



CACCI

Tourism Newsletter

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Message from the Chairman



As Chairman of the Asian Council on Tourism (ACT), I am pleased to introduce to you the 14th Volume of the ACT Newsletter.

This volume highlights the latest news and interesting reports on tourism from the Asia-Pacific region. I hope that you will find the articles included in this Newsletter of great value, and look forward to your contribution to the Newsletter in the future. Interested parties may visit http://cacci.biz/?page_id=57 for previous volumes.

I am confident that future issues will continue to serve as an effective platform for an exchange of ideas and information not only among ACT members but also among the industry players in the Asia-Pacific region as a whole.

Taking this opportunity, I would also like to invite my colleagues in the tourism industry to join us in the Breakout Session on Tourism to be held in adjunction with the 29th CACCI Conference on October 29-30, 2015 in Hong Kong. Your participation will certainly contribute much to the success of the event.

My Best Wishes

Anura Samarawickrema Lokuhetty
Chairman
Asian Council on Tourism



Asian Council on Tourism Invites Members to join CACCI Conference in Hong Kong

In conjunction with the 29th CACCI Conference, Asian Council on Tourism (ACT) will conduct its annual meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. Anura Lokuhetty from Sri Lanka. The 29th CACCI Conference will be held on October 29-30, 2015 in Hong Kong.

As part of the program of the 29th CACCI Conference, the host - the Kowloon Chamber of Commerce - is requesting the various CACCI Product and Service Councils, including the ACT, to organize break-out sessions that will feature panelists who will share their views on trends and

developments, problems and issues, and prospects for growth in the sectors concerned.

In this regard, ACT Chairman Mr. Lokuhetty would like to extend his invitation to representatives of the tourism industry in the region to join the break-out session on tourism to share their best practices and valuable experience. An active participation in the session will certainly contribute to a meaningful and productive discussion of the issues at hand.

For more information on the ACT, please visit the following link at http://cacci.biz/?page_id=175.

CLIA GLOBAL SNAPSHOT PREDICTS ROBUST GROWTH IN 2015



Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) has released its annual State of the Cruise Industry Report projecting another year of strong growth for the global cruise industry with a record 23 million passengers expected to sail in 2015.

With passenger numbers up more than a million from the 2014 forecast of 21.7 million cruisers, the CLIA report shows that cruise lines are enticing more global travellers to sea with new, exotic locations, and the debut of 22 new ocean, river and specialty ships in 2015 - a total investment of more than \$4 billion by member cruise lines.

In great news for the local industry, CLIA Australasia General Manager Brett Jardine said the report earmarked Australia and neighbouring Asia as regions set for more robust growth in 2015.

“This year is set to be another big

step forward for the entire industry as our members continue to strive to make cruising the best overall holiday experience for Australian travellers,” Mr Jardine said.

As part of the report, the global cruise association collated research from around the world to reveal its key industry outlooks:

* Cruise passengers intend to continue cruising. CLIA member ocean passenger volume is projected to increase to 23 million in 2015, a 4 per cent increase over 2014 estimates.

* Size doesn’t matter. Five years ago, the largest cruise ship in the world was introduced with a 6,300-passenger capacity. With 22 new ocean, river and specialty cruise ships scheduled for debut this year, the focus is less on size and more on unique design and amenities.

* Specialty cruises continue

to thrive. Sophisticated ships, luxury yachts, elegant ocean liners and the newest river cruises all continue to experience double digit passenger growth with specialty cruises growing by 21 per cent annually from 2009 to 2014 estimates.

* The Caribbean is Queen. The Caribbean remains the top cruise destination with more than a third of the global deployment capacity market share in 2015.

* Travellers are expanding horizons. Regions including the Mediterranean, Asia and Australia are set to grow. In 2015, 52 ships will offer 1065 Asian cruises with capacity for 2 million passengers.

* Oh, the places we will go. The cruise industry is seeing an increase in passengers looking for global experiences. As a result, cruising has made the world more accessible than ever. CLIA’s member cruise lines offer nearly 1000 ports around the globe, including many areas that fall within a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

* Travel agents are key. While the Internet and mobile devices have overtaken how consumers make purchases, travel agents continue to be the most popular and best way to book a cruise.

* Passengers are at the helm. When it comes to travel, consumers are in control more than ever before. The cruise industry is excited, motivated and responding with key innovations that are meeting the needs of today’s passengers, such as bow-to-stern Wi-Fi and phone connectivity, multigenerational appeal, themed cruises and “foodcations”.

Source: CLIA Australasia, 10 February 2015



Seeing the doctor, overseas: medical tourism booms in Asia

By Julia Zappei

The lines snaking into Bangladesh’s overwhelmed hospitals are often so long, says Nusrat Hussein Kiwan, that they extend into the street outside -- too many patients seeking too few quality doctors.

So, through a Google search, the wife of a Bangladeshi construction executive chose a Malaysian hospital for her heart bypass surgery.

“It’s peaceful here, and my doctors are good,” Kiwan, 65, said during a post-op check-up at a Kuala Lumpur private hospital, looking full of life in an orange headscarf and sparkling gold bracelets.

“I didn’t expect to be as good as before. But I’m better.”

Kiwan spent \$20,000 on the procedure earlier this year, joining a booming global medical tourism market that is seeing particularly rapid growth in Southeast Asia.

US-based industry resource Patients Beyond Borders estimates the world market is expanding by 25 percent per year -- it reached \$55 billion with 11 million medical tourists in 2013.

International medical tourism began to gain ground in the 1980s as Latin American countries such as Costa Rica and Brazil offered relatively cheap dental, cosmetic and other procedures to US and European patients driven

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Seeing the doctor

...Continued from page 2

south by high costs.

But the onetime niche market has developed into a multi-billion-dollar industry as developing-world health systems improve, global aviation links spread, and the Internet broadens patients' horizons.

Procedures vary widely from fertility treatments in Barbados, to cosmetic surgery in Brazil, heart and eye operations in Malaysia, and gender-reassignment in Thailand.

- 'Perfect storm' -

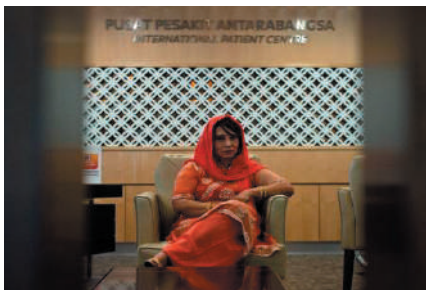
The sector benefits from a "perfect storm of an ageing global population, rising affluence and greater choice in quality hospitals," said Josef Woodman, CEO of Patients Beyond Borders.

"This is particularly true in Asia, where disparities in quality of care are driving millions of patients to countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan -- and even the US and UK -- in search of medical treatment not yet available in their homelands."

"The near-term growth potential is significant," he said.

Increasingly, major Asian players like India, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand are aggressively promoting treatments at up to 80 percent savings compared to developed nations, with some companies arranging package trips that combine a nose job with a little beach time.

Southeast Asia, in particular, is



Bangladeshi woman Nusrat Hussein Kiwan, pictured at the International Patients Centre reception area, at a private hospital in Kuala Lumpur, on December 9, 2014



Alexandria Garvie from Australia poses for a photo following a tummy-tuck operation at a private hospital in Kuala Lumpur, on December 3, 2014

considered a medical-tourism "sweet spot," with decades of solid economic growth creating high-quality medical systems that remain competitively priced.

Patients come from both rich and poor nations, the former driven by high costs at home, and the latter seeking better-quality care.

Malaysia's market has nearly doubled since 2010, reaching 770,000 patients and \$200 million in revenue last year, according to government figures.

"We are behind Thailand for sure, but we are giving Singapore a good fight," said T. Mahadevan, head of the Association of Private Hospitals of Malaysia.

Thailand says it attracted 2.53 million medical tourists in 2012. Though its figures include spa tourists, that's a one-third increase in just two years, a period in which revenues nearly doubled to around \$4.2 billion.

In Singapore, medical tourists spent \$630 million last year, a figure likely inflated by the modern city-state's relatively higher costs. Patients Beyond Borders estimates Singapore draws more than a half-million treatment-seekers annually, mostly from neighbouring Indonesia, where health systems lag.

Malaysia set up a special body in 2009 to streamline and organise industry players.

Patients Without Borders calls Malaysia "medical travel's best-kept secret", noting the widely spoken fluent

English and far cheaper medical costs compared to Japan, the United States, Europe and other key clientele sources.

"I would come back here again. I would definitely recommend it," Alexandria Garvie, 61, said from her hospital bed in Kuala Lumpur after a tummy tuck.

The \$5,000 procedure -- around one-quarter of what she would have paid at home in Australia -- was performed at the Beverly Wilshire Medical Centre.

The company also recently opened a new branch near the border with Singapore to entice patients from the more affluent city-state.

Most medical tourists to Malaysia, however, are well-heeled visitors from less-developed Indonesia, followed by Indians, Japanese and Chinese. Future growth is expected from the wealthy Middle East.

- Sun and silicone -

Ancillary businesses have sprouted.

Beautiful Holidays, based on the northern Malaysian island of Penang, connects overseas clients with local cosmetic surgeons, arranges their accommodations, and shepherds them to pre- and post-op check-ups.

But it also arranges drinks, dining and sightseeing in Penang, known for its historical sites, beaches and cultural melange.

"The idea is to have people come here for holidays -- sun and silicone, that kind of thing," said Tony Leong, the company's programme director.

Ashley Higgins, a 30-year-old American, has used the company twice, first for a breast augmentation, then a nose job.

She was initially wary of going under the knife on the other side of the globe, but price concerns won out.

"The hard part is trusting people when you are 1,000 miles from home. I felt comfortable coming here," she said.

Source: Agence France-Presse (AFP), December 22, 2014



Taiwan's Hotel trade sees 2-fold increase as tourism grows

By John Liu

As tourists flooded the nation in recent years, construction firms, investors and developers alike are making headway in the hotel industry, as a result, hotel-related trading saw a two-fold increase in the past two years, according to Sinyi Realty.

Not only have Chinese tourists exhibited keen interest in the island, visitors from Japan and South Korea have also been growing every year, statistics show.

Sensing the new trend in the booming travel industry, construction companies such as Ruentex Financial Group, Farglory Group, Huang Hsiang Construction Corp., Rich Development Inc. and King's Town Construction Co. have all made new investment in high-end lodging, the realty company said.

Their approaches range from purchasing old buildings for hotel renovations to constructing new hotels out of existing real estate.

Sinyi Realty's research shows stand-alone hotel buildings in Taipei are considered prime targets by real estate companies. Properties in Neihu and Songshan districts are the most popular, shifting away from Zhongshan and Zhongzheng districts.

Sinyi noted that the number of transactions in 2013 and 2014 increased two-fold or more compared with the volume in 2011, the year the

government granted Chinese mainlanders access to visit the island on their own.

Various Buyers Enter the Fray

Transactions were centered in the Greater Taipei region, where over 70 percent of trade took place.

Other transactions occurred in Taoyuan County, Taichung City, Tainan City, Hualien County and Nantou County.

Looking at the number of deals in the last four years, NT\$1 billion or less deals accounted for more than 50 percent of all transactions, while those between NT\$1 billion and NT\$2 billion accounted for some 36 percent, and NT\$2 billion and over made up less than 10 percent.

A lot of purchases were made by insurance companies looking for assets that generate stable returns over the long run. All their acquisitions are located in Taipei City, Sinyi said.

Investment and real estate development companies are the second-largest group of buyers. Still, another group of buyers consists of travel businesses that acquire hotels to provide a one-stop service for their customers.



Straining Hotel Supply

Michael Wang, an account manager at Sinyi's Global Asset Management Co, said that hotel supply is limited now that hotels in Taipei average an 80-percent-plus occupancy rate.

Wang provided insight from a real estate investor's perspective, saying that a piece of property with good location and convenient transportation has less difficulty in securing partnership with hotel operators.

Not only can investors obtain stable returns, they may also reap capital gains as their properties' value goes up in the future.

However, given Taipei's already soaring property prices, Wang suggested that investors move their eyes toward the outskirts of Taipei or other popular tourist locations such as Yilan, Chiayi and Hualien.

Source: China Post, May 12, 2015



Taiwan Government opens door to individual mainland travelers from 11 more cities

Taiwan announced on March 18, 2015 that it plans to allow residents from a further 11 Chinese cities to visit the country without having to join tour groups.

The new measure, which will come into force on April 15, will increase to 47 the number of Chinese cities benefiting from the individual Chinese tourists program first introduced in 2011, according to the Tourism Bureau.

The cities added to the list are Haikao in Hainan province, Hohhot in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, Lanzhou in Gansu province, Yinchuan in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Zhoushan in Zhejiang province, Huizhou in Guangdong province, Weihai in Shandong province, Longyan in Fujian province, Guilin in Guangxi province, Changzhou and Hsuzhou in Jiangsu province.

The quota on the number of entry permits for individual Chinese travelers, which currently stands at 4,000 per day, is

expected to be increased within the first half of the year, the Tourism Bureau said.

Statistics from the bureau show that the number of visits by individual Chinese travelers reached 1.19 million last year, the highest since the policy was introduced in June 2011.

This represents an average 3,251 visits per day, an increase of 127 percent on the previous year, according to official statistics, which also indicate an average 4,554 visits to Taiwan by individual Chinese travelers per day in the first two months of the year.

Deputy Director-General of Tourism Chang Shi-chung said he expects the limit on the number of

individual Chinese visitors to be increased this year, but the quota will remain at 4,000 per day for the moment.

Given that Taiwan is going to great lengths to create more tourist attractions, "there should be a chance in the first half of the year (for the government) to increase" the upper limit for visitors, Chang said.

As of February, there have been more than 2.199 million visits to Taiwan by individual Chinese travelers, according to official statistics.

Roget Hsu, former secretary-general of the Travel Agent Association of the R.O.C., welcomed the relaxation of the quota limit and expressed the hope that as more and more individual Chinese travelers visit Taiwan, cross-strait tourism will gradually be normalized.

Hsu said he hoped the limit on individual Chinese travelers would be increased to 5,000 people per day, estimating that such an increase would increase tourism revenue by 12 percent. Hsu now heads a tourism management consultancy company.

Source: Central News Agency (CNA), March 19, 2015



German undergraduates visits Ceylon Chamber, Tea Auction

A group of German undergraduates, who is on a study tour to Sri Lanka, visited the Colombo Tea Auction. The students keenly observed the conducting of the largest, single origin tea auction in the world.

The undergraduates were given a presentation about the tea industry of Sri Lanka and the also about the tea auction by Mrs. Gillian Nugara, Assistant Secretary General of the Ceylon Chamber, who is in-charge of the Commodity section, which also manages the rubber and the spices auction.

The group of student's main purpose of the Sri Lanka visit is to study the Island's tourism industry, as they studying Tourism Management from the University of Fachhochschule Stralsund – University of Applied Science of Germany.

This is the second time; the Commodities Division of the Chamber facilitated and educated a group of German undergraduates during a year's period, as part of its social responsibility initiative.

Source: The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, March 19, 2015



RI tourism leaps forward

By: *Nadya Natahadibrata*

Indonesia's position in the world's travel and tourism competitiveness index has significantly increased this year as improvement in government priorities and infrastructure facilities have made the country's industry stronger.

The country's ranking in the biennial Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report jumped 20 places, from 70th in 2013 to 50th this year.

According to the 2015 report released last week, the country's ranking for national prioritization of the industry improved from 19th in 2013 to 15th in 2015, while its air transportation infrastructure ranking jumped from 54th to 39th with a score of 3.8 in 2015. The ranking, which covers 141 countries, is compiled by the World Economic Forum and Strategy Partners Group every two years and assesses factors and policies that enable the sustainable development of the travel and tourist industry.

The report analyzes the performance of 141 economies through the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) and explores how the sector has responded to economic, security and health shocks in recent years.

The index is a measurement of the factors that make it attractive to develop a business in the travel and tourist industry of a given country.

"We managed to rise from 70th to 50th position thanks to the ministry's good work in improving the tourist industry," Tourism Minister Arief Yahya said on May 13 2015. "We got an A for natural resources, this means we have great potential but lack promotion and marketing," he continued.

The minister said that the plan to waive visa requirements for 30 countries would be ready for implementation in June this year.

The minister previously said the plan would come into effect in April, however legal issues thwarted their efforts. He also said the ministry was still waiting for presidential regulations to remove reciprocal requirements for the 30 countries.

Through the visa-free policy, the government aims to attract an additional 3 million tourists this year, bringing the overall target up to 11 million tourists.

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) show the number of foreign tourist arrivals last year rose by 7.19 percent to 9.44 million, up from 8.8 million in 2013. According to TTCI, Indonesia's main competitive advantages are its price competitiveness, for which it is ranked third on the index, and natural resources (19th), including its biodiversity

(ranked fourth in the total known species indicator) and heritage sites (10th). One of the major drawbacks for the country is the fact that Indonesia is not placing enough emphasis on environmental sustainability (134th). There are also concerns relating to safety and security, specifically the business cost of terrorism (104th), the report says.

Indonesian Tourism Promotion Board (BPPI) chairwoman Wiryanti Sukamdani said the government was on track to improve the competitiveness of the country's tourist industry with its aggressive plans to improve infrastructure and the information technology sector.

"We expect the country's competitiveness in tourism will continue to improve in the future with the government's serious efforts to improve infrastructure supporting the industry," Wiryanti told The Jakarta Post.

"However, there's still room for improvement with respect to health and hygiene, and our organization is ready to help the government in improving this by holding training sessions for tourist businesses on how to improve such aspects of the industry," she continued.

The report shows that the top five performers in the Asia-Pacific are among the region's more advanced economies: Australia (seventh), Japan (ninth), Singapore (11th), Hong Kong SAR (13th) and New Zealand (16th).

Source: *The Jakarta Post, May 15 2015*

The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index

	Rank (out of 141)	Score (1-7)
The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index	50	4.04
Enabling Environment	80	4.46
Business Environment	63	4.46
Safety and security	83	5.16
Health and hygiene	109	4.24
Human Resources and Labor market	53	4.70
ICT Readiness	85	3.73
T&T Policy and Enabling conditions	9	4.59
Prioritization of Travel & Tourism	15	5.61
International Openness	55	3.55
Price competitiveness	3	6.11
Environmental Sustainability	134	3.11
Infrastructure	75	3.38
Air Transport Infrastructure	39	3.81
Ground and Port Infrastructure	77	3.27
Tourist Service Infrastructure	101	3.07
Natural and Cultural Resources	17	3.74
Natural Resources	19	4.36
Cultural Resources and Business Travel	25	3.12

DXB Takes Over Top Spot for International Passenger Traffic



Dubai Airports released its year-end traffic report on January 27, 2015 which confirmed that Dubai International (DXB) has secured its position as the number one airport for international passenger numbers. Full year passenger numbers totaled 70,475,636, up 6.1 per cent from the 66,431,533 recorded in 2013. This followed robust passenger traffic growth of 7.5 per cent in December with 6,498,573 passengers passing through the facility compared to 6,047,126 recorded in the corresponding month last year.

“This historic milestone is the culmination of over five decades of double-digit average growth that were inspired by the vision of the late Sheikh Rashid Bin Saeed Al Maktoum. It is a vision that has been carried forward strongly by our leader HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai,” said HH Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman of Dubai Airports. “The shared goal is to make Dubai a global centre of aviation and we are nearing that goal thanks to an open skies policy, a friendly business environment, Dubai’s growing attractiveness as a centre for trade, commerce and tourism, growing network connectivity due to the rapid expansion of Emirates and flydubai and timely investment in aviation infrastructure.”

Aircraft movements in December rose 4 per cent to 34,136, up marginally from the 32,832 recorded during December 2013. Full year aircraft movements totaled 357,339

compared to 369,953 versus 2013, a contraction of 3.4 per cent, primarily due to the temporary reduction of flights experienced during the 80 day runway refurbishment project during the summer, and the shift of freighter operators and general aviation to Al Maktoum International at Dubai World Central (DWC) earlier this year. Spurred by an ongoing increase in the number of wide bodied aircraft servicing the airport, the numbers of passengers per flight increased 5.1 percent to 208.3 passengers for the full year.

For the full year 2014, the top market for growth in passenger volumes was Western Europe (+1,192,831 passengers) closely followed by the Indian Subcontinent (+936,449 passengers), Asia (+716,180) and North America (+432,597). In terms of percentage growth* in 2014 Eastern Europe (+21.0 per cent) was the strongest market followed by North America (18.6 per cent), Asia (12.6 per cent), Australasia (9.2 per cent) and Western Europe (8.8 per cent).

Freight volumes at Dubai International totaled 2,367,574 tonnes in 2014 compared to 2,443,624 tonnes in 2013, down 3.1 per cent again due to the shift of freighter operators to DWC. December’s freight volumes decreased by 7 per cent with 202,836 tonnes passing through the facility compared to 218,138 tonnes recorded during the same month last year.

“Much like 2014, 2015 promises to be another eventful year featuring more record passenger numbers and facility upgrades including the opening of Concourse D which will boost Dubai International’s capacity to 90 million,” said Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports. “Today we are also releasing our projections for 2015 traffic at Dubai International which forecast 79 million passengers. We will have more flights connecting more people to more destinations. And we will be fully focused on rolling out technology, new F&B concepts and service initiatives



that further enhance the passenger experience.”

Source: Dubai Airports, January 27, 2015

Fusion of medical services and five-star hotel soon to open doors

The Taipei Wellness Clinic and Resort (TWCR) was promoted to the public at a press conference on December 15, 2014.

Situated in the Beitou Hot Springs area, the franchise takes as its mission customized health tourism. In particular, TWCR targets overseas Chinese tourists for medical exams as well as relaxation via hot springs, the Central News Agency reported.

The Taipei City Government spent NT\$700 million to task the Taipei Beitou Health Management Hospital and the Hotel Royal Beitou to build the TWCR. The fusion of international tourist hotel and professional health management institution is slated for opening on Dec. 20, 2014.

The TWCR is located opposite the MRT New Beitou Station. Refashioned on the site of the former Yang Ming Hospital's Beitou outpatient area, the twelve-floor building is a nexus of medical technology as well as tourist facility.



The hospital is spanned out over floors one to five, with specialty departments including the medical imaging center, the endoscope examination center, beauty medicine center, and women's gynecological center. The hospital imported of state-of-the-art devices such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), low dose computed tomography (LDCT) scanners, and Automated Breast Volume Scanner (ABVS) costing a total of NT\$300 million. Fifty rooms of the Hotel Royal Beitou are spread from floors six to twelve.

Tourists can take advantage of the holiday season to grab some discount deals in a package called "Take a health exam and get a free tour." In the five-star hotel, tourists can participate in free Beitou artifacts museum tour, taste European cuisine,

experience the "sublimation of the seven senses" spa, Central News Agency (CNA) said. The hotel also offers physical and mental health exercise courses, stress-relief yoga, and white sulfur springs. For a two-day, one night stay, the starting price is NT\$35,000.

The China Times reported the hospital as saying it sought to prevent high temperature gas from sulphur causing damage to sensitive medical equipment, air ducts have been specially treated to block them out.

According to Director Tsai Ching-piao of the Taipei Beitou Health Management Hospital and reported by the CNA, last year there were more than two hundred and thirty thousand non-residents who visited for medical services, and injected NT\$13.67 billion in economic value. The estimate is that in 2016, that number can reach NT\$38.7 million.

Approximately ninety percent of people who visit for medical services are of Chinese ethnicity, consisting mostly of overseas Chinese from Thailand, Malaysia, and Myanmar, according to the CNA.

Source: *The China Post*, December 15, 2014



JTA's latest strategy: Get repeat visitors into the countryside

The Japan Tourism Agency plans to support the efforts of towns, cities and prefectures to attract tourists, particularly those on their second visit to Japan who might have seen the big cities already.

The central government has set a goal of reeling in 20 million visitors in 2020. In 2014, tourists hit a record high of 13,413,600, government figures showed on January 20, 2015.

To reach the 2020 target, the nation will need to both target repeat visitors and get people out into the rural areas.

One approach will be to devise the suggested tour routes, which take in the local landmarks and attractions. The JTA believes tourists may benefit in part from this change because of the wider range of traditional Japanese accommodations available, not just the typical tourist-haunt hotels in large cities like Tokyo and Osaka.

In 2013, more than 60 percent of the accommodations used by foreign visitors lined the so-called “golden route” that connects Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka.

But the nation needs to provide more information about options in the countryside if people are to consider making a second visit.

Sticking to the golden route can fall short of expectations, since accommodations and transportation are invariably overstretched during peak periods. Some potential tourists abandon their plans to visit because of this.

The agency plans to support the launch of tourist campaign routes similar to the Dragon Route project, a collaboration involving nine prefectures occupying Japan's less-known middle region.

Beginning at airports such as Chubu International Airport near Nagoya, the Dragon Route passes through sightseeing spots such as the Kumano Kodo pilgrim routes, Ise Grand Shrine in Mie Prefecture, Matsumoto

Castle in Nagano Prefecture, the traditional village of Shirakawa-go in Gifu Prefecture famous for its thatched-roof houses, and the Ishikawa Prefecture city of Kanazawa.

The route's shape resembles a



The Shanghai office of the Nagano Prefectural Government tries to lure potential tourists to the sprawling prefecture at a promotional event in the Chinese city on Dec. 5. | KYODO

dragon, a popular symbol in China. After the governments involved began promoting it, the number of foreign tourists staying in accommodations along the route increased by about 37 percent in 2013 from 2012.

This comfortably exceeded the national average growth of around 27 percent for tourists using hotels.

The central government's fiscal 2014 supplementary budget calls for some ¥500 million to support other governments as they develop new tourism routes and try to improve facilities.

In fiscal 2015, the agency plans to launch a project to develop tourism resources outside big cities. The agency intends to install multi-language signposts and to improve transport options between tourist sites and railway stations or airports.

Source; Japan Times, January 22, 2015

Japan, China, S. Korea agree to boost tourism: ministers

Japan, China and South Korea briefly put aside territorial and historical disputes Sunday for rare trilateral talks announcing a bid to boost tourism numbers in the three countries to 30 million visitors in five years.

Japanese tourism minister Akihiro Ota met with counterparts Li Jinzao of the China National Tourism Administration and Kim Jong-Deok of South Korea in Tokyo, Jiji Press and Kyodo News said.

The meeting — the first by tourism ministers of the three countries in four years, according to Jiji — came ahead of the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea and Japan's 2020 Summer Olympics.

The three ministers agreed to set a goal of raising the number of visitors between them to 30 million in 2020 from some 20 million in 2014, the news reports said.



The ministers also sought to work together for launching a “Visit East Asia” campaign to attract tourists from other countries during events such as the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea and the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics in 2020, they said.

The three separately called for measures to prevent problems arising from different daily habits and to ensure the safety of tourists, Kyodo said.

Source: Agence France-Presse (AFP), April 13, 2015

Taiwan Star to team up with firms to woo mainland travelers

Taiwan Star Telecom Corp., one of Taiwan's smaller telecom operators, said on April 25 it will work with non-telecom Chinese firms to provide a wider range of services to woo mainland travelers, taking advantage of an increase in visitors from the Chinese mainland.

Taiwan Star, a telecom services arm of conglomerate Ting Hsin International Group, is scheduled to sign cooperation agreements with Sfht.com and Chinese online travel agency Ctrip.com next week for the cooperation. Sfht.com is an online commercial operator under mainland-

based express delivery and logistics services provider SF Express.

Taiwan Star said that the cross-business cooperation in telecom, retail and tourism sectors across the Taiwan Strait has taken aims at the expected influx of mainland visitors to Taiwan during the upcoming May 1 Labor Day holiday in China. The holiday is one of the peak periods for mainland tourists to come to Taiwan.

Under the cooperation between the three firms, Chinese visitors who come to Taiwan through Ctrip.com and sign up for Taiwan Star's services will be offered discounts from top Taiwanese

retailers on Sfht.com.

Taiwan Star is one of telecom operators in Taiwan eager to take a larger business share among mainland tourists at a time when more and more travelers from the mainland are visiting Taiwan.

According to Taiwan's Tourism Bureau, a total of 3.99 million mainland travelers visited Taiwan in 2014, up from 2.87 million recorded in 2013.

In addition, Taiwan Star is about to team up with E-DA World, a shopping mall, amusement park and hotel operator located in Kaohsiung, to offer coupons to the telecom company's customers.

The telecom services provider said that consumers who visit the booths operated by E-Da World in the upcoming tourism exhibitions around the country will be provided with Taiwan Star's coupons to use mobile communications services, including the Internet, at preferential rates.

Source: Central News Agency (CNA), April 26, 2015



Sri Lanka Tourism spells out Rs. 3.4 bln budget for tourism promo

By Sunimalee Dias

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) is planning to market the island as a "peaceful destination" and increase awareness among tourists from mostly the traditional markets under a promotion campaign costing Rs. 3.4 billion.

Some of the plans under the Tourism Master Plan include branding Sri Lanka as a "peaceful destination" for tourists, investors and international business community, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB)

Chairman Rohantha Athukorala said. Sri Lanka would also be looking at improving its global image by using some of the traditional and existing events held locally and encouraging to initiate about 12 events per year.

Mr. Athukorala explained that in this regard they were looking at finding sponsors to sustain long term local events.

In addition, the bureau with the industry plans to host mega events with a global appeal by introducing

and hosting four world class events per year with mega promotional activities by targeting entertainment, sport and celebrity personalities.

The industry has agreed to continue tourism promotion in the emerging markets in a bid to sustain the present growth momentum in arrivals to the country.

The focus markets are: India, UK, China, Germany, Middle East, France, Russia and CIS countries, Australia,

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Sri Lanka Tourism

...Continued from page 10

Japan, USA, Scandinavia, Netherlands, Malaysia, Italy, Singapore, Thailand, Korea, Czech Republic, Poland, Turkey, Belgium and Austria.

The private sector has commended the plan for which their consultations were sought, adding that the activation process had already commenced despite the limited resources available at the SLTPB.

Mr. Athukorala pointed out that as part of the strategic plan they hope to encourage charter flight operations aimed at improving airline connectivity to the island.

The SLTPB has budgeted spending Rs. 3,415 million this year which includes approximately Rs.1, 435 million for the key markets alone,

it was stated.

Some of the highest allocations have been made to China topping approximately Rs.176 million followed by the UK, Germany, India and France.

A roadshow has been planned for Bangalore and the bureau has also undertaken printing of promotional material for another roadshow as part of the re-launching of the Ramayan Trail.

In the UK, the bureau together with the industry has planned for roadshows to be carried out in Manchester,



Birmingham, London and two other cities, Mr. Athukorala explained adding that in this respect they would be hiring a PR company to coordinate the events and invite travel agents for these events.

Roadshows have been planned for the Chinese market parallel to the travel trade fairs; in addition to a bus advertising campaign in Kunming continued from last year till this month and media advertisements on both electronic and social.

Joint promotions have also been organised with both leading Chinese travel agents and Air China and SriLankan Airlines. Moreover, they hoped to develop a mobile application as well to boost Sri Lanka Tourism in Mandarin.

Roadshows in the main cities including Berlin have been organized from July – December in addition to many more in the Middle Eastern market in Jeddah, Dammam, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain as well as in Moscow.

Source: Sunday Times, May 17, 2015



Taiwan considered a top destination for Muslims

By John Liu

In a sign of Taiwan's growing popularity among Muslim travelers, the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) recently ranked Taiwan as a top-10 non-Muslim tourist destination.

Taiwan edged ahead of Japan and attracted more than 440,000 Muslim tourists last year. It is rated as No. 10 in the MasterCard-CrescentRating GMTI list.

Compared with the average, Taiwan stands out in the categories of: safe travel environment, airport services, and Muslim travel needs awareness and reachout, according to the GMTI.

Hong Kong is another popular destination, ranked at 7th among non-Muslim destination.

Among Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) members, Malaysia tops the destination list among Muslim travelers. Other top countries on the list, in order, are: Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

For non-OIC countries, Singapore tops the list, and is followed by Thailand, the UK, South Africa and France.

The Global Muslim Travel Index gave Malaysia an overall score of 83.8. Turkey is pegged at 73.8; United Arab Emirates at 72.1; Taiwan has a score of 46.2.

Despite the scores, statistics show Saudi Arabia attracted the most Muslim tourists (10.2 million) in 2014. Turkey took the second place, attracting 8.1 million.

A Market with Great Potential

A study found the number of Muslim travelers amounted to 108 million in 2014, which represented a market worth US\$145 billion. The number of visitors is projected to grow to 150 million in 2020, representing a market worth US\$200 billion.

With a population 1.7 billion strong, the Muslim market is targeted

by governments around the world. Taiwan is also in the fray, investing much in order to win the market. The Tourism Bureau has set the goal of attracting one million Muslim travelers within 10 years.

A total of 65 restaurants and hotels in Taiwan have attained the Halal certification. The Taipei Station as well as 13 national scenery parks are equipped with prayer rooms.

Asia-Pacific More Popular among Muslims

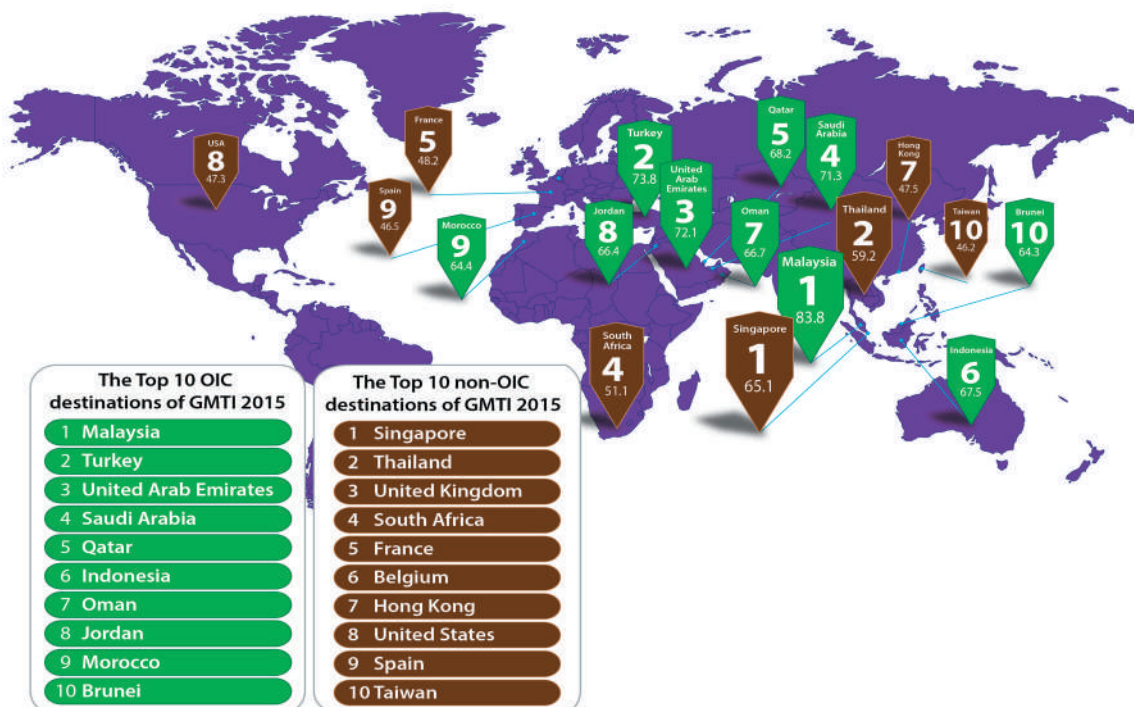
The GMTI looks at in-depth data covering 100 destinations, creating an overall index based on a number of criteria. This is the first time such thorough insights have been provided into one of the fastest-growing tourism sectors.

The GMTI's rating is based on the availability and convenience of halal food and prayer rooms in airports, shopping centers, hotels, etc.

GMTI40, which is updated quarterly around the year, tracks the average score of the top 20 OIC and non-OIC destinations.

The average score for the 40 destinations currently stands at 56, while the average score for the complete 100 destinations stands at 43.8. Region-wise, Asia-Pacific destinations lead with an average score of 54.

Source: China Post, March 19, 2015





A website promoting tourism on Taiwan's outlying island of Kinmen and the island's unique characteristics has gone online after connecting with 200 bricks-and-mortar stores on the island, the website operator said on March 7, 2015.

The website, named Uni.km — referring to unique and Kinmen — was set up by students native to the island

Kinmen Island tourist promotion website, Uni.km, is now online

after integrating resources from various sectors over the past six months, according to Huang Yung, a Kinmen native who studies at National Taipei University of Education and a co-founder of the online platform.

The site was able to be launched so quickly thanks to the support of his friends and relatives and the contributions by students at National Quemoy University in the integration of resources.

The operating team members have explored the potential for building a convenient online social networking portal that allows people interested in Kinmen to get information about travel to Kinmen, said Wu Yu-hsuan, another Kinmen native who studies in Taiwan,

who serves as the site's chief marketing officer.

The site's public relations officer, Chang Kuan-che, said that considering that the Internet has become an indispensable tool for marketing Kinmen, and in light of the lack of an online platform for integrated information on the island's tourism, they decided to set up a site dedicated to providing a broad range of travel and tourist information about Kinmen.

The online platform is located at <http://www.unikm.tw/> and its facebook page is at www.facebook.com/unikinmen.

Source: Central News Agency (CNA), March 9, 2015



Taiwanese Female entrepreneur boosts accessible tourism

By Enru Lin

A fast-growing mobile app is helping Taipei residents with special needs forgo embarrassing situations when dining out.

“Persons with disabilities, for example, have a hard time finding a usable restroom — often they need handrails fitted beside a sit-down toilet,” said Hannah Chou, cofounder of the app's developer OurCityLove Social Enterprise and winner of last year's Ministry of Economic Affairs' Women Entrepreneurship Program.

Few restaurants have this setup, and so for diners with disabilities, running out to the restroom can mean embarking on an extended search that ends at an MRT station.

“Sometimes you get afternoon tea or you're working at a cafe, and you have to leave the building and ask staff to watch your laptop while you go to the bathroom,” Chou said.

Friendly Restaurant Taipei, available in Chinese on iOS and Android, lets users search for restaurants that welcome guide dogs, collect payments at the table or have restrooms a wheelchair-bound diner can use. If there are no accessible facilities, it points out the nearest ones within 200 meters.

Each restaurant listing is also matched to color photographs of the chairs and key points like the entranceway, so users can check the width and whether it features a ramp.

“That's small but critical,” Chou said.

“Take my grandmother, who is too proud to use a cane and pretends she's not using one by holding an umbrella. Sometimes you go into a restaurant and there is no black-yellow warning belt on the step and she falls right over the entrance.”

Continued on page 14



This screenshot displays a sample restaurant listing of the English-language Friendly Restaurant Taipei app, which will be released on Android and iOS this summer. (Photos courtesy of OurCityLove)

Taiwanese Female

...Continued from page 13

Behind the App

Released in 2013, Friendly Restaurant Taipei is currently the only guide of its kind in Taiwan.

There already is EZTable, which lets users sift through popular restaurants for different occasions. Food Panda, a takeout ordering service, sorts restaurants by type of cuisine.

But the beauty of the app is not really the original concept of offering information for special needs, but the training programs that have sprung up around it.

After undergraduates at Chiao Tung University wrote the initial code in 2013, the app went through iterations and development under OurCityLove to become a comprehensive social enterprise.

OurCityLove runs two training programs, one for restaurants and another for restaurant critics.

For restaurants that fare poorly during the accessibility review, OurCityLove provides training, certification and other disability-related corporate social responsibility projects.

Meanwhile, it trains those with disabilities to become restaurant critics, by teaching them to use tablets and to create reviews via a dedicated survey program. Currently, the restaurant app supports 108 part-time jobs, Chou said.

“This is our core value — creating jobs by helping the disabled transform



Hannah Chou, winner of the 2014 Women Entrepreneurship Program by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, is shown in this file photo. (Photos courtesy of OurCityLove)

their inconveniences into an expertise, and then to generate conveniences for the public,” Chou said. “Those are changes we want to create overseas, too.”

Going Overseas

In spite of its niche demographic, Friendly Restaurant Taipei has been expanding at a quick-fire pace.

Since 2013, it's become a multi-award-winner with about a thousand local restaurants in its app and clocking up over 500,000 downloads, as well as ambitious plans to licence overseas.

Chou, who co-founded OurCityLove last year, is a frank and good-natured 30-something who spent

most of her early career managing projects at a New York translation firm.

Today, she manages the app's international expansion, and has just completed its licensing to a group in Hong Kong. Next, she's working to partner with the Philippines, Malaysia and Tokyo ahead of the 2020 Olympics.

“We're releasing an English version of the app this summer,” she said.

“If things go smoothly with Tokyo, it'll be released there — not only in Japanese and English, but French, Spanish and other languages for the tourists that come in for the games.”

First Step

Back in Taiwan, the restaurant app will become the first in OurCityLove's network of accessibility apps.

“We start from restaurants, then move on to transportation, then hotels. When a disabled person has all this information, he can travel without obstacles,” Chou said.

Today, collecting this information is tedious.

“If you're planning a trip for three days, two nights, and you're looking for accommodation for a stroller and a wheelchair — how do you arrange that? You call up the businesses one by one.”

“Accessible tourism is our ultimate goal, but there's a bit of a way to go,” she said.

Source: China Post, March 9, 2015 ❀



A restaurant critic holds a menu in this file photo. Friendly Restaurant Taipei supports 108 part-time jobs for those with disabilities. (Photos courtesy of OurCityLove)



Support staff for Friendly Restaurant Taipei pose in this file photo. OurCityLove is a social enterprise composed mainly of recent graduates and those with disabilities. (Photos courtesy of OurCityLove)

Taiwan-Turkey direct flights set to boost tourism, trade: envoy

The launch of direct flights between Taiwan and Turkey at the end of March will greatly boost bilateral tourism and trade, which are still far from reaching their full potential, according to Turkey's representative to Taiwan.

"I believe this is a new window, a new door-opening for the people of Taiwan, for the business circles of Taiwan, and definitely it will increase trade, it will increase tourism, it will increase academic cooperation in every field," Ismet Erikan, representative of the Turkish Trade Office in Taipei, told Central News Agency (CNA) in an interview on March 5, 2015.

"Last year, we had approximately 40,000 tourists going from Taiwan to Turkey, and by starting daily flights (between) Taipei and Istanbul, we are hoping that this number will increase to 100,000 or more yearly," he said.

Beginning March 31, Turkish Airlines, the national flag carrier of Turkey, will operate daily flights from Taipei to Istanbul and four days per week from Istanbul to Taipei. Daily flights will be offered from Istanbul to Taipei from early April.

It currently takes 14-16 hours to fly between the two cities, with stopovers in places such as Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong and Singapore. The direct flights will shorten the flight time by around four hours.

"Turkey offers the full package," Erikan said, urging Taiwanese travelers to visit his country to enjoy its rich history, culture, food and hospitality, as well as the convenience that comes with being located at the crossroads between Asia and Europe.

"From Istanbul, in four hours flight time, you can reach 50 different countries. This is a quarter of the world's population and one-fourth of the world's GDP (gross domestic product)," he said.

In the past, people have cited the lack of direct flights and inconvenient



visa application procedures as one of the main reasons for low trade figures between Turkey and Taiwan. Since 2013, however, Turkey has included Taiwan in its e-visa system, which makes it cheaper and faster for Taiwanese passport holders to apply for visas to the country, Erikan said.

With the scheduled launch of direct flights, there should be "no more excuses," he said, adding that "now is the time for action."

The envoy said he is uninspired by the low and stagnant bilateral trade figures over the past 10 years. Trade between Taiwan and Turkey reached US\$1.87 billion in 2014, up from US\$1.19 billion in 2004.

According to customs statistics from the Ministry of Finance, Taiwan's exports to Turkey, which consist primarily of machinery, electronic and electrical equipment, appliances, textiles, base metals, plastics and rubber, totaled US\$1.7 billion in 2014.

Imports from Turkey, meanwhile, totaled only US\$173 million last year, composed mostly of mineral products, textiles, machinery and chemicals.

"This should not be the trade volume between two large economies. So is there room to grow? Yes. How much room? Maybe 10 times more," he said, urging Taiwanese businesses to invest more in Turkey.

"By doing so, they can expand their businesses to Central Asia, to the Middle East, to Africa," Erikan said.

When asked what it will take for Turkey and Taiwan to

start negotiations on an economic cooperation agreement (ECA), Erikan said no talks about an ECA are currently underway.

"We are not there yet, but there are some other agreements or protocols or MOUs (memorandums of understanding) for cooperation in the pipeline," he said.

"We are working on them. And we are about to finalize the texts, which will help business circles a lot, I believe."

He said one of them is related to investment promotion and protection, but declined to divulge details.

A Taiwanese and a Turkish group signed an MOU on machine tool cooperation on Thursday and Erikan said he is optimistic that the soon-to-be-launched direct flights will further increase business collaboration in such sectors.

According to statistics from the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), Taiwan replaced Germany last year as the biggest exporter of machine tools to Turkey. Turkey is also the third-largest export destination for Taiwanese machine tool makers, he noted.

Peter Huang, president and CEO of TAITRA, which signed the MOU with the Machine Tools Industrialists and Businessmen Association of Turkey, said there is great potential for Taiwanese machine tool makers in Turkey, as the Turkish economy is booming.

As for when Turkey might grant Taiwanese travelers visa-free entry, Erikan said this is something the two sides can talk about, even though he believes the e-visa system is already sufficient.

"We can talk about that. In reciprocity, everything is possible," he said.

Source: Central News Agency (CNA), March 9, 2015



Filipino cooking project targets female Japanese tourists

By May Masangkay

Thai noodles and Indian curries are well known among young, gourmet-loving Japanese women, but dishes from the Philippines have yet to find their way into the hearts and stomachs of this key demographic.

In an effort to remedy the situation — and in the process draw more visitors to the Philippines — that nation’s Department of Tourism organized monthly cooking lessons on traditional Filipino cuisine in cooperation with ABC Cooking Studio Co., the major cooking school chain. The courses were held from September to December.

Their popularity exceeded the organizers’ expectations. Most participants had never tasted Filipino food, and many left the class excited to also have the chance to learn more about other aspects of the country’s culture.

Kyoko Miyamoto, 37, was one of 23 students who joined the final cooking class in early December at ABC’s studio at the Tokyo Midtown shopping complex in Roppongi.

“I have never visited the Philippines. Being involved with Filipino food in this way does make me want to go there,” Miyamoto said.

In the cooking program, students were taught to prepare two main dishes — “pork adobo,” which is meat marinated and simmered in vinegar, soy sauce and garlic, “sinigang na hipon,” a soup known for its sour taste and cooked with shrimp and vegetables — and “turon,” a popular Filipino snack made with banana in a deep-fried spring roll wrapper and covered with



caramel sauce.

Organizers, who started discussing the cooking class project in 2013, decided to limit each lesson to a maximum of 24 students. They were surprised when they had no trouble filling the slots.

Maiko Kosugi, a 28-year-old food blogger who cooked her first Filipino food at an ABC Cooking Studio outlet with her friends, said: “I was not familiar with Filipino food and had no idea how it tasted, so I was surprised at how there was so much detail in preparing the food. Still, I could easily cook this at home.”

Other students ranging from their 20s to their 30s shared such sentiments and appeared eager to eat Filipino cuisine again, or even visit the Philippines for firsthand experience with the local cuisine.

This is good news for tourist officials in the Philippines, who have been doubling their efforts to boost tourism to the fast-growing Southeast Asian country just four hours from Tokyo by plane. Aside from the cooking classes, they have been

promoting the country’s varied cuisine at food fairs.

According to Philippine government data, 433,705 Japanese tourists visited the country in 2013, up 5.15 percent from the year before. This year, more than 460,000 are expected to visit.

“The department of tourism in Tokyo has embarked on tourism



promotions to ensure the continued growth of Japanese tourists visiting the country,” said Valentino Cabansag, the east Japan attache and representative at the Philippine Department of Tourism in Tokyo.

At the end of the two-hour cooking class, the participants were given souvenir bags containing tourism pamphlets and dried mangoes.

ABC Cooking Studio also offered cooking classes on “washoku” (traditional Japanese cuisine), which was added to UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2013, in the Philippines this year.

ABC Cooking Studio’s projects in Japan and the Philippines reflect hopes that interest in cooking will boost tourism in both countries.

Miyamoto, who liked her first taste of Filipino food, said, “I think it would be hard for me to travel to a country if I do not enjoy the local cuisine.”

Source: Japan Times, December 23, 2014



Tourism thrives in Malaysia despite association with tragedy

By Eileen Ng

Two airplane catastrophes put Malaysia on the map in a bad way in 2014. But they didn't hurt the country's tourism, and the higher visibility may even have helped: visitor numbers had their strongest growth in years.

For the past decade, Malaysia has run an elaborate campaign to market itself abroad as an ideal Asian destination, touting a multiethnic culture, lush rainforests and pristine beaches. Despite the effort to internationalize, its tourism industry still relies heavily on tightly-packed neighboring Singapore and in a renewed push the government had designated 2014 as "Visit Malaysia Year."

So when Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 went missing with 239 people on board en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, it put the global spotlight on Malaysia and seemingly dealt a blow to its tourism strategy. A double whammy came four months later when a Malaysia Airlines jet was shot down over rebel-held eastern



In this Feb. 27, 2015 photo, tourists has their souvenir photograph taken against the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Two airplane catastrophes put Malaysia on the map in a bad way in 2014. But it didn't hurt the country's tourism, and the higher visibility may even have helped: visitor numbers had their strongest growth in years. (AP Photo/Joshua Paul)

Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board.

Tourism, however, grew at its fastest pace since 2008.

Figures for all of 2014 haven't been released yet but the January-October data shows 22.9 million visitors, a jump of nearly 10 percent from a year earlier. That far outpaced 2.5 percent growth for the same period in 2013 and a 0.7 percent rise in 2012. The full year growth rates for those two years are close to the 10-month figures.

"The bad publicity has made Malaysia more well known to the world," said Jaya Kumar Sannadurai, vice president at Dayangti Transport and Tours. The overall effect on visitor numbers is probably marginal but being the center of attention "is an advantage to us in some ways," he said.

The strong growth in tourism came despite a sharp drop in visitors from China, which had 153 nationals on Flight 370. Many in China were angered by Malaysia's perceived mishandling of the tragedy.

The Malaysian government says satellite data showed the jet crashed into the southern Indian Ocean, but

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In this Feb. 27, 2015 photo, tourists are reflected as they have their souvenir photograph taken against the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Two airplane catastrophes put Malaysia on the map in a bad way in 2014. But it didn't hurt the country's tourism, and the higher visibility may even have helped: visitor numbers had their strongest growth in years. (AP Photo/Joshua Paul)

Tourism thrives

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no wreckage has been found despite an exhaustive multi-nation search. Authorities believe the plane was flown deliberately off course, but are still investigating the cause of the disappearance.

Kidnappings since April of foreigners including a Chinese fish breeder and a Chinese female tourist from a resort in Malaysia's Sabah state in Borneo by Philippine gangs also put off tourists. All were released after ransom was paid. Sabah, a popular destination for scuba-diving and nature trails, is a short boat ride from southern Philippines, home to Muslim militants and kidnap gangs.

For January-October, Chinese tourists to Malaysia dropped by 11 percent or some 175,000 people. It remained Malaysia's third biggest source of visitors.

The aim of the Visit Malaysia campaign, with the endangered pot-bellied proboscis monkey as its mascot, was to lure 28 million visitors and 76 billion ringgit (\$21.1 billion) in spending. Tourism is already Malaysia's second biggest earner of foreign exchange after manufactured goods.

The country might fall a little short of the 28 million visitors goal for 2014 but a high level of fully paid advance tour bookings and a quick change in marketing strategy by tourism officials helped keep the industry on a growth path overall.

Tourism Malaysia cut promotions in China and focused efforts on India and other markets after Flight 370's disappearance, said its deputy director-general Azizan Noordin. This helped to boost growth in all markets for the first 10 months of last year, except China and Taiwan, he said.

Arrivals from India, which is the 6th biggest source of visitors for Malaysia, were up 21 percent and the number of South Koreans visiting increased by 43 percent. There was also



In this Friday, March 1, 2015 photo, Malaysia's landmark the Petronas Twin Towers and Kuala Lumpur Tower is seen illuminated during dusk in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on outside Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Two airplane catastrophes put Malaysia on the map in a bad way in 2014. But it didn't hurt the country's tourism, and the higher visibility may even have helped: visitor numbers had their strongest growth in years. (AP Photo/Joshua Paul)

strong growth from Western nations such as the United Kingdom, U.S., Australia and Germany.

But it was Singapore along with Indonesia and Thailand that provided the mass market numbers, together accounting for about two thirds of total visitors.

"Our Southeast Asian neighbors helped to keep the tourist numbers up. We could have done better if it wasn't for the China market," said Hamzah Rahmat, president of the Malaysian Tour and Travel Associations.

Other tour and travel agents said the industry also benefited from a weaker currency in the last quarter of the year, making Malaysia more attractive to foreigners. Malaysia's ringgit depreciated by 10 percent against the dollar in the last four months.

Cheaper air travel and more numerous flights, primarily due to the expansion of low-cost carriers in the region, also helped drive tourism.

Since its two jet tragedies, Malaysia Airlines has lowered fares to help fill seats.

Malaysia has extended its tourism campaign, designating 2015 as "Year of Festivals" with a goal to attract 29.4 million tourists and 89 billion ringgit (\$24.7 billion) in total receipts.

Azizan, the tourism officials, said Tourism Malaysia is working closely with China to mount more scheduled chartered flights flying direct to the country from China's second and third-tier cities such as Wuhan and Chengdu. He said Tourism Malaysia is confident of higher Chinese arrivals this year.

Last month, the government waived visa fees for Chinese tourists. Tour agents however, urged the government to allow two week visa-free travel for Chinese visitors to help the market recover faster.

"Regional travel is on the rise," said Joseph Francis Mariasosay Xavier from World Discovery Travel. "I don't think Flight 370 is a factor. People need and want to travel. It's more important to have the right infrastructure and pricing in place."

Source: Associated Press, March 2, 2015





Australia acts to curb absurd demands of travelers on embassies

By Rod McGuirk

Australia's government is taking steps to curb Australian travelers' soaring expectations of what help they can get from their embassies, such as a loan to pay a prostitute in Thailand or assistance to evict a polecat from above a ceiling in the United States.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop on December 3, 2014 announced new measures to underscore consular services as a last resort and to promote "a stronger culture of self-reliance and personal responsibility in the traveling public."

These measures include a new policy of providing minimal consular services to Australians who willfully, repeatedly or negligently get themselves into trouble. People who visit embassies and consulates will be given the new guidelines. Charging Australians for the consular help that they receive was also something the government is considering, she said.

"Our consular staff are not there to pay for the repairs to your jet ski; they're not there to pay your hotel bill; they're not there to lend you a laptop or to provide you with office space in the embassy for you to do your work," Bishop said, listing actual requests that Australian embassies have refused.

At the embassy in Bangkok — Australia's busiest overall — an Australian walked in with a prostitute and was refused a loan to pay for services already provided, said Anita Downey, a senior counselor official at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Such requests are common at that embassy, she said.

Other locations that frequently get outlandish requests include Los Angeles, Bali, Manila and Dubai, she said.

Australian diplomats have fielded requests for an armored car, help

removing a polecat above the ceiling of a house and intervention to prevent payment of a speeding fine, senior foreign ministry official Justin Brown said.

Other examples: Australians who were evacuated from civil unrest in Egypt in a government-chartered Qantas airliner in 2011 expected frequent flier miles for trip. Some Australians evacuated from the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia requested first-class seats, DFAT records show.

Brown said the United States, Canada and New Zealand embassies



were experiencing similar escalating expectations from its citizens.

"At most of our posts there are people we would describe colloquially as serial pests who are constantly bouncing back into the embassy because they've run out of money or they've got some sort of other personal problem and they often come to the embassy and the consular teams expecting us to solve their problems for them," Brown said.

Downey said 20 percent of emergency loans made to Australians overseas are never repaid.

Australians are avid travelers. Despite a population of only 24 million, they made 9.2 million overseas trips last year. That same year, the foreign affairs department assisted 15,000 of those travelers.

Source: Associated Press, December 4, 2014



PH tourism 'the next big thing in Asian travel'

By Ben O. de Vera

Philippine tourism is poised to take center stage next year.

The government has declared 2015 "Visit the Philippines Year" in a bid to attract more foreign visitors to the fast-rising favorite destination of high-value tourists.

The Department of Tourism (DOT) launched the campaign on September 4, 2014 following the 13th staging of the Philippine Travel Exchange (Phitex) at SMX Convention Center in Pasay City.

Organizers claimed that the weeklong Phitex event had drawn a record number of foreign buyers—an indication of the keen interest among foreign tourists to explore the country.

This year's Phitex gathering was attended by over 200 buyers from 30 countries, up from around 170 buyers from more than 20 countries last year, according to its organizers.

Pope's visit, Apec summit

Domingo Ramon C. Enerio III, chief operating officer of the DOT marketing agency Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), said the 12-month program would help the Philippines "burst into the limelight."

Two important events—the Pope's visit in January and the hosting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit in November—are

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PH tourism

...Continued from page 19

expected to boost the country's profile on the international stage, Enerio said.

The Apec summit, which will gather 21 of the regional grouping's leaders, is expected to help the country reclaim its place among the top destinations for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions, Enerio said.

"The visit of Pope Francis will augur well for the remainder of the new year," Enerio added.

The government, as well as the private sector, has also lined up other events highlighting the country's culture, history, culinary arts, music, arts and sports, said Enerio.

Culinary, war memorial

For one, the country will commemorate in September next year the 70th anniversary of the final battles of World War II that led to the liberation of Manila from Japanese occupation.

"The Philippines is willing to welcome visitors from the war's protagonist countries not to wage war but to pay homage to the fighters' courage and offer prayers for peace," Enerio said.

Madrid Fusion—one of the most popular food festivals in the world—will also be held in April, with international chefs expected to attend the gastronomic event.

That will be on top of monthly food festivals offering the best in regional cuisine, Enerio said.

For music lovers

Music lovers can also look forward to live performances and shows during international concerts in Manila. Music and arts festivals will also be held in Bohol and Puerto Galera, Enerio said.

Intramuros and Rizal Park are also being redeveloped by the Cultural Center of the Philippines to serve as venues for cultural events.



Tourism Secretary Ramon R. Jimenez Jr.: "Visit the Philippines Year 2015" to capitalize on the success of the earlier "It's More Fun in the Philippines".

Various international sporting events are also scheduled to bolster sports, adventure and ecotourism.

Street dancing

The sporting events will include triathlon, martial arts, marathon, yachting, beach volleyball and tennis.

Local basketball and diving events are expected to attract audiences from abroad, especially fans among overseas Filipinos, said Enerio.

Street dancing festivals, as well as electronic dance parties, would cater to the hip and young partygoers, he said.

Revenue growths

Tourism Secretary Ramon R. Jimenez Jr. told reporters that the "Visit the Philippines Year 2015" campaign would capitalize on the success of the earlier "It's More Fun in the Philippines" pitch.

"We want to sustain the campaign. We have an obligation to freshen it up and generate the same traction when it was new," he said.

While the tourism chief admitted that much needed to be addressed in terms of infrastructure, including bottlenecks at airports, he said revenues and employment-generation from tourism activities were expected to pick up.

"Foreign tourists are staying longer in the Philippines and they are also coming from countries farther away," Jimenez said.

'Unique situation'

Jimenez said higher-value tourists

had jacked up sales receipts by 15 percent year on year as of the end of July.

"We're probably having one of the biggest revenue growths in this part of the world in terms of tourism," Jimenez said.

At present, foreign tourists spend \$1,000 on average when they visit the country, Assistant Tourism Secretary Benito C. Bengzon Jr. said. These expenses include hotel accommodations and food purchases for up to 10 days of stay here, on top of tours, shopping and buying souvenir items.

"It helps that the Philippines has a unique situation—it is an archipelago, so foreign tourists try to go to as many places, hence spending more time here than they do in other destinations," Bengzon said.

Also, the bulk of tourists come from high-income northern and eastern Asian countries, like China, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan, and from North American economic giants United States and Canada, Jimenez said.

The government aims to further jack up tourist spending to \$1,500 per visitor in the next two years by offering more attractions and destinations, and enhancing tour, shopping and dining offerings, Bengzon said.

Total tourism revenues this year are expected to hit over \$5 billion, compared to last year's \$4.5 billion, according to Bengzon.

\$10B tourist revenues

By 2016, revenues are expected to reach about \$10 billion, he said.

Jimenez has expressed confidence that the target arrivals of about 7 million and 10 million for this year and 2016 would be attained, even if the number of tourists declined during the first half.

"We are the next big thing in Asian travel, as we benefit from the fact that the world is turning to Asia for travel experience," Jimenez said.

Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer, September 5, 2014



Drawing more tourists to Japan

The government has been taking steps to lure more foreign tourists to Japan and get them to spend more, such as expanding the scope of tax-free shopping for visitors from overseas beginning this month.

Local authorities and businesses around the country should also seize the opportunity to bring more tourists to areas outside the typical destinations of foreign visitors and let their spending be a driving force for the nation's rural economies.

The yen's renewed fall against the dollar in recent weeks will be a mixed blessing for the Japanese economy, with the export-led firms likely to benefit more, but the rising costs of imports and fuel prices are expected to hit many businesses and households.

But the weaker yen will certainly make Japan a more competitive tourist destination for foreign visitors, whose numbers topped 10 million for the first time in 2013 and continues to rapidly increase.

Aided by robust travel demand from East Asian countries, the number of foreign visitors reached 8.63 million in the January-August period, and officials estimate the annual figure will reach 12 million.

Travelers from China in the first eight months surged 84 percent from a year ago to 1.54 million, already topping the previous annual record set in 2012. The government has set

a target of increasing the number of visitors to 20 million by the time Japan hosts the 2020 Summer Olympic Games.

Such robust figures for inbound tourism point to the strong purchasing power of foreign visitors. While the number of visitors in 2013 increased 24 percent from the previous year, their total spending surged 30 percent to about ¥1.42 trillion, including lodging expenses.

Retail and tourism industries see a big potential for spending by inbound tourists, at a time when the prospects for domestic demand is clouded by the population downtrend.

The Oct. 1 expansion of the scope of consumption tax-free shopping is one of the measures aimed at further increasing such spending by visitors.

The tax-free shopping had earlier been limited to "nonconsumable" products such as electric appliances, clothes and bags, while liquors, cosmetics and confectioneries — items popular among foreign tourists — were not included. Now purchases of goods priced from more than ¥5,000 to ¥500,000 are tax-exempt.

Foreign visitors are estimated to have spent about ¥460 billion — or roughly 30 percent of their total expenses — on shopping last year.

Asian tourists were the biggest shoppers, led by those from China. A Chinese tourist spent roughly ¥120,000

on average in the April-June period, much higher than the ¥24,000 spent by an average traveler from the United States and more than double the average among all foreign visitors.



Tax-free purchases at department stores by visiting tourists in August rose 41 percent from a year before. Major retail group Mitsukoshi-Isetan Holdings is expanding the duty-free counters at its stores nationwide to meet the anticipated growth in sales.

One problem is that retail stores that can cope with the procedures for duty-free sales are still limited in number and concentrated in large metropolitan areas like Tokyo and Osaka. About 30 percent of Japan's 47 prefectures each had less than 10 duty-free shops as of April.

The government aims to increase the number of duty-free shops from around 5,800 today to 10,000 by 2020. Retail businesses across Japan will need to make greater efforts to tap into the potential demand from visiting tourists to sell their local specialties.

Although the number of visitors is rising rapidly, Japan is still ranked 27th in terms of inbound tourism, lagging far behind other advanced economies as well as many Asian countries. International tourist arrivals in Japan are roughly one-fifth of those who visit China and less than half the numbers who go to Thailand or Malaysia.

Large metropolises like Tokyo and popular tourist destinations like Kyoto and those around Mount Fuji continue to attract many foreign visitors, but to bump up the inbound tourism, each region needs to wisely identify what it has to offer that can attract tourists from overseas, be it their specialties, scenic beauty, historical relics or events.

Source: *The Japan Times*, October 1, 2014



India medical tourism industry to reach \$6 billion by 2018: report

The current size of the industry is estimated at a little over \$3 billion, with tourist arrivals estimated at 230,000

By Moulishree Srivastava

The Indian medical tourism industry is expected to reach \$6 billion (around Rs.36,000 crore) by 2018, with the number of people arriving in the country for medical treatment set to double over the next four years, a report by industry lobby Punjab

Haryana Delhi (PHD) Chamber of Commerce and Industry said on July 24, 2014.

Currently, the size of the medical tourism industry in India in value terms is estimated at a little over \$3 billion, with tourist arrivals estimated at 230,000.



Medical tourism is an area that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government plans to tap to drive growth in the tourism sector. Photo: Mint

Medical tourism is an area that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government plans to tap to drive growth in the tourism sector. In its manifesto, the party said it would build 50 tourism circuits including a medical circuit, which will connect hubs of modern medicine and

Ayurveda.

The report projected the segment to grow at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20% between 2014 and 2018.

India has positioned itself as an inexpensive destination for medical treatment compared with the US and Europe. Additionally, Indian private hospitals have a large pool of skilled doctors, nurses and supporting staff that attract medical tourists, especially from South-East Asia and the Middle East.

“The vast pool of medical professionals, expanding private health-care infrastructure, growing technical expertise, cheaper medical procedures, world class health-care infrastructure and government support are likely to boost the number of medical tourists arrivals in India to a projected level of 4 lakh by 2018,” said Sharad Jaipuria, president, PHD Chamber.

The report cited the lack of a dedicated website on which Indian hospitals, tour operators and medical facilitators can be listed with specialists and doctors, as a deterrent to the growth of medical tourism.

Source: Live Mint, July 24, 2014



Japan and Singapore excel in healthcare outcomes: report

Study measures efficiency of healthcare systems around the world

Two Asian countries will now have another accolade to add to their already impressive lists. Japan has been ranked first and Singapore second in the world for health-care outcomes, according to a report published by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

The report assesses the efficiency and value-for-money of healthcare systems around the globe, and the outcome - the health status of the general population.

The report reveals that Japan's focus on healthy diets, active

lifestyles and long-term care insurance contributed to high scores. Singapore was described as having “a generous health-care system as well as high life expectancy, low rates of ill-health and low mortality” according to a EIU media release.

Japan and Singapore achieved similar outcomes in terms of high life expectancy and overall health, but the latter had spent less healthcare dollars per person. The report's findings suggest that there is a significant correlation between health expenditure



and outcomes. “It is important to view healthcare spending not just as a cost but as an investment - and the emphasis should be on getting good value from that investment,” said study author Ana Nicholls, according to a press release.

Countries in Asia, Western Europe and North America scored highest, followed by Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Latin America. Countries in Africa and some of the poorer parts of Asia scored the lowest.

Source: Global Health and Travel, February 6, 2015



ABOUT CACCI

The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) is a regional grouping of apex national chambers of commerce and industry, business associations and business enterprises in Asia and the Western Pacific.

It is a non-governmental organization serving as a forum for promoting the vital role of businessmen in the region, increasing regional business interaction, and enhancing regional economic growth. Since its establishment in 1966, CACCI has grown into a network of national chambers of commerce with a total now of 29 Primary Members from 27 Asian countries. It cuts across national

boundaries to link businessmen and promote economic growth throughout the Asia-Pacific region. CACCI is a non-governmental organization (NGO) granted consultative status, Roster category, under the United Nations. It is a member of the Conference on NGOs (CoNGO), an association of NGOs with UN consultative status.

Among the benefits of membership in CACCI are the following:

1. Policy Advocacy - CACCI aims to play a strong policy advocacy role in order to establish a business environment conducive to creating

better opportunities for CACCI members.

2. Wide scope for networking - Participation in the various projects of CACCI will provide members the opportunity to expand their reach in Asia-Pacific by establishing contacts with the business communities of the region.

3. Participation in CACCI Annual Conferences and Training Programs - Members are invited to participate in the annual Conferences and various training programs which CACCI regularly conducts either on its own or in cooperation with other international organizations and member chambers.

4. Interaction in Product and Service Councils - Membership in CACCI allows participation in the activities of the various Product and Service Councils (PSCs) of the organization. PSCs are business groupings organized along product or service lines with a primary objective of promoting business cooperation, personal contacts, and technology transfer.

5. Access to CACCI publications - CACCI publishes the CACCI Profile, its monthly newsletter, and the CACCI Journal of Commerce and Industry, a bi-annual publication which features papers, speeches, and other articles pertaining to issues affecting the regional economy.

For more information, please visit www.cacci.biz

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 Chairman of Red Apple Travel & Holidays Lanka (Pvt) Ltd., and Immediate Past President of The 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 and go to the "Product and Service Councils" page.

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