



Asian Council of Tourism

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Message from the Chairman



Dear Members of the Asian Council of Tourism,

I am happy to share with you the exciting news of record-breaking growth in South Asian tourism following the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Against all odds, our region has not only weathered the storm but has emerged stronger and more resilient than ever before.

The past year has been a testament to the indomitable spirit and resilience of the South Asian tourism industry. Despite facing unprecedented challenges, our collective efforts, innovative strategies, and unwavering commitment to excellence have propelled us to new heights.

I am delighted to announce that South Asian tourism has experienced an exponential surge in tourist arrivals, surpassing all previous records and reaffirming our region's status as a premier travel destination. From the majestic peaks of the Himalayas to the pristine beaches of Sri Lanka, travelers from around the world have been captivated by the rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and warm hospitality that South Asia has to offer.

As a proud Sri Lankan, I am particularly thrilled to highlight the remarkable transformation of tourism in Sri Lanka. The unparalleled beauty of our island nation, from its lush green landscapes to its ancient cultural sites, has mesmerized visitors, making it an unparalleled destination. Visiting Sri Lanka offers an experience unmatched by any of the top 10 destinations globally.

This remarkable achievement is a testament to the resilience, adaptability, and innovation of our tourism industry. By embracing digital transformation, prioritizing safety and sustainability, and fostering partnerships across borders, we have not only revived our industry but have set new standards of excellence for the global tourism community.

As we celebrate this historic milestone, let us also reaffirm our commitment to responsible tourism practices, environmental conservation, and inclusive growth. Let us continue to work together, hand in hand, to harness the transformative power of tourism for the benefit of our communities, economies, and future generations.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our partners, stakeholders, and industry professionals for their unwavering support and dedication. Together, we have proven that adversity can be overcome, and challenges can be turned into opportunities for growth and innovation.

Here's to a future filled with prosperity, sustainability, and boundless opportunities in South Asian and Asia-Pacific tourism.

Sincerely,

Anura Lokuhetty
Chairman, Asian Council of Tourism

Source: [UNWTO](#)

ANA eyes growth in S.E. Asia with low-cost carrier



ANA Holdings is planning to launch a new service to and from Thailand under its low-cost-carrier brand AirJapan.

ANA Holdings expects the Southeast Asian market to be a new growth driver in the post-pandemic recovery of leisure travel demand, with plans to launch a new service to and from Thailand under its low-cost carrier (LCC) AirJapan.

A Narita-Bangkok route will start in February 2024 as the first AirJapan service, with six round-trip flights a week.

The one-way fare will start from ¥15,500 (\$108), slightly

higher than that of another ANA group LCC, Peach Aviation.

The airline will also offer higher-priced services with various meal choices and different checked baggage allowances.

The price range has been set to draw families in Southeast Asia who want service quality higher than that of LCCs. AirJapan provides more legroom and better meal options on its 324-seat Boeing 787-8 aircraft, ANA said.

Meals that passengers can select in advance include Japanese dishes such as a chicken and egg rice bowl and sushi.

The airline said it will consider adding more routes in the future, such as those from Kansai International Airport in western Japan.

ANA has said it expects the low-cost operation of AirJapan to generate profits from services that could be unprofitable if offered by the full-service airline.

The group's other LCC service, Peach Aviation, is more focused on domestic routes but has expanded into international services, offering flights to such destinations as Bangkok, Seoul, Shanghai and Taipei.

Foreign visitors to Japan have surged since the government lifted its COVID-19 border control measures in late April. A weaker yen has also made Japan a more attractive travel destination, ANA said.

Japan Times

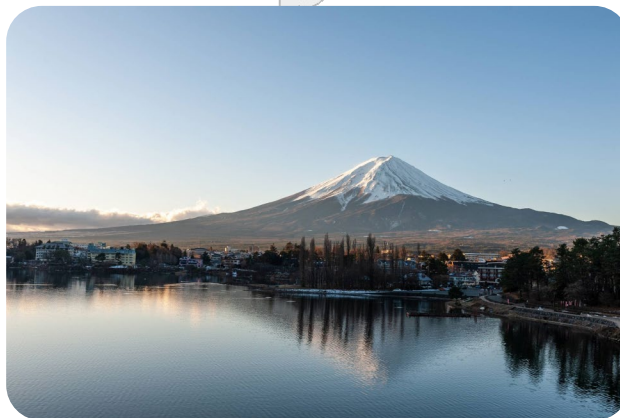
Japan targets ultrarich travelers to boost regional revival

From on-demand helicopters to private superyachts, the spending power of ultrarich travelers could be the key to revitalizing regional areas in Japan to give the country a much-needed boost in its post-pandemic economic recovery.

Luxury travelers looking to explore areas beyond the classic tourist destinations of Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka offer an opportunity for lesser-known destinations to showcase their unique culture, according to those in the industry.

"The most crucial aspect of regional revitalization is figuring out how to effectively encourage (the wealthy) to spend money, and there are only two ways to do that. One is through tourism, and the other is by leveraging each prefecture's strengths," said Shintaro Masuda, founder and CEO of Blank Marketing & Management.

The Mie Prefecture-based venture company is the



The possibility of tourists being able to skip the Tokyo traffic and get to Mount Fuji in 30 minutes, by private helicopter has been suggested.

developer of an app called Airc, which enables on-demand helicopter flights between various locations in Japan, almost like booking an Uber.

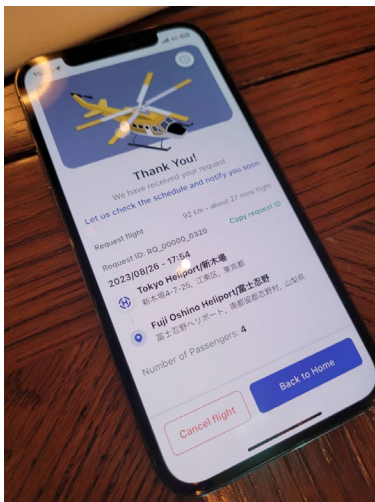
Those wanting to skip to Tokyo traffic and get to Mount Fuji in 30 minutes, for example, could open the app and book a private helicopter journey from Tokyo to Kawaguchiko in Yamaguchi Prefecture.

The app takes care of all the arrangements, including transfer from the customer's current location to the heliport.

Blank Marketing & Management is also developing a platform slated for release in summer

2024 that will streamline the hassle of sorting out accommodation, booking restaurants and arranging activities through an interactive chat system.

If a user wants to eat sea urchins, for example, the app will be able to identify the best restaurants across the country, devise



Airc, an app that enables on-demand helicopter flight bookings, offers trips between various locations in Japan.

a route, and even make all the necessary reservations to get to the chosen location, Masuda said.

“Luxury travelers want to see things they can’t usually see or experience. The app will be able to cater to their desire to experience things spontaneously, like when they come across something on social media,” he added.

The Japan National Tourism Organization defines “high-value travelers” as those who spend a total of ¥1 million (\$6,700) or more per visit to Japan.

According to a report by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, high-value travelers from six countries – the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Australia and China – in 2019 accounted for only 1% of total inbound visitors to Japan but contributed to 11.5% of total travel expenditure.

Noting the value of luxury tourism, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government has been taking part in various trade shows, such as the flagship ILTM Cannes luxury travel event, and collaborating with local businesses to develop content catering to high-end travelers.

In addition to economic benefits, affluent travelers from overseas also “improve the city’s image through their influence, contributing to the growth of visitors,” said Shigeki Yamaguchi, director for city sales at the metropolitan government.

The Japanese government would like to see annual spending by inbound tourists, which dwindled during the COVID-19 pandemic after hitting ¥4.8 trillion in 2019, to reach ¥5 trillion as early as possible, and has put particular focus on attracting high-net-worth visitors.

In line with this goal, the government eased rules for private jet arrivals on June 1, shortening the required period to apply for landing permission in Japan from at least 10 days prior to arrival to three.

The move follows a regulatory overhaul for arrivals into Japan by private boat travel in 2021, which included removing the requirement that superyachts declare their cargo and the number of crew members on board every time they make a port call, enforcing such measures only when they enter into and depart from the country.

SYL Japan, which provides concierge services for superyachts docking in Japan, was instrumental in convincing the government to ease regulations by espousing the economics benefits of foreign-flagged yacht visits.

“It is said that when a ship stays for a day, it contributes between \$10,000 to \$15,000 to the country’s economy. Therefore, it would be ideal if each ship stays as long as possible,” said Kenta Inaba, president of SYL Japan.

Superyachts also offer a way of increasing spending in more rural areas that may lack forms of accommodation such as luxury hotels and other infrastructure for tourists, supporting the government’s goal of increasing the number of high-end travelers in places off the beaten path.

“Money is already flowing quite substantially in cities like Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka, but it is a challenge to establish a mechanism for ensuring that it is distributed to other areas effectively,” said Inaba.

But ships, which can dock in lesser known destinations without much difficulty, “are a convenient way of attracting visitors to remote islands and border regions,” he added.

In a bid to improve the appeal of Tokyo’s remote island, the metropolitan government said it has dispatched staff to study and learn from harbor facilities in the Mediterranean, which are popular destinations for superyachts.

The Japan Tourism Agency, meanwhile, has recently selected 11 regional locations to support in developing products and services for the wealthy.

But there are concerns that while offering exclusive experiences to customers and economic benefits to locals, luxury tourism could also potentially cause environmental degradation, cultural disruption and the over-commercialization of destinations.

To mitigate these potential side effects, over a dozen Japanese organizations have joined the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, an international body that manages standards for sustainable travel and tourism.

One of its members, tourism consulting company Tricolage, in 2022 it supported a project by the tourism agency, also a member, to develop a sustainable accommodation plan at a luxury forest resort in Yamanashi Prefecture.

“Developing a comprehensive travel experience with local participation in this way can sublimate the experience into a customer experience with added value that is unique to the region,” the company said in a news release after the project was launched.

Japan Times

Vietnam records surging number of international arrivals during CNY holidays

Vietnam recorded a surging number of international arrivals during the Chinese New Year holiday, local media reported February 15, citing the Vietnam National Authority of Tourism.

Central city of Danang welcomed nearly 177,000 foreign arrivals in seven days of the holiday from Feb 8 to 14, while capital city Hanoi welcomed nearly 103,000 arrivals, an increase of 2.2 times compared to the Chinese New Year holiday in 2023.

During the cited period, the number of foreign tourists travelling to Ho Chi Minh City hit 75,000, while that in the Mekong Delta province of Kien Giang was 44,370, and the Central Highlands province of Lam Dong reached 20,000.

The authority attributed the increase in the number



Chairman of Quang Ninh Province People's Committee Cao Tuong Huy personally offering flowers and lucky money to the tourists.

of foreign visitors to favourable visa policies, proper market exploitation, and efforts of businesses and localities as well as effective promotion activities, Vietnam News Agency reported.

Localities with ports welcomed foreign ships during the holiday. Northern Quang Ninh province welcomed 600 tourists from Zhao Shang Yi Dun Ship. Central Danang city received about 3,400 tourists from Zhao Shang Yi Dun and Dream Cruise ships.

Vietnam recorded 12.6 million international visitor arrivals in 2023, a 3.4-fold rise from 2022, according to the General Statistics Office.

The country sets the goal of receiving 17-18 million international visitors in 2024.

The Star

China's thriving outbound tourism contributes to global economic recovery

The past Chinese New Year holiday just witnessed a surge in China's outbound tourism. According to statistics released by China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, around 3.6 million overseas trips were made by Chinese tourists during the holiday.

International observers said that this increase has not only contributed to the growth of the international tourism industry, but also provided a boost to the global economic recovery.

On the second day of the Chinese New Year, the Siam Square, a shopping mall in Bangkok, Thailand, was crowded with tourists. Xiaolan, a tourist from Shanghai, told People's Daily that there has been a noticeable increase in the number of people travelling to Thailand ever since Thailand announced a five-month visa-free policy for Chinese tourists last September.

"I am planning a trip to Malaysia in a few days. It's much easier to travel abroad nowadays," Xiaolan said.

To attract more Chinese tourists, several Southeast Asian countries have successively implemented visa-free policies.

Starting from Dec. 1, 2023, Malaysia has implemented a 30-day visa-free policy for Chinese citizens. On Jan. 28 this year, China and Thailand signed an agreement on visa exemption for holders of ordinary passports, which will officially take effect on March 1.

On Feb. 9, an agreement between China and Singapore on visa exemption for holders of ordinary passports officially took effect. On that day, many Chinese tourists entered Singapore, experiencing the convenience brought by the visa-free policy. During the Chinese New Year, Singapore's landmark Gardens by the Bay specifically hosted a special lantern fair, attracting many Chinese tourists.

Egypt was one of the main destinations for Chinese tourists during the Chinese New Year holiday. On Feb. 10, a special ceremony was held at the Cairo International Airport to welcome Chinese tourists spending the Chinese New Year in Egypt.

Ibrahim, marketing manager of a travel agency in Egypt,



Chinese tourists experience the charm of Antarctica. (Photo by Natalia Sabrina)

said that Chinese outbound tourism has brought tremendous benefits to his company.

"Compared to the same period in 2023, the number of Chinese tourists we received from late January to early February has surged four-fold. Everyone in our company was happy to see the sudden increase," he noted.

In mid-January, China announced unilateral visa-free treatment for Switzerland, and Switzerland also provided visa convenience for Chinese citizens and companies investing in Switzerland.

Hannah, a coach at a skiing school in Davos, Switzerland, said that Davos attracts many Chinese skiing enthusiasts every year.

"Chinese skiing enthusiasts are friendly, kind, and passionate about skiing," Hannah said. With the increased convenience of travel between the two countries, she looks



Chinese tourists check in Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, Thailand during the Chinese New Year holiday. (Photo by Bai Yuangi/People's Daily)

forward to experiencing ski resorts in China.

According to the World Travel Market Global Travel Report, the value of China's outbound tourism is projected to increase by 131 percent from 2024 to 2033.

Thai government spokesperson Chai Wacharonke said that with the Thailand-China visa exemption agreement set to take effect on March 1, it is expected that more Chinese tourists will choose Thailand as their destination. This will further boost the growth of Thailand's tourism industry and bring more vitality to the country's economic development.

Bojan Lalic, director of the Institute for Belt and Road Studies in Belgrade, noted that since the visa exemption policy between Serbia and China came into effect in 2017, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Serbia has been continuously increasing, promoting economic development and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

He said China ranks among the top in terms of outbound tourism, and has contributed to the economic development of relevant countries.

"Since 2023, China's outbound tourism has been steadily recovering. This is a clear testament to the vitality of the Chinese economy and adds momentum to the global tourism industry and economic recovery. We look forward to more Chinese tourists visiting our country," Lalic said.

In recent years, Chinese tourists have become more diverse and individualized in their outbound travel preferences and demands. They now place greater emphasis on experiencing the natural environment, cultural history, and local lifestyle of their destinations.

Li, who traveled to Egypt from China's Sichuan province during the Chinese New Year holiday, said she spent two days at the Egyptian Museum and the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization.

Liu, who works in Beijing, chose to have a trip to France during the Chinese New Year holiday and spent the entire vacation in Paris.

"I saw the romantic Seine River and experienced history at the Palace of Versailles and the Arc de Triomphe," Liu said. This trip allowed him to feel a resonance between Chinese and French cultures, making it an unforgettable cultural and artistic journey.

Harry Hwang, director of the Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations World Tourism Organization, noted that in recent years, Chinese tourists have placed a greater emphasis on travel experiences. Chinese tourists are now more interested in exploring the attractions, cultural heritage, and history of different countries and regions, which indirectly contributes to the preservation of local cultural heritage.

PR Newswire

UNWTO and Pacific Asia Travel Association Focus on Sustainable Future for Tourism



UNWTO has once again partnered with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) to guide the development of tourism across the region.

For its 17th edition, the 2023 UNWTO-PATA Forum (Guilin, China, 26-27 October) put the focus on maximizing the sector's ability to drive growth, build economic resilience and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. The Forum is the consolidated leading platform for policymakers, business leaders and a range of tourism stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific.

People, Planet and Prosperity

With co-organizers the Guilin Municipal People's Government and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region's

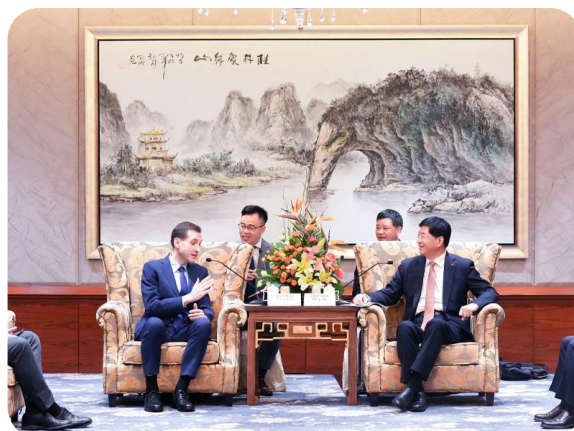


Department of Culture and Tourism, as well as with Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Forum explored the best ways of introducing greater sustainability into every level of the tourism ecosystem. Among other areas, discussions centred on priorities

including trends, innovation and technology, education and skills, and green investments.

The two-day event featured keynote interventions from UNWTO officials, alongside expert inputs from National Tourism Administrations, National Tourism Organizations and Destination Management Organizations, government officials, NGOs, industry practitioners. The trends, insights, research findings and practices, will be used to develop policies focused on greater sustainability while also raising awareness promote awareness and education about sustainable tourism among forum attendees and the broader general public, including through the more effective use of data.

The Forum also featured a high-level technical session organized by UNWTO around the theme of “Rethinking Tourism in post-pandemic times: understanding and adapting to new trends,” and a panel discussion focused on strengthening collaboration between public and private actors. Within the framework of the Forum, UNWTO officials met with key officials from the region,



including the Secretary of CPC Committee and the Mayor of Guilin and with representatives of the Hongkong Polytechnic University.

UNWTO

Asia-Pacific will retain its supremacy in global eco-tourism

The report with the title – The global Ecotourism Market by Traveler Type, Age Group, and Sales Channel: Global Opportunity Analysis and Industry Forecast, 2021-2027– has been disclosed. In 2019, the market size of ecotourism was around \$181.1 billion and is anticipated to reach \$333.8 billion by 2027. This statement offers a comprehensive examination of the best investment areas, best winning tactics, drivers & opportunities, market size & valuations, competitive landscape, and constantly evolving trends of the market.

Growth in tourism to exceptional destinations, leaning toward study of coral reefs, wildlife, and unspoiled uninterrupted natural vistas, and increased focus on sustainability drive the international ecotourism market. But, low obtainability of housing facilities and restricted availability of quality and clean restaurants



at various places stop the market growth.

Instead, public-private partnerships in the form of promoting air routes to isolated attractions, development of transport capabilities, and offering seamless access to create new opportunities in the forthcoming years.

Recent years have witnessed heightened popularity of eco-tourism worldwide. The international tourism is experiencing paradigm shift with improved awareness in terms of environment. Stakeholders, as a result, all over the industry are endorsing unadulterated, natural, and unspoiled destinations to entice tourists. Maintaining the nature and housing large groups of tourists remains the main target of the stakeholders.

Travel and Your World

Thailand named ‘Best Destination – Asia Pacific’ in Travel Weekly Asia Readers’ Choice Awards 2023



Thailand has been recognized as the ‘Best Destination – Asia Pacific’ in the 2023 Travel Weekly Asia Readers’ Choice Awards. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) played a crucial role in this achievement, demonstrating its commitment to the travel industry. Mrs. Kulpramote Wannalert, TAT Director of Singapore Office, expressed her gratitude

for the recognition and highlighted the collaborative efforts of TAT with stakeholders, suppliers, and partners in enhancing the travel experience for visitors worldwide. This is the second time Thailand has received this prestigious award, with the first being in 2018.

Bangkok Hotels Garner Recognitions

Apart from Thailand’s accolade,

two hotels in Bangkok were also honored in the Travel Weekly Asia Readers' Choice Awards 2023. The Capella Bangkok was named the Best Luxury Hotel – Asia Pacific, while the Holiday Inn Bangkok was voted the Best Midscale Hotel – Asia Pacific. These recognitions further solidify Bangkok's position as a prime tourist destination.

About Travel Weekly Asia Readers' Choice Awards

The winners of the Travel Weekly Asia Readers' Choice

Awards 2023 were chosen by industry professionals who voted for outstanding travel operators and suppliers. The awards aim to acknowledge organizations that have displayed excellence, professionalism, and innovation within their specific areas. Travel Weekly Asia, a renowned multi-platform information provider, offers a broad range of products and services that connect buyers and sellers in the travel industry.

Thailand Business News

Taylor Swift effect: Singapore hotels, airlines see up to 30% spike in regional demand for 6 sell-out shows



Photo: Business Today

American pop star Taylor Swift has yet to arrive but the knock-on effects of her upcoming stop in Singapore are already being felt and are likely to be wide-ranging.

Hotels and airlines told CNA that demand for flights and accommodation around the dates of Swift's concerts has increased up to 30 per cent.

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) said it provided a grant to help bring Swift's Eras tour to the country next month, her only stop in Southeast Asia.

"It is likely to generate significant benefits to the Singapore economy, especially to tourism activities such as hospitality, retail, travel and dining, as has happened in other cities in which Taylor Swift has performed," said the tourism board and the Ministry of Community, Culture and Youth (MCCY) in a joint statement.

But what are these benefits to the local economy and does it make financial sense for the country to give a grant?

According to one expert, Swift's concerts in Singapore could generate revenue in the ballpark of and possibly exceed the estimated A\$1.2 billion (US\$787 million) in economic value from her time in Melbourne.

Singapore is one of two stops in Asia for Swift, having performed four shows in Tokyo earlier in February. The star has sold out all six of her shows here, which [will be held starting from Mar 2](#).

More than 300,000 tickets have been sold, with a "significant" number of fans travelling from other countries, said MCCY and STB.

Flight, Hotel Bookings Up

Demand for flights to Singapore on both Singapore Airlines and Scoot has increased in March, particularly from Southeast Asia, the airlines said.

Jetstar Asia said demand has risen by 20 per cent for routes connecting destinations like Bangkok, Manila and Jakarta to Singapore, during the period when Swift is performing.

Hotels contacted by CNA said they also have seen an uptick in demand.

Cavaliere Giovanni Vitale, cluster general manager for Raffles Sentosa Singapore and Sofitel Singapore Sentosa Resort & Spa, said that when there are major concerts featuring internationally acclaimed performers such as Taylor Swift, their fans contribute "significantly" to hotel reservations.

"The demand from international visitors cum concertgoers continues to have a positive impact on our resort's occupancy, which will be at peak levels from early March onwards," he said.

Mr Vitale added that the majority of the reservations originate from Southeast Asia.

M Hotel Singapore's general manager Edeline Tiong said that it had observed a spike in demand in local hotel bookings during the first two weeks of March in anticipation of the concerts. Ms Tiong added that the hotel is seeing a 30 per cent increase in demand from Southeast Asia.

Similarly, there also has been an increase of 20 to 30 per cent in demand from Southeast Asia at One Farrer Hotel, said its general manager Gilbert Madhavan.

"We have experienced a significant spike in demand during the period Taylor Swift is performing in Singapore, with a significant number of the bookings coming from our Marriott Bonvoy members in Southeast Asia and beyond," added Westin Singapore.

Exclusivity A Possible Game-Changer

The provision of grants to bring in performers is nothing new, said Mr Christopher Khoo, managing director of tourism consultancy MasterConsult Services.

Such grants are given to encourage tourism development in a "specific direction", said Mr Khoo, who spent 15 years at STB.

Mr Joshua Loh, who is course chair for the Diploma in Tourism & Resort Management at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, said that

it is “not uncommon” that destinations offer financial incentives to anchor major events.

This is both for direct reasons such as to boost tourism arrivals and spending as well as strategic reasons, including the branding of a place as a vibrant lifestyle destination.

Such incentives may include financial grants which are usually based on a percentage of qualifying costs such as event production, marketing, professional services, he said.

By lowering costs, grants can potentially allow for higher ticket prices or more shows, ultimately increasing the artist’s earnings, added Dr Samer Elhajjar, a senior lecturer of marketing from the National University of Singapore’s Business School.

“Additionally, grants can help cover the costs associated with venue rental, transportation, and accommodations, easing the financial burden on artists and their teams,” he said.

“This financial flexibility can empower artists like Taylor Swift to optimise their touring strategies and expand their reach to new audiences.”

Citing business confidentiality, STB declined to answer queries from CNA on whether the grant had been given out in the past and which acts it had been given to.

Historically, Swift’s concerts have been big sources of revenue.

According to Mitsumasa Etou, a representative of research site Economic Effects NET, and a part-time lecturer at Tokyo City University, her four days of shows in Tokyo, Japan earlier this year are expected to generate up to 34.1 billion yen (US\$226.8 million).

Swift’s tour in Australia could generate A\$1.2 billion in economic value in Melbourne alone where she had three shows earlier this month, according to the city’s Lord Mayor Sally Capp.

Mr Khoo said that the amount of revenue generated in Singapore could be in the ballpark of Melbourne’s figures or possibly more.

“I’m sure STB internally would measure this and be able to come up with a more accurate figure but I think this would be a good figure to work with,” he added.

“Estimating the potential revenue from Taylor Swift concerts in Singapore would involve considering various factors such as venue capacity, ticket prices, merchandise sales, sponsorship deals, and other ancillary revenue streams,” said Dr Elhajjar.

“Without specific details on these factors, it’s challenging to provide an accurate estimate.”

However, he added that given Swift’s stature, her concerts in Singapore could generate “substantial revenue”, potentially in the “millions of dollars”.

About 96,000 fans packed the Melbourne Cricket Ground each night for three shows, while about 55,000 fans per show are expected at Singapore’s National Stadium.

There have also been questions surrounding a performance deal after Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said last week that the Singapore government offered US\$2 million to US\$3 million per show in exchange for exclusivity in Southeast Asia.

According to Mr Srettha, concert promoter AEG had informed him of the arrangement.

STB and MCCY stopped short of confirming if an exclusive deal was struck preventing the US pop sensation from



Photo: Vietnam Plus

holding her Eras world tour elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

Mr Kevin Wee, senior lecturer at Nanyang Polytechnic’s School of Business Management, said that exclusivity is critical from the branding perspective as it helps to cement Singapore as the true “events capital” in the region.

“Hosting exclusive events offers invaluable branding opportunities whose impact can persist long after the concerts are over, significantly boosting Singapore’s image as a vibrant, culturally rich destination,” he said.

“However, it’s important to note that we don’t have concrete information regarding claims about any exclusivity clause for Taylor Swift’s concert.”

Mr Jaquel Koh, a digital marketing and branding lecturer at Singapore Polytechnic’s School of Business, said securing exclusivity for a global icon like Swift is “paramount” from the business perspective.

“It monopolises the market share within the region and compels billions of fans from across the globe to visit the exclusive host country for the concert,” said Mr Koh.

“With over 300,000 tickets sold and a substantial number of fans travelling from other countries, the demand speaks volumes about the allure of exclusivity surrounding Taylor Swift’s performances.”

CNA

Tourism Malaysia embarks on strategic sales mission to North Africa

Tourism Malaysia embarked on an impactful sales mission to North Africa, strategically aimed to captivate international tourists and position Malaysia as the ultimate value-added travel destination. The mission kicked off on 1 February in Algiers, Algeria, and concluded on 4 February 2024 in Cairo, Egypt.

The delegation comprised 14 esteemed organisations, including seven travel agents, six hotels/resorts, and one association.



The mission sought to contribute to a robust rebound in the tourism industry by focusing on attracting newcomers and regular visitors.

Delegates actively participated in travel marts in each country to showcase Malaysia's diverse tourism products. Additionally, targeted tourism presentations and media conferences

engaged local tourism and media communities, culminating in a dinner and video presentation that captured the essence of "Malaysia Truly Asia."

Expressing enthusiasm about the mission, Dato' Dr. Ammar Abd. Ghapar, Director General of Tourism Malaysia stated: "This was a crucial step in our journey towards Visit Malaysia Year 2026. As we ramped up our strategic engagements and promotions, we aimed to create lasting impressions on the North African market, making Malaysia a top choice for discerning travellers."

In 2024, Malaysia set a target of welcoming 27.3 million international tourist arrivals, with tourism receipts exceeding RM102.7 billion. Through business-to-business (B2B) sessions, seminars, networking opportunities, and a focus on promotions in niche segments such as edu-tourism, shopping paradises, and halal food heavens, Malaysia aimed to establish itself as a premier family-friendly holiday destination.

TravelDailyNews Asia & Pacific

Vietjet to launch 5 new routes to Asia-Pacific destinations

Budget airline Vietjet has announced it will launch new routes connecting Vietnam's major travel destinations with Asia-Pacific cities as year-end tourism season heats up.

Starting November 21, it will launch two new routes connecting Ho Chi Minh City with Australia's Perth and Adelaide with five flights a week, the carrier said in a press release.

The two new routes will make Vietjet the first Vietnamese carrier to operate flights connecting Vietnam with five largest cities in Australia, after Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

On December 10, the carrier will debut its route connecting Vietnam's biggest island Phu Quoc in the south with South Korea's Busan city with seven flights a week.

A month later, it will open a route linking Phu Quoc and Taipei in Taiwan with four flights a week.

From December 22, the Hanoi-Hong Kong route will officially be launched with seven return flights each week.

The launching of direct new routes to major tourist hubs in Asia-Pacific comes at a time when Vietnam has already achieved its 2023 foreign tourist target of 8 million and expects to welcome a total of 13 million by the end of this year.

Vietnam welcomed 8.9 million foreign tourists in the first nine months of the year.

South Korea was the biggest source of tourists with



A Vietjet plane takes off from Tan Son Nhat International Airport in Ho Chi Minh City.

2.5 million arrivals, followed by mainland China (1.1 million), Taiwan (575,000), and the U.S. (548,000).

Australia is one of Vietnam's 10 biggest feeder tourism markets.

In the first nine months of this year, the number of Vietnamese tourists traveling abroad reached over 3.8 million, up 2.5 times year-on-year.

VnExpress International

Asia Pacific Outdoor Lodging Association (APOLA) launch at Thailand Tourism Forum 2024

The Asia Pacific Outdoor Lodging Association (APOLA) was founded on the initiative of Robert Hecker, Bill Barnett, and Paul Dean at the PHIST conference in Phuket. The Association was officially launched at the Thailand Tourism Forum in Bangkok on January 15, 2024.

The founding members agreed that the trade body would be an advocacy vehicle to guide, promote and structure the development of the outdoor lodging sector in the Asia Pacific Region to meet the needs of operators, owners, government authorities, suppliers, investors, and tour operators associated with the outdoor lodging industry.

Given the recent growth of the industry and the strong fundamentals of the market, the members agreed that the organization should help define the standards for the region, raise awareness, guide policy, develop an accounting.

The Association is in the process of being registered as a non-profit Society in Singapore, following which annual subscriptions will be available to members across the industry in the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.

Louis Thompson from Nomadic Resorts was nominated as the inaugural president. Each of the founding members agreed to pay an annual membership fee to launch the association.

Robert Hecker, co-founder of the association said, "APOLA stands as a testament to a shared vision for a thriving outdoor lodging sector in the Asia Pacific Region."



From left to right: Bastian Sagild, Tim Sargeant, Matt Gebbie, Paul Stocker, Louis Thompson, Willem Niemeijer, Koko Tang, Mervin Ho, Fabrizio Muzzio, Brendan O'Molony, Yvonne de Suner Beltran | Photo courtesy of APOLA

"We recognize the immense potential of this niche in the Asia-Pacific, and our commitment to its proper development is reflected in APOLA's establishment. APOLA aims to not only set standards but to champion sustainable practices, guide policies, and foster collaboration. This association is a collective effort to shape the future of outdoor hospitality, and like-minded individuals and organizations are invited to join on this transformative journey."

APOLA members will have access to tools, resources, best practices, case studies, newsletters, and market insights via the

membership portal, where they will be able to network with other APOLA members.

The founding members of the organization are:

- Louis Thompson Nomadic Resorts
- Willem Niemeijer Yaana Ventures
- Koko Tang Vinetree Tourism
- Tim Sargeant, Explorar Hotels & Resorts
- Niels Huby, Explorar Hotels & Resorts
- Fabrizio Muzzio Cloud Collective
- Paul Stocker Minor Hotels
- Bastian Sagild Cloud Collective
- Yvonne De Suner Beltran Banyan Tree Escape
- Andre ZINA T3 Architects

To know more, visit their website: [APOLA – Asia Pacific Outdoor Lodging Association](https://www.apola.asia).

Thaiger

The Countdown Begins for The Meetings Show Asia Pacific's Debut

THE MEETINGS SHOW
ASIA PACIFIC

17-18 APRIL 2024
MARINA BAY
SANDS,
SINGAPORE



Supported by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), [The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024](https://www.themeetingshow.asia) promises to be a game-changer for meetings and events planners in the region, with its MICE market[1] poised to grow from USD412.18 billion in 2023 to USD783.63 billion by 2032. The show will present a diverse range of Asian and international destinations, venues, hotels, technology providers and key suppliers in the thriving Meetings, Incentives,

Conventions and Events (MICE) industry.

The Meetings Show is owned and organised by the Northstar Travel Group, a preeminent B-to-B information, events, and marketing solutions company in the travel industry, which also owns travel and MICE events and publications such as Travel Weekly, TravelAge West, Business Travel News, Successful Meetings, Meetings & Conventions, Travel Weekly Asia, M&C Asia, Incentive, and Web in Travel.

With a winning hosted buyer format, The Meetings Show Asia Pacific combines a trade exhibition, conference, and business networking, setting the stage for a dynamic gathering of MICE professionals from the APAC region. Its exclusive hosted buyer programme brings senior MICE buyers and planners to a bustling tradeshow floor, through a prescheduled meetings platform that facilitates targeted meetings with top-notch exhibitors, including the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, Singapore Tourism Board, Dubai Tourism, Tourism New Zealand, Tourism Promotions Board Philippines, Royal Caribbean Cruises (Asia), Marina Bay Sands, Hard Rock International, Pan Pacific Hotels Group, Meliá Hotels International, Groups360 LLC, and more.

Many of the world's leading meetings industry associations, such as MPI (Meetings Professional International), SITE (Society for Incentive Travel Excellence) and IAEE (International Association of Exhibitions and Events), are partnering with Northstar to invite their members and facilitate their business and professional growth at The Meetings Show Asia Pacific. Together, in support of the Global MICE Collaborative (GMC), they will provide actionable educational offerings and a vast worldwide network to MICE professionals in growing global markets. Additional association partnerships to be activated at The Meetings Show Asia Pacific will also be announced soon.

David Blansfield, Executive Vice President and Group Publisher, Northstar Travel Group, says, "As a gateway to the flourishing Asia Pacific market, The Meetings Show Asia Pacific serves to capture the widespread business opportunities in this diverse and lucrative market. We are delighted to bring the world-class experiences from our highly successful meetings show brand from London to Singapore, a stellar award-winning MICE hub strategically chosen to host our inaugural show."

Irene Chua, Vice President and Group Publisher, Asia, Northstar Travel Group, adds, "Set against the backdrop of Singapore's vibrant business community, The Meetings Show Asia Pacific is a fantastic platform to explore the very best that Asia Pacific has to offer in the future of MICE. It is in the meeting of minds that new connections, ideas and innovations are sparked, and we couldn't be more excited to launch this cutting-edge show in one of the world's fastest growing region for the MICE industry."

Slated for **17-18 April 2024** at the illustrious **Sands Expo & Convention Centre, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore**, The Meetings Show Asia Pacific aims to unlock new partnerships and business opportunities for exhibitors and attendees, whilst addressing the MICE industry's challenges posed by the evolving business landscape.

As an exhibitor and venue host, Ong Wee Min, Vice President of Sales and MICE, Marina Bay Sands, shares, "Held at Sands Expo & Convention Centre, the inaugural edition is expected to offer a hub of networking and sourcing opportunities for event planners, bringing together leading MICE partners from meeting destinations and venues, to hotels and technology solution providers across the Asia Pacific region."

With wellness becoming a growing priority amongst delegates, The Meetings Show Asia Pacific is the perfect platform for us to showcase the newly-launched Wellness in MICE programme and how it can be incorporated into itineraries. As the first-ever carbon-neutral meeting venue in Singapore, we also look

forward to sharing our best practices with planners and guiding them to create impactful and sustainable meeting experiences."

Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya, President, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), notes, "The Meetings Show is a high-profile MICE marketplace and platform for us to showcase new distinctive products and services and follow market trends. TCEB will offer support campaigns in partnership with attractions and shopping malls in key destinations, providing event planners with a broader and more diverse range of locations and activities. We also collaborate with local communities and networks to create memorable local experiences for meetings and incentives groups in various regions of Thailand. This includes the creation of MICE routes in each province and developing a premium MICE programme that transforms local products and services into souvenirs, snacks and gifts that bolster the local economy."

Bjoern Spreitzer, General Manager New Zealand & Business Events, Tourism New Zealand, adds, "New Zealand is actively pursuing association conference business in the Asia Pacific region and we look forward to sharing our expertise, events infrastructure, and unique culture with key decision makers at The Meetings Show Asia Pacific. We're also looking to build on and enhance our relationships and connections, whilst growing our presence and share of conferences in the region. These range from research alignment through university partnerships, industry collaborations, and direct airline connectivity between Auckland, Christchurch and many destinations across Asia."

[Registration](#) is free for trade buyers in the meetings and events industry, while trade visitors may purchase an entry pass for US\$100. Validated international meetings buyers and decision makers also stand to benefit from a slew of privileges from the show's signature Hosted Buyer Programme, including travel and accommodation, curated pre-scheduled 1:1 meetings with targeted exhibitors, a familiarisation trip to Singapore, exclusive networking opportunities, and access to the hosted buyer lounge serving complimentary food and beverages. All trade and hosted buyers will be vetted to be qualified for the complimentary benefits.

For more information, please visit www.themeetingshow-apac.com.

Taiwan News

Asia Pacific tourism to fully recover in 2024 and other tourism news

For PropertyGuru's tourism news roundup, the hotel sector continues to grow as Asia Pacific's tourism is expected to fully recover in 2024. Also, Hong Kong seeks to bring back the 3% hotel tax to increase its revenue in 2024, while the extended stay accommodation market is booming.

Asia Pacific tourism to approach full recovery in 2024, driving hotel sector growth

According to new CBRE research as reported in [The](#)

[World Property Journal](#), institutional investors are attracted to prime hotel assets in tier-one markets across Asia Pacific, even though tourist arrivals in key destinations are only reaching 70-80% of pre-pandemic levels.

“With limited supply of high-quality assets, we anticipate intense competition among investors for the best hotel properties across Asia Pacific,” said Dr. Henry Chin, Global Head of Investor Thought Leadership & Head of Research, Asia Pacific. “Despite the region’s uneven tourism recovery, core assets in Japan, Singapore, Australia, and Korea, as well as resort markets continue to generate strong interest.”



Hong Kong budget 2024: City seeks to bring back 3% hotel tax to increase revenue

Hong Kong plans to resume charging the Hotel Accommodation Tax at a rate of three percent starting from January 1, 2025, Financial Secretary Paul Chan said on Wednesday as he delivered the budget for the next financial year.

According to HKFP, the minister said the tax would account for less than one percent of the spending of overnight visitors in Hong Kong while generating income of around HK\$1.1

billion for the government annually.

Under the Hotel Accommodation Tax Ordinance enacted on July 1, 1966, hotel guests in Hong Kong were charged a two percent levy on stays. The tax was later raised to three percent, but it was waived starting July 1, 2008.

Strategies for success: unlocking profitability in the extended stay sector

The extended stay accommodation market is booming, with the sector projected to reach US\$166.5 billion by 2032. With more individuals and corporations embracing flexible work arrangements, there is a strong demand for accommodations supporting a mobile lifestyle and providing more favorable rates than traditional short-stay hotels.

However, when it comes to the marketing, operations, and revenue management of extended stay properties, there are very distinct differences between their accommodations and traditional hotel rooms, along with several challenges that must be overcome.

This report by [The Hotel Conversation](#) discusses at length the strategies for success in the extended stay sector.

Asia Property Awards

Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia eye seamless tourism: PM Srettha



Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin unveiled plans to enhance seamless tourism between Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia after meeting the three leaders on Sunday. PHOTO: THE NATION

Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin unveiled plans to enhance seamless tourism between Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia after meeting the three leaders on December 17.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the summit in Tokyo commemorating Japan’s 50 years of cooperation with ASEAN countries.

Srettha said that in his discussion with Vietnam President Võ Văn Thưởng, both sides agreed to restore Cabinet meetings between the two countries. Vietnam has proposed to host the first such meeting in May next year. Srettha said the agenda of the meeting will include the price of rice to boost income for farmers.

In the discussion, President Võ suggested that Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia take steps to promote seamless tourism, so tourists can hop between countries without having to take separate visas.

Srettha commended the idea as creative and said he would instruct Tourism Minister Sudawan Wangsuphakitkosol to discuss this issue and work on stimulating tourism across the four nations.

In discussions with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, Srettha addressed several issues, including the setting up of a Thai consulate in Siem Reap to accommodate the influx of tourists visiting the renowned Angkor Wat temple complex.

The Cambodian premier also thanked Srettha for the care provided to Cambodian workers in Thailand.

In his talks with Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Srettha confirmed Indonesia’s purchase of 2 million tonnes of Thai rice.

The surge in rice exports to Indonesia has been notable due to severe drought and delayed rainy seasons triggered by the El Niño phenomenon.

Widodo also pledged to send officials to meet Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister Thamanat Prompow early next year.

“This will help boost the price and demand for Thai rice,” Srettha said.

The premier added that the president also expressed interest in Thailand’s 1-trillion-baht Land Bridge project, adding that further discussions will be held soon.

Asia News Network

The Maldives has Record Year of Tourism Thanks to Russia and China



Avani+ Fares Maldives Resort

This family-friendly island features 176 studios, beach villas, overwater villas, and pavilions. It is located on the western edge of the Baa Atoll, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and 35 minutes by seaplane from the airport. There are multiple dining options and a spa.



Amari Raaya Maldives

Located on the Raa Atoll, 45 minutes from the airport, with 167 contemporary Beach and Ocean Villas, multiple dining venues, and a spa, this family-friendly island is also launching a new kids' club, including zip lines.



Barceló Whale Lagoon Maldives

Located in the South Ari atoll, the island has 100 villas, including 63 Beach Villas, 30 Water Villas, and 7 Beach Suites with plunge pools.



The Maldives is experiencing a significant increase in tourism, with Russia leading the pack. With over 1,000 stunning coral islands, one of the world's most beautiful locations has many reasons to attract tourists, and last year, a record number of tourists visited the Indian Ocean country.

The country is home to 176 resorts, 809 guesthouses, and 14 hotels, and is attractive to all budgets, with a wide variety of accommodation options. Maldives celebrated a 12% increase in arrivals in 2023, a record for the nation. According to new data from the Ministry of Tourism, the most arrivals came from India, Russia, and China.

After a recent call to boycott the Maldives, India was edged out of the top spot after negative remarks were made against India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Russia held the leading market with 174,416 arrivals, followed by India with 161,751. China came in third place with 138,426 visitors. Other countries with high visits include the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and the USA, with a mere 8.8% of arrivals.

2024 Resort Openings

Development is booming in the Maldives, with countless islands and resorts being launched. For 2024, nine new resorts were unveiled in the Maldives, including:

NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi

Located in the Vaavu Atoll, 75 minutes by speed boat or 24 minutes by seaplane from Male. The resort has two-story overwater villas, beachfront villas, and an over-water presidential villa. There is also a spa and six diverse dining experiences.



Joy Island Maldives

The island is located in North Malé Atoll, a 40-minute speedboat from the airport. Joy Island has 151 rooms, with 60 rooms located overwater and 91 rooms on the beach. There are three restaurants and an Oasis Spa with overwater treatment rooms.



Jawakara Maldives

Mabin, the larger of Jawakara's two islands, offers spacious beach villas and private palm suites. This family-friendly island offers 88 villas, including beachfront, poolside, and two-bedroom options.



Soneva Secret

Located on the Haa Dhaalu Atoll, Soneva Secret features 14 overwater and island villas, including the Castaway villa, the Maldives' only floating villa accessible only by boat. Each villa features a dedicated team of three staff members, including a Barefoot Guardian, Barefoot Assistant, and dedicated chef, to ensure every stay is completely personalized.



SO/ Maldives

Located on the Emboodhoo Lagoon, Kaafu Atoll, the island has 80 beach and ocean villas, including signature private pools in all villas. There is a Beach club, wellness spa, Award-winning restaurants, and an Exclusive Kid's Villa that has a kids' Pod for the kids to sleep under the stars.



Oaga Art Resort

Situated in North Malé Atoll, Oaga Art Resort is 45 minutes by speedboat from the airport. It is a small island with 60 villas with beach and overwater options, five dining venues, and a spa. They also have the Largest Art Collection in the Maldives, including the largest mural pool in the world.



Madifushi Private Island Maldives

The island is located in the Meemu Atoll and is a 35-minute seaplane ride from the airport. The island features 26 Serene Pool Villas, 3 Two-Bedroom Serene Pool Villas, and 1 Grand Madifushi Serenity Pool Villa. There are 46 Aqua Pool Villas, 3 Tranquil Aqua Pool Villas, and 1 Grand Madifushi Aqua Pool Villa.



New International Airport Terminal

Velana International Airport hosted 52 airlines in 2023, while President Dr Mohamed Muizzu supports a new terminal for 2024, hoping to handle up to 7 million arrivals. Their goal for 2024 is over 2 million tourists, with an anticipated 7% increase in the number of nights tourists spend in the country during the year.

Forbes



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 (NGO) 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 1996, CACCI has grown into a network of national chambers of commerce with a total now of 29 Primary Members from 27 Asian countries and independent economies. It cuts across national boundaries to link businessmen and promote economic growth throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

As an NGO, CACCI is 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.

For more information, please visit www.cacci.biz.

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