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NEWS FOR ASIA'S TRAVEL PLANNERS

NEWS UPDATES at www.ttrweekly.com









### AirAsia introduces trial flights to China

AirAsia Thailand (flight code FD) will launch direct flights to China and Hong Kong from its Bangkok Don Mueang airport hub starting 7 August.

Initially, the low-cost airline will fly a weekly service but hopes to increase flights to twice a week in September and three times weekly in October.

### Travel Meet Asia returns in 2023

Travel Meet Asia returns in June 2023 after a two-year pause, the organiser Messe Berlin Singapore confirmed this week.

Travel Meet Asia (TMA), originally sporting a conference and networking format, made its debut in 2019 at regional locations in Asia.

Now Messe Berlin Singapore says TMA will return as a fullfledged B2B tradeshow with exhibitions, conferences and networking opportunities for the travel trade.

### YouTrip launches inapp travel insurance

Singapore's neobank, YouTrip, announced Monday it has launched a new travel insurance product on its multi-currency app for all local users.

Rolled out in conjunction with an online insurance provider, HL Assurance (HLAS), travellers can now purchase a single-trip policy directly on the YouTrip app with a 65% saving on their plan. Users are guaranteed a 15% cashback and up to 50% in additional savings on each single-trip policy.

### Cross Hotels & Resorts promotes executives

Cross Hotels & Resorts follows recent hotel signings by strengthening its executive team as it gears up for expansion in the Asia Pacific.

### Singapore welcomes first port calls

Southeast Asia welcomed its first cruise port call in over two years when Royal Caribbean's (RCI) Spectrum of the Seas arrived at Malaysia's Port Klang on 1 July.

It was followed closely by Resorts World Cruises' Genting Dream, which will call at Indonesia's Batam and Bintan on 2 July. Both cruise ships are based out of Singapore.

### Wyndham expands Garden brand in Japan

Wyndham Destinations Japan has signed off on an agreement to manage Wyndham Garden Sapporo Odori, making it the second Wyndham Garden hotel to open in Japan after the hotel group opened the 95-room Wyndham Garden Nagaizumi in 2020.

Wyndham Destinations Japan is managing the 132-room property in a partnership with the building owner, JR West Real Estate & Development Company and lessee.

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# **Embark with NCL premieres 1 July**

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), the innovator in global cruise travel with a 55-year history of breaking boundaries, announced Thursday the next season of its visual storytelling platform, "EMBARK with NCL," with the first episode, "Caribbean Adventures," premiering Friday, 1 July 2022 at 0800 SGT at www.ncl.com/ embark and on Facebook. Following its successful first season, which garnered



nearly three million views and showcased the NCL's fierce resiliency as it returned to cruising after a 500-day pause, this second season will focus on the highcalibre offerings onboard and ashore, as well as the most guestfavoured destinations, beginning with the Caribbean. In addition, American television personality and world traveller Zay Harding will bring viewers along this season as the host of EMBARK, chronicling his cruise adventures around the globe.

"EMBARK with NCL allows us to visually showcase the incredible experiences we offer across our dynamic fleet, as well as the unforgettable vacation moments awaiting our guests at some of the most bucketlist-worthy destinations around the world," said Harry Sommer, president and CEO of Norwegian Cruise Line. "This season, our guests will be able to discover, or rediscover, some of their favourite places and get a sneak peek into the future of NCL with episodes dedicated to our next best-in-class ship, Norwegian Prima."

In season two, guests will have a front-row seat to the onboard experience and the over 300 incredible destinations visited by NCL each year.

"What's most exciting about this new season is the relevancy of the content to travellers who may not be familiar with cruising," said Christine Da food, entertainment, and the incredible places we visit. We're happy to bring all of the benefits and joy of cruising to anyone who wants to see the world."

This season, guests are invited to discover the majestic islands of Hawaii when Harding sets sail aboard NCL's Pride of America, the only ship to offer roundtrip inter-island voyages from Honolulu. They will also witness NCL's culinary champions battle it out in the kitchen in the "Great Cruise Cookoff" episode for a chance to have their creations featured aboard the highly anticipated Norwegian Prima. In the "Evolution of Innovation" episode, guests will celebrate the brand's storied history as well as glimpse its future as it prepares to launch its next class of ships. In the season finale. Harding travels to Reykjavik, Iceland, to



Silva, SVP of Branding and Communications of Norwegian Cruise Line. "Season one provided us with an opportunity to connect with loyal guests, as well as those who know us and missed being at sea with us. Season two is all about the experience... about the attend the event of the season, the Christening of Norwegian Prima. He will bring viewers along for this history-making celebration, where godmother Katy Perry will not only fulfil the longstanding maritime tradition of blessing and officially naming Full story.

## Philippines strengthens presence for global MICE; expands horizons in 2022 IMEX Frankfurt

# PHILIPPINES PHILIPPINES PHILIPPINES

In a bid to strengthen the Philippines' presence in the international MICE (Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conventions, and Exhibitions) scene, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines and the Department of Tourism (DOT) participated in the 2022 IMEX in Messe Frankfurt, Germany held from 31 May to 02 June 2022.

A major trade fair for events and incentive travel, IMEX brought together worldwide roster of top MICE suppliers and key tourism industry players for three-day educational sessions, networking functions, business appointments and exhibition showcases.



(L-R) Mr. Arnold T. Gonzales, MICE Department Manager, Tourism Promotions Board Philippines; Mr. Oliver Graue, Editor-in-Chief, FVW Biz Travel; Ms. Margarita Patricia R. Valdes, Tourism Attaché for Central and Eastern Europe, Philippine Department of Tourism

The Philippine delegation to the 2022 IMEX Frankfurt included exhibitors from hotels and resorts, convention venues, meetings and event management companies together with association buyers, destination management specialists, conference organizers, and incentive travel tour operators. This year's participation generated an estimated revenue of about Php 210 million.

As borders reopen and travel restrictions ease, the country looks forward to welcoming more foreign business travelers back to its borders, marking the end of the country's nearly two-year border closure due to the restrictions posed by the pandemic.

The MICE sector is poised to resume its dynamic business activities and rebuild its pre-pandemic vigor now that borders have reopened across the globe. As countries regain confidence in business travels, the Philippines has bolstered its MICE readiness efforts, coupled with government programs to ensure seamless and authentic travel experience to MICE organizers and business travelers.

Recently, the Philippines has set a standard for future MICE events with its successful hosting of the 21st World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Global Summit wherein global industry leaders and professionals described the Philippines' hosting as an "impactful summit" and was also lauded for its "extraordinary Philippine welcome" and warm Filipino hospitality.

#### Government programs: a big boost to PH tourism recovery

Government-initiated promotional campaigns and incentive schemes pave the way to more collaborative and sustained efforts in regenerating the Philippine MICE industry. In 2021, the TPB Philippines rolled out the enhanced MICE Plus Program, a set of initiatives and privileges that the TPB offers to boost the MICE industry by encouraging local and foreign MICE organizers to stage events in the Philippines.

The program also allows the TPB to offer its expertise through a wide range of services and business solutions from technical assistance on event planning to post-event city tours. Additional incentives include venue rental support, event technology solutions (for virtual and hybrid events), and the provision of care kits for delegates.

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Moreover, the Philippines also joins the ATA Carnet System which took effect on 17 April 2022. It is seen to benefit micro, small, and medium sized enterprises participating in international trade fairs and similar events as it grants relief from import duties and taxes of goods for one year and streamlines customs procedures for professional equipment and personal goods to be used in trade fairs, shows, and exhibitions. ATA Carnet System is recognized in 87 countries and territories worldwide.

Backed by government programs, the Philippine tourism industry has raised its game and recalibrated its efforts to cater to the shifting demands of the new normal. Now that borders have reopened with safety and health protocols in place, the Philippines is more than ready to welcome MICE organizers to its borders.



Ms. Sandra Zurek, Managing Director of MICE Tip Austria's dialogue with DOT and TPB officials

#### ABOUT TPB

An attached agency of the Department of Tourism, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) exists to market and promote the Philippines domestically and internationally as a world-class tourism and MICE destination, in strategic partnership with private and public stakeholders to deliver a unique highvalue experience for visitors, significantly contributing to increased arrivals, receipts, and investments to the country. For more information, please visit www.tob.gov.ph.







# My Go Go Sabah 2.0 back on the air

Sabah Tourism Board (STB) is collaborating with MY Sabah, a Malaysian-Chinese language radio station managed by Astro Radio Sdn. Bhd, through the My Go Go Sabah 2.0 campaign.

The first campaign, My Go Go Sabah, showcased MY Sabah radio announcers visiting Kudat, Kundasang and Kota Belud. The video series was uploaded in October 2021 on their Facebook page (@myfmsabah) and garnered more than 71.2K views.

My Go Go Sabah 2.0 is back again this year featuring three more Sabah destinations; Semporna, Tambunan-Keningau-Tenom and Tuaran-Tamparuli-Kiulu. The video series is scheduled to be on their Facebook page this week.

In addition to the Facebook promotion, MY Sabah will be promoting the campaign on-air. To further entice their listeners, a contest will be conducted on their radio platform from 25 to 29 July with a chance to win five travel vouchers worth MYR500 each sponsored by Sabah Tourism Board.

STB CEO Noredah Othman said that the campaign produced in the Chinese language features a good combination of tourism ideas, including Community Based Tourism.

"We use many media platforms to reach different



audiences, and a combination of radio and social media is equally effective. Sabah will also be featured this weekend at MITM Kuala Lumpur, Mid Valley." She added.

For more information on Sabah visit: <u>www.sabahtourism.</u> <u>com</u>.



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# Outrigger Maldives wins best hideaway title

Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort has earned the title of "Best Luxury Hideaway Resort in the Maldives, 2022" in this year's Luxury Lifestyle Awards.

The visually stunning property comprises a collection of 81 luxury villas in five categories, including beach, pool and duplex accommodations, as well as coveted overwater bungalows.

"Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru sparkles with breathtakingly beautiful nature alongside elegant accommodations. We are so proud that our delightful hideaway has already been recognised by the experts from Luxury Lifestyle Awards," said John Allanson, General Manager of the property.

"The Outrigger Way commitment to authentically caring for our guests, alongside the bewitching allure of our setting, has been apparent to patrons and judges alike," he said.

Known for its uninterrupted views of white sandy beaches and a seemingly endless turquoise lagoon, Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort





recently underwent extensive modernisation. It is now poised to be among the Maldives' most sought-after vacation experiences.

Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru has all of the amenities high-end guests expect: private seaplane transfers, a diverse array of quality food and beverage outlets, plush full-spa service, a chic retail boutique, vow renewals, PADI dive centre, abundant watersports, and more.

Marine conservation and awareness building are a key part of the resort operations, which align with Outrigger's ZONE (OZONE), the company's long-established global marine conservation and environmental care initiative.

The resort's marine biologist, Lynn Kessler, leads guests on snorkel and scuba trips each day. She collects data on manta rays, whale sharks and turtles, which helps Maldives-based NGOs in their marine conservation work. She also gives marine wildlife presentations to Outrigger guests twice a week and is connected with a coral planting program.

"Being environmentally responsible and leading by example is key to The Outrigger Way – caring for our hosts, our guests and our place," said Mr Allanson.

Expert judges at Luxury Lifestyle Awards took these factors, and more, into consideration before giving the award.

#### ABOUT OUTRIGGER MALDIVES MAAFUSHIVARU RESORT

Discover a unique Island Experience in the Indian Ocean, offering small island charm with contemporary architecture and bespoke finishing touches. In the



pristine South Ari Atoll, the 5-star Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort is a 25-minute seaplane journey from Male. It offers 81 villas in five distinct styles plus four restaurants, bars and cafes, a spa, a library lounge, a boutique, an airport lounge and transfers. More at <u>Outrigger.com</u>



# Sailing on calmer waters



Globally, cruise demand is growing daily. Guests are returning with a bigger appetite for immersive and authentic experiences, premium cabins and longer cruises.

With much of the world now open to fully vaccinated people and with plenty of unused annual leave, travellers are making up for lost time by embracing the world around them once more, choosing to travel for longer, spend more and visit all the places they have been unable to in recent years.

Now, as many markets in Asia start to reduce restrictions and re-open to travel, the cruise industry is perfectly poised to capitalise on the pent-up demand locally too.

After 500 days on pause, we began our 'great cruise comeback' on 25 July 2021 with "Where to next for the cruise industry? Braydon Holland, Senior Director Asia, Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), shares insights on the 'great comeback' and the voyage from choppy to calmer waters. "

Norwegian Jade out of Athens. It was an emotional moment for us and our crew, who hail from over 100 nationalities worldwide. They were so happy to be back at work, and the positivity and excitement were truly palpable.

Our 17-ship fleet is now fully operational, and today we're counting down to the first new class of ship for our brand in a decade, the Prima Class. When Norwegian Prima launches in August this year, she will lay claim to the title of the most spacious new ship and the highest staff-guest ratio in her competitive set. She will be the first of six new ships to be launched over six years; a construction schedule we remained committed to throughout the pandemic – a testament to our belief that the Prima Class will truly be a gamechanger for our guests and the industry.

We welcome the innovations and pace of change that has been brought about by the



pandemic, and we are glad to see the industry sail through these choppy waters to enjoy new, blue horizons that await travellers.

#### CRUISING HABITS POST-PANDEMIC

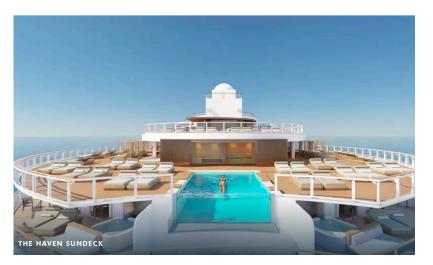
The needs and preferences of cruise-goers were already evolving even before the pandemic – from having increased expectations around the choice and quality of dining options available on board to the range of amenities, activities and entertainment to choose from; as well as the depth of destination immersion they are seeking within each itinerary.

However, the pandemic accelerated the pace of some of these changes and introduced

#### THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

The post-pandemic pursuit of freedom buoyed by a remote working culture means that travellers have the power to choose how they want to spend their holidays. They are seeking itineraries that offer opportunities to enjoy experiences that they could not indulge in for the past two years.

That is why the appeal of longer cruise holidays is going from strength to strength. Today's cruise guest is seeking out more deeply immersive travel experiences, and after having their wings clipped for so long, they are willing to spend longer doing so. They are making up for lost time, seeking



a range of new demands from consumers, particularly in the health and safety space. Consequently, we've seen rapid innovation within the industry as cruise lines were creatively tasked with introducing new ways of facilitating things like contactless check-in and ensuring the quality of air filtration throughout the ship – two changes guests on NCL ships will find long outlast the pandemic given the positive impact they continue to have on our guests' experiences.

out holidays that visit multiple destinations – a trend that cruising is perfectly positioned to capitalise on, arriving at a new destination each day with all the benefits of unpacking just once.

At NCL, we're responding by delivering itineraries that are port-rich with minimal sea days, together with longer stays and overnight calls for destinations where nightlife abounds. For example, in Asia when Norwegian Jewel sails the region from October 2023, she will offer a collection of 10-12-day voyages



Author: Braydon Holland, Senior Director Asia, Norwegian Cruise Line

that feature no more than two sea days per cruise, many of which are open-jaw, allowing guests to book-end their cruise with land packages that extend their stay. And at up to 21-days in length, our suite of Extraordinary Journeys is growing in popularity – combining lesser-known ports with bucket-list destinations that are not on any typical cruise itinerary, such as Tahiti, Antarctica and Namibia.

For guests from Asia in particular, cruising offers the ultimate way to tap into the growing trend of travelling together as a group or multigenerational family; with a range of accommodation options available to suit every taste and budget; the ability to explore on shore separately; before coming together as a family at dinnertime in a new restaurant each evening.

One of the most significant trends we see is the increasing demand for freedom and flexibility from our guests to holiday their way. As the pioneer of Freestyle Cruising, NCL offers cruise-goers an experience tailored exactly to their desires, all with no schedule to follow except their own. Full story.



# Tourism chief on listening tours

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco is encouraging the DOT regional offices in the Visayas and Mindanao to reach out to local government units and stakeholders to ensure the alignment of tourism development initiatives.

In the first leg of her 'listening tours' as tourism chief, Secretary Frasco met with the top officials of DOT Region 6 (Western Visayas), Region 7 (Central Visayas), Region 8 (Eastern Visayas) Region 9 (Zamboanga Peninsula), Region 10 (Northern Mindanao), Region 11 (Davao Region), Region 12 (SOCKSARGEN), and Region 13 (CARAGA) at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Cebu, last week.

"Moving forward, I would want for us, in the same way, that I am reaching out to you, to continuously reach out to our local government officials and local stakeholders because I think that the model for that - which has been Cebu – has proven very successful that even throughout the pandemic, domestic tourism still flourished because DOT Region, the Provincial Government, local government officials, and private stakeholders were all aligned. And it is this alignment that we need across all regions that will spell the success of our endeavours in the Department," said Secretary Frasco.

"The reality is that the success or failure of our industry rests in the success or failure of our regions because this is where our tourist destinations are," she stressed.

To recall, Frasco announced



that she would embark on "listening tours" to hear for herself the challenges and problems that besiege the various regions and tourism stakeholders. Additionally, through the conduct of the tour, the Secretary hopes to start the process of assessing the contemporary challenges in the tourism sector. Fund availability and utilisation, tourism infrastructure and transportation were among the issues raised during the discussions with the regional offices.

Frasco has enjoined the consolidation and review of work and financial plans of the Department's regional offices for the efficient utilisation of the Department's budget.

Pursuing her direction towards promoting better access to tourism destinations, Frasco also assessed the possibility of developing more air and seaports and additional routes to create more convenient connections for domestic and international visitors.

"I'm hopeful as well that you would be open to the innovations we wish to introduce to the Department if only to fulfil our President's vision to equalise opportunities for tourism promotion and development across the Philippines. On the one hand, to maximise the potential of our already wellknown tourist sites and, on the other hand, to further develop areas that have not necessarily been given equal attention", the tourism chief enthused.

All officials who attended the meeting expressed their appreciation for the consultation process initiated by Frasco. "We are optimistic under this administration, seeing that our Secretary is paying close attention to the concerns on the ground. We can feel that she is serious and sincere about improving tourism governance and continuing collaboration with the LGUs," DOT-Region 10 Director Marie Elaine Unchuan added.

"We are ecstatic about this transition because we have a Secretary who listens. It is important for us to have a Secretary who supports and understands the issues faced by the regions," said Director Tanya



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# Changi Airport launches interactive gallery

Changi Airport has launched the "Hello, Changi Precinct" gallery at Terminal 3 (T3), kicking off an initiative to drive awareness of the Changi Precinct, which includes areas in and surrounding Changi Airport, such as Pulau Ubin, Pasir Ris, Tampines, Bedok and East Coast Park.

#### Explore the "Hello, Changi Precinct" gallery

Step into the exciting world of Changi Precinct at T3 Departure Hall where visitors can pose with iconic cultural landmarks. The



Featuring interactive elements and photo spots modelled after iconic sights and sounds in the Changi Precinct, visitors can pose for photos and discover fun facts across seven themed zones. As part of the initiative, Changi has also launched two new exploration tours – My Changi Airport Tour and My Changi Village Heritage Tour – in partnership with MyCommunity, a local non-profit organisation that celebrates Singapore's heritage and culture through organising tours, programmes and exhibitions.

journey begins at the Changi Airport zone, where visitors can take photos with models of various popular spots at the airport, such as Jewel Changi Airport and the well-loved Terminal 2 flight information flip-board.

Moving through seven different zones, visitors can learn interesting nuggets and stories of Siglap in the drawers of an oldschool barbershop, play a digital arcade game at an HDB void deck and 'watermelon' playground, and jump onboard a bumboat that brings visitors through the history of Pulau Ubin and the eastern coast of Singapore.

#### Hear the stories of Changi Airport through a guided tour

A newly curated tour of Changi Airport traces the development of the airport from its humble origins through the stories of airport staff and visitors. The tour begins in Terminal 1 and guides participants to discover the airport's recreational spaces, artwork installations, designs, and heritage businesses. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the airport while exchanging stories with airport staff they meet along the tour, giving them a peek into behind-the-scenes operations that keep Changi Airport running, as well as intriguing anecdotes of people who have worked and visited Changi Airport from the past to the present.

#### Experience Changi Precinct through activities

In addition to the two new tours, visitors can also sign up for six other tours running till October, each exploring a key area of the Changi Precinct such as Bedok, Pulau Ubin and Pasir Ris.

Tour prices start from S\$20 per person. Please refer to the Annex for more details on the tours.

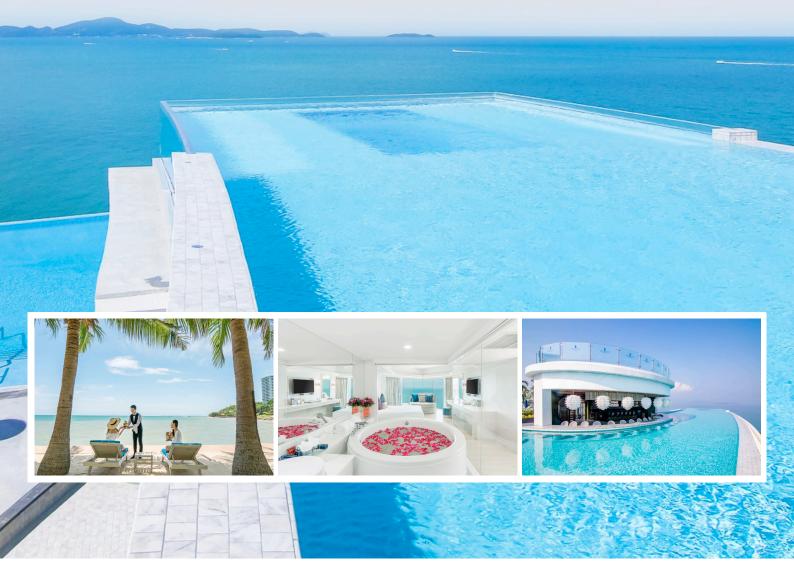
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