsewhere, Maldivian women can be flogged in public for fornication.

“Since (the) Maldives is a Muslim country, we have always supported the idea that the tourism industry should be separate from the inhabited islands,” said Mauroof Hussain, vice president of the conservative Adhaalath Party.

“If the hippy-type of travelers come, along will come drugs and narcotics which even now our society is suffering from,” said Hussain.

While the archipelago is still far from the hippy trail, the sight of

backpackers wandering around the capital, Male, and the nearby island of Maafushi is growing thanks to a new policy to attract budget travelers.

“Things like nudity are not acceptable in a place where people are living,” Hussain stressed. “The people complain that they are praying in the mosque and just outside there are tourists in bikinis.”

Since enacting reform under the country's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Nasheed, in 2009, Maldivians have been allowed to open their own guesthouses on populated islands.

While fundamentalist interpretations of Islam imported from the Persian Gulf and Pakistan are progressively taking root in the Maldives, Hussain's views lie far outside the mainstream and are

*Continued on page 9*



## Maldives

...Continued from page 8

ridiculed by many.

What started as a trickle of guesthouses has become a torrent with entrepreneurs like 25-year-old Ibrahim Mohamed converting properties and profiting from what is the islands' biggest business and foreign exchange earner.

"Maldivians are very welcoming people. It wasn't Maldivians that wanted separation, it was the government and a few businessmen saying that they should be isolated," Mohamed said. "The Maldives can't hide from the world anymore."

His three-roomed Sundhara Palace, located on a busy street of the cramped Male, opened at the beginning of September, offering basic en-suite accommodation for \$30 a night. The cheapest resorts are usually about 10 times this, with prices stretching up to several thousand dollars per night — with expensively priced food and drink on top.

Mohamed stressed that the guesthouse policy is also "a good system to get money to the people instead of to wealthy businessmen."

A handful of well-connected resort owners who prospered under the 30-year autocratic rule of strongman Maumoon Abdul Gayoom continue to control the Maldives' economy and are active in politics. These oligarchs have united against Nasheed, who was ousted in February 2012 following a mutiny by security forces that he branded a "coup."

If re-elected in national polls on Oct. 19, Nasheed has promised to expand the guesthouse policy as part of his ambitious social and economic reform program.

"The industry is flourishing very rapidly. We feel there is so much more scope for that," he told reporters days



before voting in the first round of the election in September.

One of the people to take advantage of the changes is Dutch tourist Chris Constandse, a 27-year-old web designer who works for a travel website in Amsterdam. He booked a few nights at a hotel in the capital, but plans to spend the rest of his two-week holiday staying in guesthouses dotted around the country of more than 1,000 islands.

"Backpackers go to India, Sri

Lanka, Thailand and I was like, 'I always do things different,' so I thought I'd go backpacking in the Maldives," he said shortly before leaving on a ferry for one of the nearby islands.

"The most important thing is that you get in touch with the people. I've stayed in Male for three nights and I've already met some people and made some friends."

*Source: The Japan Times, October 11, 2013* ■

### About CACCI Asian Council on Tourism

Asian Council of Tourism is one of the Product Service Councils under the CACCI umbrella. The PSCs have been formed with the primary aim of promoting greater business interaction among CACCI members who are in the same product or service line. There are currently twelve PSCs that are operating within the CACCI umbrella.

The PSCs meet at least once a year, usually in conjunction with the Annual CACCI Conference held in various member countries. Occasionally, officers and key members of the PSCs conduct teleconferences to discuss their activities for the year.

CACCI held its first breakout

session on Tourism during the 60th CACCI Council Meeting held on 18-19 May 2004 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia and formally organized a CACCI Asian Council on Tourism (ACT).

The current Chairman of ACT is Mr. Anura Samarawickrema Lokuhetty from Sri Lanka. He is concurrently Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive of Serene Pavilions, and Immediate Past President of Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka, the apex body representing all hotels in Sri Lanka.

For more information on the PSCs, please visit the CACCI website at [www.cacci.org.tw](http://www.cacci.org.tw) and go to the "Product and Service Councils" page.

Published by the Secretariat, Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry

David Liu - Director-General

Amador R. Honrado, Jr. – Editor; Wendy Yang / Jacqueline Uy – Contributing Editors; Julia Hsu – Assistant Editor

14/F, No. 11, Songgao Road, Taipei 11073, Taiwan

Tel: (886 2) 2725-5663/4; Fax: (886 2) 2725-5665; Email: [cacci@cacci.org.tw](mailto:cacci@cacci.org.tw)