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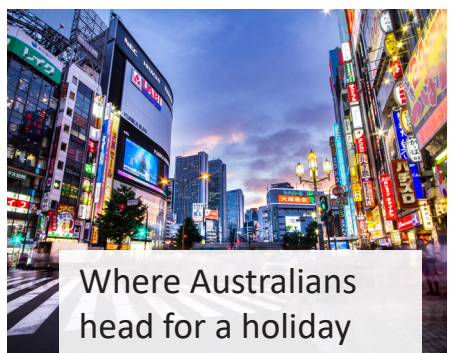
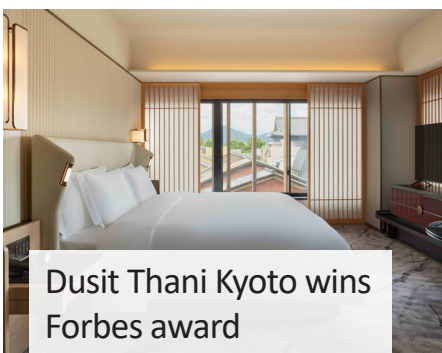
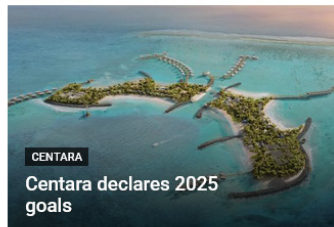
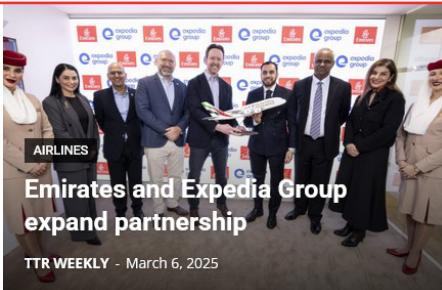
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NEWS FOR ASIA'S TRAVEL PLANNERS

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## MATTA Fair introduces B2B Connect

Malaysia's most prominent international travel show, The National MATTA Fair, will convene from 18 to 20 April 2025 for its 56th edition at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre (MITEC) in Kuala Lumpur.

The Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) organises the travel fair biannually in April and September...

## Air India and Virgin Australia sign codeshare

Air India and Virgin Australia have signed off on a new codeshare partnership that significantly boosts connectivity and the ease of travelling between India and Australia.

The codeshare agreement enables Air India to place its 'AI' code on flights operated by Virgin Australia...

## Trip.com names Next Big Travel Trends

The Trip.com Group released its forward-looking report, Momentum 2025 on Wednesday, tagged 'Travel's Next Big Trends' as the global travel industry strives to reinvent itself.

Based on insights from over 6,000 travellers across six Asia-Pacific markets...

## Michelin Guide arrives in Manila 2026

The Michelin Guide has arrived in the Philippines, setting its sights on Manila and its neighbouring localities plus Cebu, for its highly anticipated 2026 debut.

Last week, Michelin Guide confirmed its inspectors were already exploring the country's vibrant dining scene, starting with bustling Metro Manila...

## Resort World Cruises revives iconic brands

Resorts World Cruises confirms the return of two of Asia's iconic cruise brands – StarCruises (a refreshed version of the previous Star Cruises brand) and Dream Cruises.

The Resorts World Cruises brand, which was used to restart cruising in Asia after the Covid pandemic, will return...

## Codeshare fares open for Lufthansa Group airlines

Italian-based ITA Airways announces the launch of ticket sales for codeshare flights with five airlines from the Lufthansa Group: Lufthansa, SWISS, Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, and Air Dolomiti, for travel starting 30 March.

With these codeshare agreements, passengers can...



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# Sarawak rolls out the red carpet for agents

Tourism Malaysia, with the Sarawak Tourism Board, Business Events Sarawak, and the Sarawak Trade and Tourism Office Singapore, conducted a business-to-business (B2B) seminar earlier this week connecting local



tourism industry players with Singaporean travel agents.

It was part of the “Meet-The-Experts” programme that hosted 18 travel agents from Singapore and highlighted a four-day, three-night familiarisation trip (FAM Trip) to Sibu, showcasing Sarawak’s rich cultural heritage, diverse ethnic communities and local cuisine.



The B@B seminar held at the Riverside Majestic Hotel Puteri Wing gave the 18 travel agents from Singapore an opportunity to network with 25 local representatives, including travel agents, tourism product owners and hoteliers.

The newly appointed Director of Tourism Malaysia director for Sarawak, Rubiah Tul Adwiyah Haji Md Yusof, officially opened the programme. In her address, she emphasised the importance of collaboration and innovation in promoting Sarawak as a premier travel destination.

“We anticipate this initiative will lead

to the development of compelling travel packages and promotions that highlight Sarawak as a must-visit destination for Singaporeans, especially given the 26 weekly flights currently operating between Singapore and Sarawak.

The programme presented responsible tourism experiences that are attractive for Singaporean tourists and will be part of the promotions for the upcoming Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026).

Beyond the B2B sessions, the FAM trip to Sibu allows participants to immerse themselves in the Borneo Rainforest, enjoy a scenic journey along the Rajang River (Malaysia’s longest) and experience the Iban culture and the Melanau Heritage Trail.

First launched in 2022, the “Meet-The-Experts” programme is an initiative by Tourism Malaysia Singapore to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange between Malaysian travel trade partners and their Singaporean counterparts. The programme supports new business partnerships, contract renewals, product updates, and developing attractive travel packages tailored for the Singaporean market.


Since its inception in Johor Bahru, followed by successful sessions in Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Sabah, and Kelantan, the Meet-The-Experts programme has sparked enthusiastic participation, resulting in the creation of 268 travel packages showcasing Malaysia’s hidden gems and enriching cultural experiences.

The ASEAN market has predominantly contributed to Malaysia’s tourism sector, with Singapore ranking as the top source of tourist-generating markets. Singapore contributed significantly to the 18.9 million visitors in 2024.



# GATEWAY TO BORNEO

Explore the unique charm of Sarawak, where nature, culture, and adventure come together in harmony. Discover the enchanting Three Sisters Keluan Waterfall, a symbol of natural beauty and serenity. Nestled deep in the forests of Miri, this cascading wonder invites you to immerse yourself in the tranquillity of Sarawak's pristine landscapes. Find peace and wonder in the heart of nature's embrace.

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More To Discover





# Dusit Thani Kyoto wins Forbes award

Dusit Thani Kyoto, a luxury urban oasis operated by Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies, has built on its recent One Michelin Key recognition by earning a 2025 Forbes Travel Guide Four-Star



Award—further cementing its reputation as one of Kyoto's most exceptional hotels.

Founded in the US in 1958, Forbes Travel Guide (formerly known as Mobil Travel Guide) is a globally respected authority in luxury hospitality, renowned for pioneering the five-star rating system in 1960. Its anonymous inspectors evaluate hotels based on more than 900 objective standards, ensuring a trusted benchmark of excellence in the travel industry.

The Four-Star rating is awarded to properties with exceptional service and outstanding facilities. Dusit Thani Kyoto earned this distinction through rigorous, undercover assessments by Forbes Travel Guide's inspectors, who experienced the hotel just as a typical guest would—paying their own way to ensure impartiality.

Opened in September 2023, Dusit Thani Kyoto is set in the peaceful Hongwanji Monzen-machi district, 850 metres from the city's bustling Kyoto Station. Operating under

Dusit's luxury Dusit Thani brand, the hotel seamlessly blends Thai-inspired gracious hospitality with Japan's deep-rooted culture of 'omotenashi'. It features 147 meticulously designed guest rooms that balance timeless elegance with contemporary comfort.

The hotel also serves as a hub of gourmet dining experiences. Guests can embark on an interactive omakase journey at Kōyō, which showcases Kyoto's 24 micro-seasons through the finest ingredients. Den Kyoto elevates mixology with handcrafted cocktails infused with Thai herbs, while Ayatana, the hotel's signature Thai fine-dining restaurant, delivers an exquisite celebration of Thai flavours and culinary artistry. Committed to sustainability, Ayatana sources premium seasonal ingredients from the Kansai region, including fresh herbs and vegetables from Ohara Farm and organic tea leaves from Wazuka.

Alongside versatile event spaces that accommodate up to 240 guests, the hotel also boasts a signature Devarana Wellness



Centre, where expert therapists blend ancient Thai massage therapies.

"Receiving Forbes Travel Guide's distinguished Four-Star Award just over a year after our opening is a remarkable achievement and a testament to our unwavering commitment to excellence, heartfelt service, and creating truly memorable experiences for our guests," said Makoto Yamashita, Cluster General Manager.



# Langkawi

## 99 Magical Islands

### SUNSET SERENADES AT TELAGA HARBOUR

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 Telaga Harbour



# Sabah: A training hub for nature guides

Sabah welcomes the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) recognition of the state as an ideal place for an international training centre for nature interpretation guides.

Assistant Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister

guide training,” the minister explained.

Datuk Joniston Bangkuai greets participants at the 1st World Federation Tourist Guide Associations Trainer Convention in Kota Kinabalu, on Thursday.

Last Thursday, 20 February, Joniston launched the

destinations like Sabah and consider us as a future host for its biennial congress”.

Earlier, WFTGA president Sebastian Frankenger praised the state’s natural environment as an excellent setting for developing nature interpretation guides.

“What beautiful nature you have... Sabah is the perfect place to focus on nature interpretation. We need different training centres, and one dedicated to nature interpretation would be an excellent addition,” he said.

Frankenger emphasised the need for proper training, highlighting topics such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), improving guiding standards, and inclusivity within the industry.

Participants engaged in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions designed to help them grow as industry leaders. To complement their learning, participants joined tours around Sabah for firsthand exposure to the state’s tourism offerings, with post-convention activities including river cruises and wildlife encounters.

Present were STGA president Roger Rajah, Sabah Tourism Board chief executive officer Julinus Jeffery Jimit, Sabah Convention Bureau chief executive officer Noredah Othman, Sabah Parks director Dr Maklarin Lakim, and STGA past president Grace Leong, who is also the organising chairperson.



Datuk Joniston Bangkuai said this aligns with Sabah’s focus on culture, adventure, and nature tourism.

The Sabah Tourism Board chairman added that the state is ready to explore the potential of becoming a dedicated training hub for nature guides and had requested the Sabah Tourist Guides Association (STGA) to discuss the matter further with WFTGA.

“Sabah has the appeal of biodiversity, landscapes, and ecotourism, making it a natural choice for training centres. With a structured plan, we can further position Sabah as a leader in nature-based tourist

first-ever WFTGA Trainer Convention, hosted in Sabah in collaboration with STGA. The convention brought together 100 participants from 27 countries, including virtual attendees.

Joniston said the event provides an opportunity for guides to adapt and innovate.

“For this industry to thrive, we must continue to learn and evolve. This convention is a step toward a stronger and more sustainable future in tourism. The WFTGA’s recognition of our potential is an opportunity for collaboration, and as a developing region, I hope the federation will support



# Your Sabah Bucket List

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# Where Australians head for a holiday

Australians continue embracing international travel, with the latest ATIA Travel Trends report revealing significant growth in outbound travel, particularly to Japan, Indonesia and the US.

The report, which analyses data from the Australian

reaching 8.27 million. China was the fastest-growing market, with a 66.4% increase in visitor numbers, reaching 891,550 arrivals.

New Zealand remains Australia's largest source market, with 1.39 million

## ***Airline market share — international & domestic***

For international travel, Qantas Airways maintained its lead with a 17.3% market share, carrying 597,000 passengers in the year ending November 2024. Jetstar followed with an 11.7% market share, carrying 402,000 passengers, while Singapore Airlines accounted for a 9.8% market share, transporting 337,000 passengers.

Domestically, Melbourne-Sydney remained the busiest route, with 763,228 seats available in November 2024. Brisbane-Sydney recorded a 93% load factor, reflecting strong domestic demand. Perth-Sydney saw a 7.1% increase in available seats, reaching 163,560 seats by year-end.

Commenting on the findings, ATIA CEO Dean Long said:

"The latest data confirms that Australians' appetite for international travel remains strong, with destinations like Japan, Indonesia and the US seeing significant increases.

"At the same time, inbound travel continues to strengthen, with China's remarkable growth standing out. These figures underscore the resilience and vitality of our travel and tourism industry.

"As always, we encourage travellers to book with an ATIA Accredited business to ensure a seamless and professional travel experience."



Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Department of Infrastructure, highlights a 16.2% increase in Australian international trips, rising to 11.6 million in December 2024.

Japan recorded an exceptional 56.9% increase, with 798,710 Australians travelling there over the past year. Indonesia remained a favourite, with 1.68 million Australian travellers, marking a 22.7% rise, while the US saw 735,210 Australian visitors, a 10.2% increase.

## ***China leads inbound growth***

Inbound travel to Australia also experienced robust growth, with a 15.1% rise in visitors,

visitors, a 9.5% rise. The US and UK also experienced strong growth, up 8.0% and 7.4% respectively.

## ***Most popular travel months by purpose***

According to the report, July was the most popular month for Australians travelling on holiday, with 63.1% of outbound travellers citing leisure as their reason for travel.

For those visiting friends and relatives, January saw the highest percentage at 34.8%, reflecting the holiday season's influence on travel patterns.

Business travel peaked in March, with 8.7% of outbound travellers departing for work-related purposes.



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