



► CONFERENCES



Victor Tseng

Chief Communications Officer, Ctrip

"ITB Asia provides a wonderful opportunity to meet with current and potential partners. It's a platform for exchanging ideas, discussing trends and new technologies.

Read page 5

► TRADE TALK



Col Anurodh Mishra

Associate Vice President – Administration,
TATA Consulting Engineers

"I am looking for packages that include flights, hotels, all meals, conference room facilities – all-in-one – plus some leisure activities

Read page 6

► REGION: EUROPE



Lasma Lidaka

Head of the Representative Office in
Singapore, Investment and Development
Agency of Latvia (LIAA)

"Nature is at the heart of Latvia as it is one of the greenest countries in the world.

Read page 9

Innovative brands, fresh ideas, new business

ITB Asia 2018 – the launch pad for innovative industry concepts



The growing success of ITB Asia is due in part to its positioning as a "launch pad" for new ideas and concepts in the region's travel and tourism industry.

Entering its 11th year, ITB Asia is now much more than a simple regional sales event where buyers are met and contracts negotiated. It is the meeting place for the entire tourism industry, and its reach is widening with each edition.

The success of the event has attracted a number of countries participating for the first time, especially from Europe, which has shown the largest growth. First-time exhibitors in 2018 include the Polish Tourism Organisation, the Tourism Association of Canton Sarajevo and the Ministry of the Slovak Republic to name but a few.

Some very new names can also be seen on the show floor – like Best Western's Vib, Glō, Sadie and Aiden. Learn more about these and other innovations from BW in our exclusive interview with their Managing Director, International Operations – Asia, Olivier Berrivin, on page 7.

► Olivier Berrivin

Managing Director, International Operations – Asia,
Best Western Hotels & Resorts

REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT: EUROPE

In the first six months of 2018, UNWTO reports 7% growth in inbound tourism in Europe, with 9% growth in Southern Mediterranean countries. On the demand side, France, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation all reported double-digit increases in outbound spending in Europe.

In 2017, arrivals to Europe overall grew 8%, equating to 52 million more travellers than in the

previous year. Travel demand increased from virtually all Europe's source markets, both inside and outside the region, fuelling inbound growth across Europe. The recovery of the Russian outbound market in particular, benefitted many destinations.

Discover more about Europe, and its new attractions on show at ITB Asia, from page 9.



• Plitvice National Park, Croatia



ITB
ASIA

FLOOR PLAN



GAPA TOUR IRAN
Stand No. L31

GYEONGGI TOURISM ORGANIZATION 韩国观光公社
Stand No. H40

wonderful indonesia
Stand No. G05



PREFACE



Simon King
Associate Editor

MICE take centre stage

This year's ITB Asia is underpinning the MICE sector with a number of new developments, as the importance of this market grows.

According to a report published this year by Allied Market Research, the global MICE industry was valued at US\$752 bn in 2016, and is projected to reach US\$1,245 bn in 2023, registering a CAGR of 7.5% from 2017 to 2023. The MICE industry is complex, consisting of participants, sponsors, planners, convention and visitor bureaus, meeting venues, accommodation, and suppliers generally being involved in the planning and execution of an event. The group market of the tourism industry has witnessed exponential growth owing to rapid globalization and expansion of service industries, and the continuous evolution of scientific and technological innovations.

This year's show thus sees the expansion of the MICE & Corporate Hub, as well as the launch of the new MICE & Corporate Speed Networking session. With its position as the leading tourism show, ITB Asia is committed to drawing opportunities across MICE, as well as leisure and corporate travel, and organisers continue to innovate. ITB Asia is firmly on the world stage and this year's show is bursting with opportunities for all businesses, both here in South-east Asia, and further afield. ■

Minister officially opens ITB Asia

Singapore “delighted” to host Asia’s leading travel trade show

ITB Asia was officially opened yesterday morning by Chee Hong Tat, Singapore's Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Trade & Industry, Ministry of Education

Speaking in front of a VIP audience that included Melissa Ow, Acting Chief Executive, Singapore Tourism Board, and Dr Christian Göke, CEO, Messe Berlin.

Mr Chee welcomed all participants to ITB Asia and stated that Singapore is delighted to host such a leading event. Chee said the Government's overall tourism strategy includes investing in quality attractions and reinventing Singapore's offerings. He also mentioned that a streamlined procedure for tourist guide licence applications will be launched in the second quarter of next year.

Chee also announced plans to "reshape" the island of Sentosa to provide more scope for new

attractions and investments. The minister spoke about the Island's status as a major tourism attraction in Singapore, highlighting its need to remain competitive by constantly rejuvenating itself. Sentosa currently welcomes around 19-million tourists annually, and was under the spotlight in June when it hosted the Trump-Kim summit.

After the ribbon cutting ceremony, Chee, Ow and Göke were taken on a VIP guided tour of the show, stopping at many stands along the way. One of the first stands to be stopped at was that of Abu Dhabi, where the group was given an insight into the emirate's tourism offering. The next stops were Turkey, Indonesia and Thailand, followed by a long stop at the Singapore stand.



- Ms **Melissa Ow**, Acting Chief Executive, Singapore Tourism Board
Mr **Chee Hong Tat**, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Trade & Industry, Ministry of Education, Singapore
Dr **Christian Göke**, CEO, Messe Berlin GmbH



Allan Taylor

Managing Director
& Chief Commercial Officer (CCO),
Boost

Boost for learning in hospitality

A new technology firm present at ITB Asia, Boost, has announced what it describes as the "most comprehensive mobile learning solution yet for the hospitality industry".

The suite of mobile solutions by the mobile learning solutions provider is designed to empower hospitality employees to provide higher guest satisfaction, improved team communications, greater productivity, and allow hotels to upskill, manage and organise their workforce more efficiently.

"The globalisation of travel has seen massive disruption in the hospitality industry, not least in changing guest demands, the emergence of new tourist profiles, growing guest expectations often led by the increased use of social media, more competition and changing employee habits among other changes", says Allan Taylor, Managing Director and Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) of Boost.

Boost's platform leverages mobile technology to provide

a holistic team management system that brings together mobile learning, messaging, communication, recruitment (including assessment), measurement and organisational capabilities under a simple-to-use mobile umbrella.

The platform upsills employees in vocational and language skills, where results can be monitored and viewed in real time by the properties' leadership teams – a true 360° view of the hotel's staff performance and engagement. Hotel HR professionals can use Boost to conduct accurate first-line screening of candidates, while team leaders are able to manage, monitor and organise their teams while communicating with them through Boost's advanced messaging application. ■

STAND No. B42

IHG pushes "greener" image at ITB Asia

InterContinental Hotels Group again has a strong presence at ITB Asia, and this year has a slightly "greener" tint, as the company has announced this week it is to remove plastic straws from its global estate by the end of 2019.

The decision to remove plastic straws from IHG's global estate will eliminate an average of 50 million single-use plastic straws from more than 5,400 IHG-branded hotels each year.

Keith Barr, CEO, IHG, commented: "IHG is in almost 100 countries and we touch the lives of millions of people each day. This gives us a responsibility

to protect the environment and an opportunity to make a real difference. There is always more we can do to minimise waste, but the work we're doing to reduce single-use plastic is a powerful example of how we can come together with guests, owners and colleagues to drive positive change". ■



Pan Pacific Hotels Group launches new Smart Meetings offer

With the newly-launched Smart Meetings offer by Pan Pacific Hotels Group – their latest offering on show at ITB Asia, meeting organisers get rewarded for "booking smart".

Smart Organisers enjoy immediate savings of 5% with every meeting booked at Pan Pacific and Parkroyal



properties worldwide, along with a plethora of curated privileges to enhance the meeting experience. The selection of privileges is specially curated with the needs of modern business travellers in mind – complimentary airport transfers, room upgrades, cocktail receptions, as well as photobooths and tickets to popular attractions – for a meeting experience where all the details are taken care of.

Smart Meetings run from now until 31 March 2019, with a minimum of 15 delegates and 10 guest rooms for meetings held by 31 December 2019. ■

STAND No. Q22

GO GLOBAL TRAVEL – PLAYGROUND FOR TRAVEL PROFESSIONALS



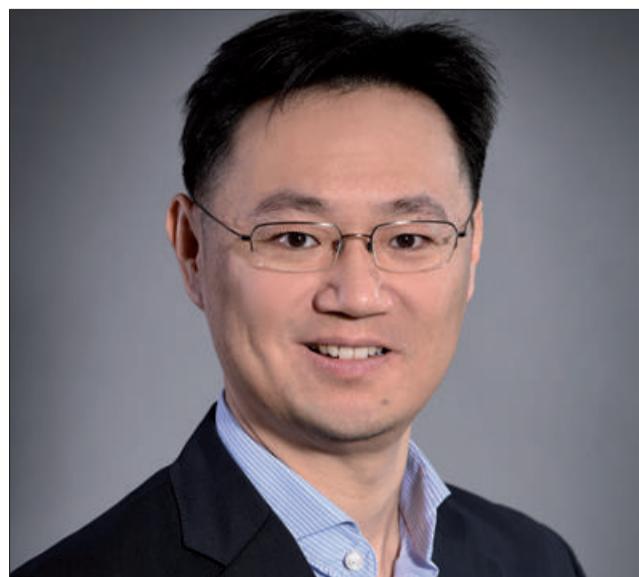
Think of Go Global Travel as a well-oiled machine that makes the searching experience a "bliss for the travel players" – from its diversified products with dynamic pricing, to the variety of ways of connectivity offered, it has its clients' interest at heart while developing a user-friendly interface.

Over 200,000 hotels and apartments are available at negotiated prices available in 208 countries with last-minute availability, along with transfer products that cover more than 600 locations worldwide, not to forget car

rentals with FOC cancellation up to 48 hours prior to pick up time.

Travel professionals are offered three ways of accessing the Go Global Travel database: directly, via its award-winning B2B online booking system; XLM API integration, where one is able to maintain full brand integrity on a cloud-based infrastructure; or alternatively, via a "white label solution" that provides a personalised frame to display GGT products... All with a free 24/7 customer service guarantee. ■

STAND No. B10



“ SINCE THE REBRANDING LAST YEAR, WE HAVE WITNESSED THE GROWTH OF TRIP.COM ESPECIALLY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

Victor Tseng

Chief Communications Officer,
Ctrip

Chinese travellers increasingly looking for premium products and services

Ctrip celebrates 20th anniversary next year - targeting further growth across the APAC region

With its headquarters in Shanghai, China, Ctrip, Asia's largest OTA, has experienced rapid growth since its inception in 1999. We asked Victor Tseng, Chief Communications Officer at Ctrip to tell us more about the business and its commitment to ITB Asia.

Ctrip is a leading provider in accommodation reservation, transportation ticketing, package tours, corporate travel management and other travel-related services. It has been listed on NASDAQ since 2003, with a market capitalisation of roughly US\$20 bn. It has 37,000 employees globally and strives to provide one-stop travel products and services over several brands and platforms.

How long have you been coming to ITB Asia, and what have been the highlights to date?

Ctrip has been proactively participating in ITB Asia for the several years. ITB Asia has always provided a stage for our different business divisions to meet with business partners and fellow peers within the travel industry. Many Chinese travellers visit Asian countries, with Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia always ranking as top outbound destinations.

Last year, Ctrip Group CEO Jane Sun spoke on the Chinese outbound travellers who have become one of the largest travel markets in the world. ITB Asia offers an opportunity for Ctrip to share insights of Chinese travellers and also helps us understand different consumers across Asia. With the launch of Trip.com, Ctrip Group's international brand, ITB Asia helps us develop better products and services for all of our consumers across Asia.

In your opening keynote at ITB Asia yesterday, you talked about the challenging international travel market. What are the key trends?

With rising customer expectations and rapidly-changing technology, I questioned how we as an industry can evolve to meet these challenges. I shared my insights on how travel is changing, what are some of the future trends and new technologies that Ctrip is watching, and what global growth

strategies that Ctrip is pursuing. In terms of trends, we have seen an increase in Chinese travellers seeking high quality products and services. For instance, during the recent national holiday, approximately 90% of Ctrip customers booked four-diamond and five-diamond outbound package tour products.

We have also seen an increase in demand for unique experiences, and Ctrip customised travel saw a 130% growth in Q2 compared to Q1 of this year.

According to Crip's latest report on the 2018 Chinese National Holiday travel trends, nine out of the 10 most visited regions by Chinese travellers are in Asia. Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Singapore ranked one to five respectively. Asia is a very important market for Ctrip Group and we are always looking to cater to the needs of our customers. ITB Asia provides a wonderful opportunity to meet with current and potential partners. It's a platform for exchanging ideas, discussing trends and new technologies. We hope to connect with new suppliers and partners not only in Asia but around the world.

What is Ctrip's key priorities for the future?

We want to be able to offer a range of different products to meet the diverse needs of our consumers. Our teams are continuously working with local partners and suppliers to increase our range of competitive offerings.

At Ctrip we are very customer centric, if we find that there is a need, we work to provide services accordingly. For example, we have seen a growth in family trips among our Chinese travellers. Due to this we have developed new products and services, we now offer more family friendly options for hotel rooms to make family travel easier.

This year we would also like to accentuate Trip.com. Since the rebranding last year, we have witnessed the growth of Trip.com especially in the Asia Pacific region. We are continuously working to provide better products and services over all Trip.com platforms. Trip.com operates a 24/7 customer call centre providing services around the clock. We recently opened a customer service centre in Seoul, Korea to provide quality customer service to Korean consumers ■

Corporate travel planning - seeking inspiration

Spotlight on the Indian engineering group TATA Consulting - back at ITB Asia looking for new destinations



**Col Anurodh
Mishra**

Associate Vice President – Administration,
TATA Consulting Engineers

Col Anurodh Mishra, Associate Vice President – Administration, TATA Consulting Engineers, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata, is attending ITB Asia for the second time, having first visited in 2014. We started by asking him about his role and what he is looking for in Singapore this week.

2018 is a very special year for all of us at TATA, as we mark the 150th anniversary of the Tata group. We have 3,000 staff in TATA Consulting Engineers and most of these travel; we have staff in India and we also have representatives all around the world. I am a member of Tata Consulting Engineers' executive Team and, among other things, I look after mobility, travel and MICE across the business. The company's total travel spend is €1.4 m per year.

What kind of travel and events do you look after?

We have a lot of activities in the business that we have off-site for senior management; we also have incentive programmes for employees, which include leisure trips overseas; and we have meetings off-site. For meetings off-site, we have about 80 to 100 people who get together and discuss business and then take part in some leisure activities. We go out for about three or four days every quarter on this kind of trip. The other trips include going to a resort or on a cruise and again, there are business and leisure activities in which to take part.

For employees that are doing well, or for somebody that has done something sterling for the organisation, a reward is given. This is usually a trip with families or in a group.

What are your favoured destinations?

Our popular destinations are in central Europe. Rome is very popular. In Asia, we have been sending people to Thailand and Hong Kong. I am looking at a number of new destinations, including South Africa and other countries on the African

I am open to all options. I am also considering appointing a travel organisation to handle these kinds of packages. We tried this earlier this year for a group of four people that went to Vietnam. It worked well, which is the most important thing, as far as the itinerary and host is concerned. I can get my team to do the planning by booking tickets and working with a resort or I can give it to somebody who will do it end-to-end for me. Whatever works better is important.

“THE COMPANY'S TOTAL TRAVEL SPEND IS €1.4 MILLION PER YEAR.

continent including Kenya. In Europe we are looking at countries including Croatia and in Southeast Asia, we are fairly settled with Indonesia and Vietnam among the destinations we use.

What are you looking for at ITB Asia?

I have come to ITB Asia to see if I can find some good deals and something new. We are looking at destinations in Southeast Asia and Europe. We are looking to make cost savings. I am looking for packages that include flights, hotels, all meals, conference room facilities – all-in-one – plus some leisure activities, such as a small cruise on a river, or a trek in a hilly region.

What are your predictions for travel within your business over the next 12 months?

In 2019, I forecast that as a business there will be more investment in travel, so I am here in Singapore looking for the options that I can offer people. Reinforcing our relationships with suppliers is key – especially existing ones. Equally as critical is forging new partnerships with tour and attraction providers that may not previously have worked directly with a company like us. I have a full list of appointments and I am really looking forward to meeting both new and existing suppliers ■



“WE WILL INTRODUCE THE BW SIGNATURE COLLECTION INTO ASIA FOR THE FIRST TIME”

Olivier Berrivin

Managing Director,
International Operations – Asia,
Best Western Hotels & Resorts

Olivier Berrivin, Managing Director, International Operations – Asia, Best Western Hotels & Resorts, says that 2017 was a significant year in terms of growth as the business signed 19 projects in the region. Most of them were located in Thailand, Vietnam, Japan and Malaysia. We started by asking about how the business is developing in Asia.

We're now signing more management agreements compared with franchise contracts, which is a clear indication that we've achieved a strong level of credibility with developers and owners. We're currently offering 13 brands – the vast majority of our properties are in the midscale segment but we also have brands in a wide range of categories, from economy all the way up to upscale with our Best Western Premier and BW Premier Collection brands. This allows us to offer products that fit every type of market.

Can you detail the key hotel openings for Best Western Hotels & Resorts in Asia in 2018?

The main focus market in 2018 is clearly Vietnam and we've signed several significant projects – most with more than 500 keys – in various parts of the country that have strong potential for economic growth. Our "Plus" (upper-midscale) and "Premier" (upscale) brands are the most requested by developers and this trend highlights the country's potential for such hotels. We've also signed a conversion property in Thailand (Tawa Rawadee Resort in Prachinburi province) that gives us the opportunity to introduce our BW Signature Collection into Asia, thanks to a partnership with a strongly established property. In

Japan, we have opened new hotels in famous destinations including the country's two biggest cities, Tokyo and Osaka.

existing properties which have a unique style and "flavour" in their respective markets, so we'll select them carefully to remain faithful to the original concepts. As previously mentioned, the agreement for Tawa Rawadee Resort in Thailand's Prachinburi province gives us the opportunity to introduce our BW Signature Collection to Asia for the first time.

How important is ITB Asia as a platform to meet buyers?

For us, ITB Asia has become much more than a standard regional sales event where you meet buyers and negotiate contracts. It's also a strong brand development platform as plenty of property developers and hotel owners attend the show, giving us the opportunity to showcase our new

Best Western introduces exciting new brands to Asia

Asia's first Vib hotel set to open its doors in Bangkok

Do you have any plans to introduce any of your recently launched brands – Vib, Glō, Sadie Hotel and Aiden Hotel – into Asia?

Asia's first Vib hotel, the 91-key Vib Sanampao, will open in Bangkok in a couple of months and will become the flagship of that brand in the region. We're currently negotiating a couple of potential Glō projects and I expect to have one on the map by 2019. Both Sadie and Aiden will give us the chance to better position ourselves in a more concrete way in the upper-midscale and upscale segments. These two brands are mainly targeting conversions of

What are your future development plans for 2019 and beyond in Asia?

Our focus is to keep developing our core brands and increase our footprint, ideally with more managed properties, and to establish us as one of the top five hotel operators in the region. Obviously, our new brands, like SureStay and BW Premier Collection, provide us with more opportunities to establish ourselves in markets and segments that we couldn't previously approach as we lacked the right concepts.

brands and concepts, resulting in strong development leads. We also take the opportunity to meet our existing partners, solidify our relationships and develop new ones with players that offer products and services that match our current and upcoming needs in a constantly changing market ■

APAC DRIVES GLOBAL MICE MARKET GROWTH

According to a forecast published this year by Allied Market Research on the global MICE market, Asia-Pacific is expected to witness the highest growth rate of 8.6% during the forecast period through to 2023. The region, states the report, is significantly driven by emerging countries such as Singapore, China, and India. Moreover, ease of visa restrictions, investments in better infrastructure, and high demand in commercial aviation further fuel the growth of the Asia-Pacific MICE industry.

The group market of the tourism industry has witnessed exponential growth owing to rapid globalization and expansion of service industries, and the continuous evolution of scientific and technological innovations.

Based on event type, meetings segment generated the highest revenue in 2016, and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 7.5%, due to the growth of the travel & tourism industry, increase in international business travels, and rise in government initiatives for the development of MICE segment & SME sector. Recent trends of organizing hybrid meetings, and use of social media and meeting apps are also expected to boost market growth in the near future ■

● Sabah International Convention Centre set to open in 2019



MICE: THE FESTIVE ATMOSPHERE APPROACH

Creating a festive atmosphere was the theme of a presentation yesterday at the MICE & Corporate Hub by Nina Gomez, Head of Operations – Singapore, CWT Meetings & Events.

Gomez explains that the much-hyped marketing term is fast becoming popular in the MICE market, with organisers increasingly dispensing with conventional and fixed concepts and instead focusing on a relaxed atmosphere and informal dialogue.

Gomez is renowned for her “push” on creating more fun vibes at events, but cautions that it is important to have strong content to anchor one’s event to its core business message, “regardless of whether you have a food truck outdoors serving a DIY lunch or an art installation featuring a local artist at one of your breakout sessions” ■



● Busan Cinema Center

Korea promotes MICE offering

Korea MICE Bureau (KMB), under the Korea Tourism Organisation, is present at ITB Asia promoting Korea as a premier business events destination

The organisation provides planners with information and assistance for the successful planning and hosting of international conventions, corporate meetings, incentive tours, and other business events.

An example was the recent FISM Korea 2018, the World Championship of Magic, which welcomed 3,000 magicians. The event took place from July 9-13 and with the support of the Korea MICE Bureau, digital banners welcomed delegates arriving at Incheon International Airport. In addition, delegates enjoyed cultural experience programmes such as participating in a Korean traditional tea ceremony, making a Korean fan, and wearing the traditional Korean hanbok costume at the on-site tourism information booth. The KTO’s efforts to diversify its source markets for incentive groups is starting to bear fruit.

Thailand’s global gas company, PTT Public Co, is bringing a large-scale incentive group to Korea this year. The 1,312-strong group is visiting South Korea in batches, with the first descending on the destination on September 2, and the rest continuing through to December 3. The first batch experienced a five-day itinerary, where participants visited attractions in Seoul and Busan, such as Haedong Yonggungsa Temple, Jagalchi Fish Market and Gamcheon Cultural Village in the latter destination ■

KINTEX TARGETS MICE MARKET

The Korea International Exhibition & Convention Centre (KINTEX), in the Gyeonggi Province, opened its doors in April 2003 as part of efforts to help globalise South Korea’s meetings industry.

The facility further expanded its capabilities with the addition of a second exhibition centre on the premises in September 2011. Today, KINTEX boasts a total indoor meeting space of over 100,000 sq m, suitable for conventions, exhibitions, and many other kinds of functions.

It not only makes significant contributions to MICE industry growth, but also provides an environmentally-friendly venue for events that is powered by various forms of renewable energy.

International event rooms are equipped with simultaneous interpretation systems across the grand ballroom, both exhibition centres and the event hall ■

STAND No. H40

STAND No. H05

Remarkable growth in Europe led by Southern Mediterranean destinations

Sustained growth in Europe, the world's most visited region, continues unabated

In the first six months of 2018, UNWTO reports 7% growth in inbound tourism in Europe, with 9% growth in Southern Mediterranean countries. On the demand side, France, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation all reported double-digit increases in outbound spending in Europe.

In 2017, arrivals to Europe overall grew 8%, equating to 52 million more travellers than in the previous year. The growth in arrivals was mirrored by receipts which also increased 8%.

Travel demand increased from virtually all Europe's source markets, both inside and outside the region, fuelling inbound growth across Europe. The recovery of the Russian

outbound market in particular, benefitted many destinations, the report said.

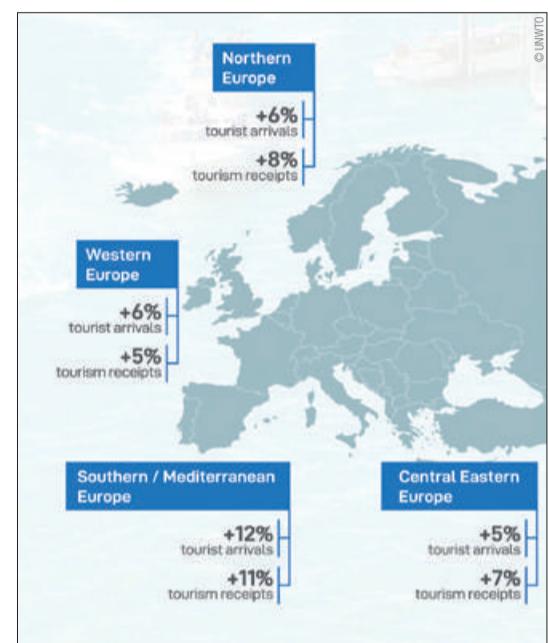
By subregion, Southern Mediterranean Europe led results in arrivals and receipts, driven by the recovery of Turkey and the continued strength of other traditional and emerging destinations. Italy and Spain reported an increase of six million arrivals each. In Western Europe, growth was led by top destination France and Belgium, recovering from the security incidents in previous years. Destinations in Central and Eastern Europe also posted solid growth with a few exceptions, thanks to increased outbound demand from Russia.

All destinations in Northern Europe reported growth,

including the United Kingdom, the subregion's largest destination, despite the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester. The depreciation of the British Pound contributed to the UK's results, making the destination more affordable.

The report highlighted that Spain climbed from third to second place in arrivals and held on to the second position in receipts to become the world's second largest destination by both international tourist arrivals and receipts.

France was in first place in arrivals with 86.9 million visitors, the report states. France occupied third place in receipts, with a 9% increase to US\$60.7 bn.



Latvia targets more Asian visitors

At ITB Asia, Latvia aims to grow the number of South-East Asian visitors



Lasma Lidaka

Head of the Representative Office in Singapore, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (LIAA)

Lasma Lidaka is Head of Representative Office in Singapore for Latvia's Investment and Development Agency. With Latvia celebrating its centenary in 2018, we asked her about her role and the importance in attending ITB Asia.

The Latvian government's Trade, Investment and Tourism Promotion Agency in Singapore has the strategic task of promoting Latvia in Singapore and the Southeast Asian region. My role specifically is to facilitate partnerships between entrepreneurs in Latvia and Singapore as well as South East Asia. In a way, I help to build a "bridge" with the tourism industries of the various countries. This is the second time that Latvia will be participating in ITB Asia

with a stand. There is a growing interest in the Baltic States, especially, Latvia, as it is the most vibrant centre of all three Baltic countries.

Is Latvia a popular destination for Asian tourists?

Latvia is a comparatively unknown destination among Singaporean and South Asian travellers, but it has already gained recognition from other international travellers as "Europe's best kept secret" and "the hidden gem of Europe". It has many different offerings to suit the tastes of diverse travellers as it is a fabulous mix of the old and the new. In Riga, the capital of Latvia, medieval pearls mingle with Art Nouveau gems and top class contemporary architecture. The downtown area of Riga is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List

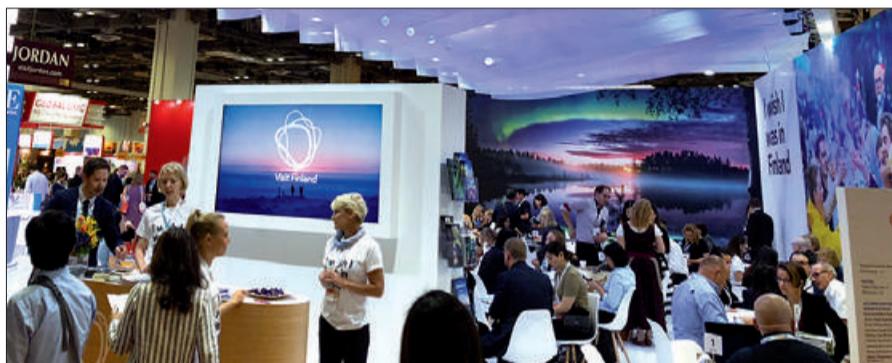
thanks to its medieval dwellings, quaint 19th Century wooden structures and its examples of Art Nouveau architecture.

Can you tell us more about Latvia's nature tourism offer?

Nature is at the heart of Latvia as it is one of the greenest countries in the world. From its beautiful forested landscapes to pristine beaches, from the Baltic Sea to its many rivers and lakes, nature and its changing seasons provide a never-ending source of inspiration for Latvians and its visitors. A major plus point for Latvia is that it is not too crowded with tourists, but at the same time has excellent infrastructure to ensure the very best for your customers and meet all their needs and interests ■

STAND No. L23

FINLAND: growth in overnight stays following ITB Asia StopOver Finland launch



Visit Finland is hosting a delegation of 36 companies at ITB Asia, representing the main regions of Helsinki, Lakeland, Archipelago and Lapland.

Heli Mende, Director of Visit Finland Global Sales Promotion, says: "2017 was a record year in tourism for Finland, as we saw a 17% growth in overnights compared to previous year. Travel from Asia is growing steadily also this year and are especially happy to see how the numbers from South East Asia and Australia have developed."

Two years ago at ITB Asia, Visit Finland, in collaboration with Finnair and other Finnish travel experts, launched StopOver Finland concept, which offers Asian travellers enjoyable experiences and easily accessible packages and services in Helsinki and outside the capital city in Finland's countryside.

Mende says: "The StopOver concept and the attraction of the Northern Lights have proven to be a success. The amount of stopover travellers from Asia to Finland is growing steadily. During first quarter of 2018,

Finland has seen an increase up to 23% in passengers staying more than 24 hours. Travellers from Australia saw a huge increase from 2016 to 2017, altogether 44%. Overall, the total number of overnights spent in Finland by Asian travelers has increased by 2% during the first half of the year."

Mervi Toivonen, Head of the Finland Convention Bureau at Visit Finland, says: "We are seeing more and more interest from the business events sector towards Finland. Our well-organised services and infrastructure with peaceful settings and numerous thrilling activities both in summer and winter are perfect for any event." At the Visit Finland stand, one can find shipping companies, hotel chains, regional organisations and incoming agencies from all four characteristic regions of Finland: adventurous Lapland, laid-back Lakeland, rocky Archipelago and the cosmopolitan area of Helsinki. Additionally, Visit Rovaniemi and the national carrier Finnair are complementing Finland's visibility at ITB Asia ■

STAND No. M05



Vera Lett

Marketing Director,
Tour Partner Group

Tour Partner Group – more than 200 European destination specialists

Tour Partner Group is a group of specialist destination management companies and travel experts from Europe. We asked Vera Lett, the company's Group Marketing Director, to tell us more about the organisation.

We consist of six companies, each with their own specialisation, focus areas and impressive track record. Tour Partner Group brings together more than 200 destination specialists, designing B2B travel for groups, FIT and the MICE industry. By aligning our expertise, we are able to follow a more innovative approach and provide our clients and suppliers with enhanced value.

Are you promoting any particular travel themes?

Our four brands – Hotels & More, Irish Welcome Tours, Trans Nordic Tours and Authentic Vacations – offer a variety of tours for individual travellers (FIT) and groups which differ in their focus. Many

of our products are focused on nature travel, where our end-clients experience the unique nature and culture in our destinations United Kingdom, Ireland, and the Nordic and Baltic countries.

What are you hoping to gain from this year's ITB Asia?

Through ITB Asia we are hoping to expand our network and meet new interesting contacts from various sectors within the travel-value chain. ITB Asia is an opportunity for us to expand our reach in Asia and conduct new business to market our amazing destinations ■

STAND No. K20

DISCOVER LATVIA THE HIDDEN GEM OF NORTHERN EUROPE

Latvia100

LIAA

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020
EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

**MAGNETIC
LATVIA**

From big city sophistication to heartfelt country hospitality, Latvia has a warm welcome for every visitor. Discover ancient castles, impressive architecture from Gothic cathedrals to world class Art Nouveau buildings, wander through stunning valleys or laze on miles of beaches in this Baltic gem. In the capital city Riga, explore its buzzing cafe, restaurant, bar and nightlife scene, as you meander through the city's historical streets. The largest and most exciting metropolis in the Baltics, Riga will inspire you.

Outside the capital, nature takes centre stage in one of the greenest countries in the world. Nature continues to

dazzle in Latvian cuisine, tantalizing the palate with its tastes of purity and authenticity.

Latvia offers travellers a safe, clean and green holiday, without the crowds. But with its excellent infrastructure, Latvia ensures all one's travel needs and interests are answered.

Visit stand L23 and discover Europe's best kept secret!

www.latvia.travel





POLAND: where gastronomy is "capital"

Poland is bursting with authentic experiences... including Krakow's award-winning food scene, which has been named 2019 European Capital of Gastronomy Culture.

One is able to combine city and sea in Gdansk or escape to one of Poland's many unique agro farms that few tourists know about and take to activities like bread and cheese making, fish smoking and horse riding.

As well as its diverse selection of regional cuisines, Poland houses one of the world's oldest beer brewing cultures, brewing some of the world's finest beers for well over a thousand years.

Meanwhile, the country's white sandy beaches located along the Baltic Coast are another great attraction. Head to Sopot, home to the longest wooden pier in Europe, where views stretch out across the Baltic Sea, or discover Jurata, the popular seaside resort along the 35km Hel Peninsula. Visitors can enjoy relaxed sunset walks on the wide sandy beach, or take to sailing, windsurfing or kite-surfing on its blue shores.

Discover the Kashubian region, home to its very own language. Kashubian is the second language spoken after Polish, and since 2005 enjoys legal protection as an official regional language - the only tongue in Poland with this status. Experience local customs, authentic cuisine and enjoy the traditional ways of Polish life ■

STAND No. N43



NEW MOBILE APP FOR LUXEMBOURG

The new Luxembourg Card mobile app is a quick way for tourists to get money off their visits to the country's attractions. It gives either free or reduced-price entry to more than 60 locations and museums and also gives free access to public transport.

With three tourist sites registered as UNESCO World Heritage, a thousand-year-old multicultural capital city and five tourist regions with their very own characteristics, Luxembourg offers a wide variety of tourist attractions.

Despite modernisation over the last few decades, Luxembourg is shaped by tradition and modernity and with natural surroundings. Although the capital is only home to some 115.000 people, with its 150 different nationalities it is very multicultural. They all appreciate and enjoy the incentives of a city, built around a fortress more than 1,000 years ago.

With more than 50 castles, Luxembourg is described as a fairyland destination. The castles range from smaller ones (used as residences) to big ones that can be visited, hired for events or are popular for group tours.

Luxembourg's official cycling network stretches over more than 600km and has an additional 33 mountain bike tracks. Cyclists can enjoy the favourite routes of professional road racing cyclists and those looking for more challenging terrain can explore the designated mountain bike tracks. Exploring the five regions by bike is a great way to visit the country in an authentic way ■

STAND No. L26



Camino Ways Santiago introduces new guided tours for 2019

CaminoWays.com is introducing two new Camino Walk & Coach guided tours for 2019: the Camino del Norte and the Camino Portugues.

Ideal for Camino beginners, the Walk & Coach tours are the perfect introduction to the unique experience that is the Camino de Santiago. The tours give pilgrims the best of both worlds: combining sightseeing in some of the most important towns and monuments along the way with easy two-hour walks in scenic sections of the routes.

Starting in Lisbon, the Camino Portugues Walk & Coach follows the traditional route taken by Portuguese pilgrims to Santiago. With departures in June and October, the groups will visit Portugal's most famous sanctuary in Fatima, Coimbra and Porto. Once in Galicia, the Atlantic city of Vigo and the quaint cobbled streets of Pontevedra

are a must-see for pilgrims on their way to Santiago.

The Camino del Norte, running next May, takes pilgrims along the coast of Northern Spain, starting in Bilbao. Picos de Europa National Park, the Cathedrals Beach and Lugo's Roman Wall are some of the sights along this route, in addition to stunning coastal landscapes and fascinating historic towns.

In 2017, 301,036 pilgrims received their Compostela certificate in Santiago, according to statistics from the Pilgrims Office. This reflects the number of pilgrims walking at least the last 100km of any of the Camino routes and requesting their certificate; or cycling at least the last 200km ■

STAND No. N05



ALL IN ONE KOREA G.MICE Gyeonggi



G.MICE
BUREAU
Gyeonggi MICE Bureau

Gyeonggi MICE Bureau | 5F, 1150, Gyeongsu-daero, Jangan-gu,
Suwon-si, Gyeonggi-do 16207, Korea
Tel : +82-(0)31-259-4786 [Eng] E-mail : gmice@gto.or.kr

