



PATA TO ORGANISE BHUTAN'S FIRST TRAVEL TRADE EVENT

The 3rd annual PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart (AT&RTCM2011) will take place in Paro, Bhutan, February 3-7, 2012. The official theme for the event will be 'High Value Tourism – Low Impact Footprints'. The gathering has the honour of being the first B2B travel trade event ever held in the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Bhutan is a land-locked state at the eastern end of the Himalayas ranging from sub-tropical plains in the south to Himalayan peaks over 7,000 metres in the north. The country has a population of 700,000 and is bordered by India to the west, south and east, and by China to the north.

"We are honoured to host the PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart in Bhutan for the first time," said Kesang Wangdi, Director General of the Tourism Council of Bhutan. "I am confident that such an international conference will help broaden the understanding of tourism and stress its positive impact on societies."

At the event, international, regional and local speakers will share experiences and provide insights into existing and future travel trends in the responsible and adventure tourism sectors. A buyer-seller mart component will target a limited number of relevant, high-quality buyers primarily from Japan, Chinese Taipei, Western Europe, Australia, the US, Canada and the Asian cities of Singapore, Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Bhutan's successful and highly acclaimed tourism policy is, "High Value – Low Impact". It is not interested in mass tourism.

"We welcome all PATA conference delegates to visit Bhutan, where happiness is the ultimate development goal, complemented by a strong commitment to environmental and cultural preservation," said Karma Lotey, Chairman of the Association

of Bhutanese Tour Operators. "We look forward to fruitful interactions that will create meaningful business associations, many friendships and lots of happy memories," he said.

The new event in Bhutan builds on the two successful adventure conferences and marts staged by PATA in 2010 and 2011 in Kathmandu and Pokhara, Nepal. The Bhutan event will also feature a series of pre-conference webinars, activities and interactions with speakers and participants.

"Due to the unique nature of this destination, participation is limited to a select number of delegates," said Bill Calderwood, PATA's Interim CEO. "It is therefore advisable to register as soon as possible to secure your place at what promises to be a unique event in an exceptional destination."

For registration and more event click here, email events@PATA.org or search for #pataat2012 on your preferred social media platform.

NEW EVENT FOR INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN ASIA PACIFIC

The first Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism Conference (PAITC) will take place on 28-30 March 2012 in Darwin, Australia. The objective is to enhance and protect the increasingly important tourism role of Asia Pacific's indigenous people such as hill-tribes, forest dwellers, sea-faring groups and Aboriginal people.

This inaugural event is a joint initiative of the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC), Tourism NT and the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), with the support of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation.

ATEC Chairman, John King OAM, said there were around 370 million indigenous people spread across 70 countries worldwide. "As the world becomes increasingly homogenous, indigenous cultures face a challenge in maintaining their cultural heritage," King said. "Tourism provides a strong driver to restore, protect and promote indigenous culture and it needs to be promoted in a viable and sustainable way."

PAITC AIMS TO:

- establish the role of tourism in indigenous advancement and cultural preservation;
- celebrate indigenous tourism experiences as a vehicle for cultural understanding;
- learn from successful case studies;
- understand and overcome impediments to indigenous tourism development; and
- take indigenous tourism from the margins to the mainstream of tourism.

Interim PATA CEO, Bill Calderwood said the

event was expected to attract hundreds of delegates including indigenous peoples groups, government agencies, associations, operators, NGOs, multi-lateral agencies, universities, research bodies and media.

"The conference is a timely opportunity for the many hundreds of indigenous groups across Asia Pacific to benefit from tourism in a way that respects their culture and heritage," Calderwood said.

The organisers plan to create and adopt the Darwin Declaration on Indigenous Tourism which will establish operational principles for the responsible development of indigenous tourism into the future.

PAITC is working closely with the Northern Territory's Larrakia people to plan the conference. Larrakia artist Yvonne Odegaard created the artwork and logo design for the Conference.

Pre- and post-conference tours organised by Territory Discoveries will allow delegates to experience indigenous tourism activities in the Northern Territory.

For full event information and registration visit www.paitc.com

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EXPEDIA BOOSTS AGENTS PROGRAMME

Expedia expands its Travel Agents Affiliate Programme (TAAP) in an effort to attract more business from travel agents in Singapore. The expansion includes commission on bookings from hotels to other related services.

Expedia Manager – Travel Agent Distribution, Southeast Asia, Charee Guico, was quoted as having said that aside from the 10% commission agents get on bookings of Expedia Special Rates hotels, and less than 5% on other GDS hotels, they will also get 6% for flights booked as a package with another component. Additionally, Expedia will implement incentive tier schemes for agents depending on booking volume. As an agent goes up the tier, they get a higher commission.

Expedia will apply this to the existing 500 agents in Singapore under the TAAP

programme, and will roll it out in Malaysia as well by the end of the year.

UNITED AND CONTINENTAL LAUNCH UNITED CLUB

United and Continental further integrate their products and services with the rebranding of the name of its airport lounges. United Club is the result of the rebranding of United's Red Carpet Club and Continental's Presidents Club.

There are more than 50 United Club lounges in 39 airports worldwide that offer members and their guests complimentary bar service, light snacks and beverages; business amenities such as Wi-Fi, conference rooms and workstations; and personalised assistance with reservations, seat selection, upgrades and boarding passes. The remodeled clubs will also soon provide additional business-friendly features that are of value to customers which include more workstations for travellers to be more productive.

United Clubs are accessible for Red Carpet Club and Presidents Club members. Members also have access to Star Alliance departure lounges when travelling on a Star Alliance member carrier. There are a variety of United Club membership options, with annual memberships starting at US\$495. For more information, visit united.com/unitedclub and continental.com/unitedclub.



JAL BAGS DESIGN AWARDS

Japan Airlines (JAL) won three Good Design Awards from the Japan Institute of Design Promotion (JDP).

The awards were for the Bamboo wheelchairs used at select airports, which allows customers to circumvent the inconvenience of getting up from the wheelchair when going through security

metal detectors; JAL's Sky Recliner seat fitted in Executive Class on certain international routes, the upholstery of which is made of a special lightweight material, contributing to JAL's efforts to reduce weight onboard and thereby reduce fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions; and the food tray mat with scenic images served onboard JAL flights to customers a sense of space in the cabin and also familiarity with the origin and destination of the flight.

These three were among 1,112 items identified from 3,162 eligible entries to garner recognition from JDP.

AMADEUS TEAMS UP WITH CORNERSTONE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Amadeus has announced its partnership with Cornerstone Information Systems. The partnership allows for Amadeus to become an official global distributor of two of Cornerstone's most effective solutions, Amadeus iBank and Amadeus iQCX, which will help travel agents save time, money and improve the quality of their data reporting and their reservations.

Amadeus Vice President for Multinational Business & Corporate Travel, Albert Pozo, was quoted as having said that business travel agents and travel managers urgently need to implement smart technology to improve the time-consuming and costly manual aspects of the reservation management process, as well as gain access to relevant information to manage and measure travel programmes more effectively. Pozo added that Amadeus is now pleased to be able to provide solutions that effectively address these issues thanks to our partnership with Cornerstone, which will allow customers to have access to exceptional value at a global level.

AUSTRALIA AND JAPAN SHARE OPEN SKIES

Australia and Japan have signed an open skies agreement. The agreement enables unrestricted number of direct flights between Australia and Tokyo's Haneda Airport. The agreement indicates that the open skies agreement includes flights between all Australian and Japanese airports with the exception of Tokyo's Narita Airport. Unrestricted access by carriers between Australia and Narita Airport is set to be implemented by 2013.

Australia Minister for Tourism Martin

Ferguson was quoted as having said that the extra seats between Japan and Australia would help Japan on its recovery post-quake as well as build a market that spends up to US\$1.2 billion in Australia every year. Ferguson added that these new arrangements will allow both countries' airlines to capitalise on the continuing growth in passenger numbers and the business opportunities that will arise from tourism, trade and development in the region.

SRI LANKA TO IMPLEMENT ONLINE VISA APPLICATION

Starting in early 2012, Sri Lanka's online visa application system for visitors will come into effect.

Immigration and Emigration Department Controller General, Chulananda Perera, said that the new Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system will enable travellers to obtain online visa approval within 24 hours of submitting an application for short-term stays. A visa-processing fee of US\$50 will be imposed on all travellers for short stays up to 30 days and US\$75 for visa on arrival (VOA). The fees vary for extended stays.

Additionally, all passengers transiting through Sri Lanka will have to pay US\$25 processing fee for a visa. In the past, there were no visas or fees required for transit passengers.

TOURISM MALAYSIA BUILDS PRESENCE IN NEW ZEALAND

Tourism Malaysia has opened an office in Auckland, New Zealand to further promote the country to New Zealanders. Tourist arrivals from New Zealand to Malaysia have increased by 47% year-on-year from April to June.

Tourism Malaysia Deputy Minister of Tourism, Dr James Dawos Mamit was quoted as having said that Malaysia faces competition from more traditional 'Kiwi' holiday destinations such as Australia and the Pacific Islands but it has become more attractive because of its easy accessibility and a favourable exchange rate, which makes it a value-for-money destination. Mamit added that the launch of flights from Auckland and Christchurch to Kuala Lumpur via low-cost carriers JetStar and AirAsia has been a boost to the industry.

Tourism Malaysia is set to reinforce promotional and marketing campaigns that focus on promoting its main tourism products as well as use major events and festivals to attract more New Zealanders to visit the country.



GREEN GLOBE CERTIFICATION PARTNERS WITH GREEN GROWTH

Green Globe Certification has appointed Green Growth as its new preferred partner for Portugal and Spain.

Green Globe Certification CEO Guido Bauer was quoted as having said that he is pleased to welcome Daniel Frey and his company, Green Growth, as the new Green Globe Partner for Portugal and Spain. Bauer added that Daniel and his company Green Growth will cover these two important countries, which are both leading tourism destinations and are looking to engage in a recognised programme such as Green Globe.

STARWOOD TO OPEN NAKA ISLAND RESORT

Starwood Hotels & Resorts announced the launch of its new boutique resort in Phuket, the Naka Island, in November. The new resort is located on Naka Yai Island, 25 minutes away from the Phuket International Airport, and can be reached via a five-minute speedboat ride.

The boutique resort features 67, 450-square-metre villas with open-air bathrooms, private plunge pools and sala pavilions. Each guest will enjoy the services of the Experience Guide – a personal butler, concierge and guest rooms officer rolled into one.

Other facilities include a spa, a multi-function pavilion and multiple scenic outdoor locations as well as an array of dining options, including an all-day restaurant, an open beachside grill house, and a wine cellar and bar.



CGH EARTH LAUNCHES EXCLUSIVE RESORT IN KERALA

CGH Earth, Kerala-based resort developer focusing on eco-friendly properties, has opened the Chittoor Kottaram. The new exclusive three-bedroom resort is located in Cheranellor, 45 minutes away from Ernakulam in Kochi City.

The property used to be the palace of the Rajah of Kochi and was originally built in 1898. Leased by CGH Earth from a descendant of the royal family, the palace-turned-resort is now available for exclusive use of guests, with a maximum of six and only one booking at a time is accepted.

Guests will arrive by boat and can enjoy private Ayurveda treatments as well as savour traditional royal vegetarian cuisine. The Chittoor Kottaram charges US\$1,000 for two nights and includes the exclusive use of the entire resort, village walk and temple activities, and the private use of the boat.

ABACUS LAUNCHES ABACUS TRIPPLAN

Abacus International has introduced the Abacus TripPlan, an integrated travel approval and management solution for the Asian enterprise.

The Abacus TripPlan allows trip planning and approval to be integrated and streamlined by enabling supervisors to be automatically notified of new trip requests that they can then approve with a single-touch – anytime, anywhere, through any device. Abacus International Vice President of Marketing Brett Henry told the press that Abacus TripPlan is a ready-to-go solution that enables corporations to arrange and manage all their travel arrangements in a single platform, ensuring higher organisation productivity. Henry added that Abacus TripPlan can help corporations drive employees towards responsible travel behaviour and optimise the organisation's travel expenditure.

IHG EXPANDS HOLIDAY INN BRAND IN THAILAND

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) grows its Holiday Inn brand in Thailand with the launch of its second property in Phuket and fourth in Thailand, the Holiday Inn Resort Phuket Mai Khao Beach. The hotel group is also set to open Holiday Inn Express Phuket Patong Beach Central in 2013.

The new Holiday Inn in Phuket, located on the northwest coast of Phuket, features 246 rooms, a beachfront infinity pool, a resort leisure centre, a fitness centre and a Tea Tree Spa. IHG Brand Director for Asia Australasia was quoted as having said that the Holiday Inn portfolio is expanding rapidly in the region with 28 hotels in the pipeline for the next three years.

Aside from the Holiday Inn Resort Phuket Mai Khao Beach and the Holiday Inn Express Phuket Patong Beach Central, IHG also have another two being developed in Bangkok's Sukhumvit area and Pattaya in Chonburi province.



INTERNATIONAL VISA CARDHOLDERS SPEND MORE IN CHINA

Visa's recently released Tourism Outlook: China indicated an increase of 23% year-on-year to US\$4.7 billion in spending by international Visa cardholders in China. Visa cardholders from the United States remain the biggest spenders in China, followed by the Japanese and Hong Kong nationals.

The publication also shows that over the last five years, spending by international visitors on Visa cards in China reached US\$20.8 billion with an average annual spend across the five-year period of US\$4.2 billion. Visa Group Country Manager for North Asia, Chris Clark, was quoted as having said that in China they have seen continued rapid economic growth and the tourism market in particular, due to rising incomes and increasing demand for travel. Clark added that they believe that as tourism grows, China can expect the effects of tourism spending to bring even more benefit to the labour market and its economy as a whole.

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WTM'S MERIDIAN CLUB INVITES ASIAN BUYERS TO JOIN

World Travel Market's Meridian Club, the only global buyers group for the travel and tourism industry, is inviting Asian buyers to join.

Meridian Club is WTM's exclusive membership club for senior buyers with direct responsibility for purchasing travel products, from air travel to hotels, tours to technology. WTM 2010 saw more than 8,500 Meridian Club members attend the event, helping it to generate a record £1,425 million in industry deals.

Members can work in the inbound, outbound or domestic travel sectors. Public and private sector buyers are equally welcome.

Benefits on site at WTM include Speed Networking sessions and exclusive Meridian Club lounges, situated on the exhibition floor and access to private meeting rooms and fast-track cloakroom. Other benefits include annual discounts on trade conferences and opportunities to attend Meridian Club Think Tanks on key issues.

There is a strict selection process in place to ensure that only truly senior buyers are allowed to join. To apply, buyers should visit www.wtmlondon.com



PATA GOLD AWARDS 2012 NOW OPEN

Travel industry organisations and individuals who have made outstanding contributions to successfully develop and promote travel and tourism in Asia Pacific can now submit entries to the 2012 Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Awards. The winners' programme will be part of PATA Annual Meeting in Putrajaya, Malaysia, April 20-23, 2012.

PATA Interim CEO Bill Calderwood said: "The PATA Gold Awards put the spotlight on tourism innovation and excellence. No matter if you are an individual or a travel-related company or organisation, your achievements will be recognised by worldwide media exposure."

The PATA Gold Awards are open to PATA members and non-members. Winners attract valuable media coverage in various PATA communications channels including PATA e-newsletters, press releases, PATA Compass magazine and social media. Winners will be entitled to leverage the prestigious PATA Gold Awards 2012 logo on their websites and collaterals. The highlights of the winning entries will be on display at the Annual Meeting for delegates to enjoy. Award recipients will be featured in the winners' showcase souvenir CD.

The PATA Gold Awards 2012 are open for submission until December 15, 2011. Judged by panels of experts, the Gold Awards recognise exceptional achievement in six categories:

- 1) Marketing campaign (six Gold Awards and one Grand Award)
- 2) Environment (three Gold Awards and one Grand Award)
- 3) Heritage and Culture (two Gold Awards and one Grand Award)
- 4) Education and Training (one Gold Award and one Grand Award)
- 5) Marketing Media (nine Gold Awards)
- 6) Travel Journalism (four Gold Awards)

In total, PATA will present up to 26 PATA Gold Awards and four elite PATA Grand Awards at a special luncheon on April 22 at the Putrajaya Marriott Hotel, Malaysia.

Sponsored by the Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO) for the past 17 years, the PATA Gold Awards set industry standards for excellence and innovation.

Joao Manuel Costa Antunes, Director, MGTO, said: "We are proud to be the long-standing sponsor for this prestigious awards programme. We strongly encourage our industry stakeholders to take this opportunity to 'go for gold' with the PATA Gold Awards 2012. We look forward to seeing more outstanding projects from diverse backgrounds for the sustainable development and promotion of the travel and tourism industry."

PATA Gold Awards details, entry forms and information about past winners are available at www.PATA.org/goldawards.