

ISSUE 240

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WEEKLY INSIGHTS

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Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei agrees on resetting tourism sector in post-pandemic era

Countries in the Brunei–Indonesia–Malaysia–Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP–EAGA) have agreed to resetting tourism towards greater sustainability, inclusion, resilience, and innovation to benefit local communities.

The subregion’s gross domestic product rose to 2.4 per cent in 2021 versus a contraction of 3.3 per cent in 2020, but tourism remains the hardest hit sector with the slowest growth in tourist arrivals.

Ministers and stakeholders met in West Kalimantan, Indonesia on Saturday for the 25th BIMP–EAGA meeting with Malaysia being represented by the Economic Planning Unit director–general Datuk Nor Azmie Diron.

Ministers opined that implementing the BIMP–EAGA and Indonesia–Malaysia–Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT–GT) tourism recovery communications plan would attract travellers, given the subregion was safe and easy to visit. [READ MORE](#)



Johor targets five million foreign visitors in 2023

Johor's tourism sector is expected to continue to grow, with a target of attracting five million international visitors to the state next year, said state Tourism, Environment, Heritage and Culture committee chairman K. Raven Kumar.

He said his confidence is based on the fact that, so far this year, Johor has already received 2.8 million international visitors compared to its target of 1.5 million, with some of the main tourist destinations being Desaru, Kota Tinggi and Iskandar Puteri.

“Most of the foreign tourists are from Singapore, India, the Philippines and China. We will continue to attract more tourists and we are working to double the number of tourists next year,” he told reporters when met at the Johor Speed Fest 2022 at R&F Marina.

The Sultan of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim Almarhum Sultan Iskandar launched both the Johor Speed Fest and the Johor Yacht and Recreation Club at the R&F Marina. Also present was Johor Tourism director Suhairi Hashim. [READ MORE](#)



Malaysian Startup MYAirline Unveils Launch Network

Malaysian startup MYAirline will launch its first commercial flights from Dec. 1 after clearing all regulatory hurdles.

The LCC's inaugural routes will be domestic, linking Kuala Lumpur (KUL) with Kuching (KCH), Kota Kinabalu (BKI) and Langkawi (LGK) twice a day. Flight frequency to Kuching and Kota Kinabalu will increase to three-times daily from Dec. 23 onwards.

MYAirline also plans to serve Kota Bharu, Penang, Sibul, Tawau, Miri, Alor Setar and Terengganu once it has received approvals. All flights will be operated using Airbus A320-200 aircraft with 180 seats in a single class cabin.

Details of the carrier's launch network came after the Malaysian Aviation Commission granted an air service licence on Nov. 15. This followed the airline receiving an air operator's certificate from the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia in October. [READ MORE](#)



With own airline, MAH Sarawak chairman expects more tourist arrivals

The availability of Sarawak's very own airline will enable the state to secure more direct flights from neighbouring countries into Sarawak, said John Teo.

The Malaysia Association of Hotels (MAH) Sarawak Chapter chairman said the proposed boutique airline would provide an alternative and cheaper option for tourists to visit Sarawak.

“MAH had briefed the Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg on higher airfares particularly during the festive seasons and before the 15th General Election.

“We were informed on this proposed boutique airline, which will be operating under Hornbill Skyways, by the Premier and it would offer better and lower rates compared to other airlines,” he told The Borneo Post.

The Premier at an event said the proposed airline would fly visitors to Sarawak from countries such as Hong Kong, Bali in Indonesia, Singapore, Bangkok (Thailand), Japan and India. [READ MORE](#)



Hotel occupancy rate at 65-75 pct this year, says MAH S'wak chief

Hotels in the state achieved between 65% and 75% occupancy rate by the fourth quarter of the year, more than six months after the relaxing of Covid-19 related travel restrictions, said John Teo.

The Malaysia Association of Hotels (MAH) Sarawak Chapter chairman said with more people starting to travel, hotels in Sarawak have enjoyed better occupancy compared to during the pandemic phase where average hotel occupancy in the state was between 25% and 35%.

“For instance, hotels in Kuching achieve an average of 73% for most star-rated hotels while Bintulu is having around 75% occupancy. “In Sibu and Miri, the star-rated hotels there have about 65% and 67% occupancy,” he told The Borneo Post.

Teo, who is also Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) Board of Directors member, said one of the factors for the high occupancy rate is the promotion of ‘Sia Sitok’ tourism campaigns which have been doing quite well. This, he said, allowed Sarawakians to travel and enjoy benefits that included 50% discounts on hotel stays that resulted in boosting hotel occupancy further. [READ MORE](#)



The opening of Mercu Maybank and DoubleTree by Hilton boosts I-Bhd's earnings

I-Berhad's earnings have increased as a result of the dynamic operational environment at i-City Finance Avenue, which is led by the two major "stars," Mercu Maybank and DoubleTree by Hilton.

The developer reported RM15.6 million in net profit for the third quarter that ended on September 30, 2022 (3Q22).

The DoubleTree by Hilton opened its doors to guests in the third quarter of this year, and positive feedback has been reflected in the hotel's strong occupancy rates for both guests and events. I-Berhad chairman Tan Sri Lim Kim Hong said by next year, the hotel is anticipated to significantly increase the company's revenue in the leisure sector.

"I was informed that i-City was a preferred location based on Hilton's selection criteria. Hilton was attracted and impressed by i-City's solid infrastructure such as its world-class IT infrastructure; an on-site Tier-3 certified data centre enabling super AI and dual source network. Infrastructure aside, footfall is important for a hotel," Lim said.

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Stylish accommodation for retirees in Bangsar

Designer senior living residence Domitys Bangsar Kuala Lumpur aims to appeal to mature citizens with its fresh, contemporary look, ideal location and extensive amenities and services.

The project is a collaboration between diversified Singaporean real estate group Ascott Ltd and French senior services residences brand Domitys Group.

“We have partnered with Domitys Group to bring this concept to Asia, and Malaysia will be the first to have Domitys properties in the region. We unveiled it on Oct 24 this year and the response has been encouraging with quite a number of bookings,” Ascott’s country general manager for Malaysia, Mondy Mecja shares with City & Country.

Ascott is targeting independent seniors who want to live in a safe, secure community, says Mecja. “Specifically, we are eyeing local seniors who are empty nesters, singles and seniors who are looking to downsize from their [larger] homes. “We are also aiming for foreigners and Malaysian seniors who are living abroad and are looking to retire in Malaysia. The property will also be suitable for silver-generation holidaymakers and those who are looking for temporary stays and vacation stays, and even for post-hospitalization. [READ MORE](#)



Ascott unveils Somerset brand refresh with sustainability focus

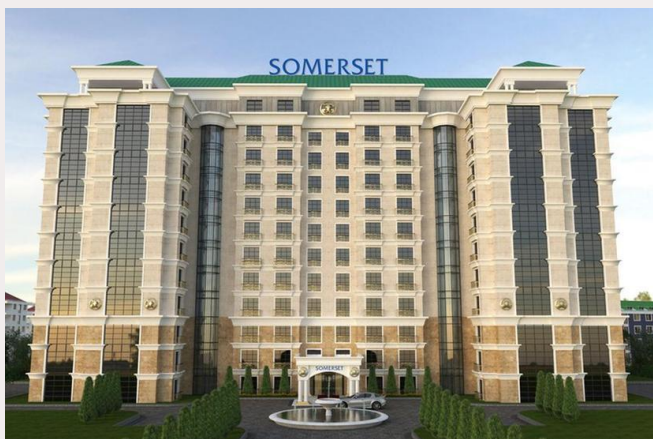
The Ascott Limited (Ascott), has unveiled its refreshed extended stay hospitality brand, Somerset.

The Somerset brand refresh is part of Ascott's Brand360 strategy, to strengthen its expanded brand portfolio through sharpened brand stories and the introduction of signature experiences and programmes unique to each brand.

The Citadines brand refresh was unveiled in September with the tagline 'For the Love of Cities'.

Ascott, the lodging business unit wholly owned by CapitaLand Investment, also recently announced Ascott CARES, a sustainability framework that aligns Ascott's growth strategy with environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations.

The refresh of the Somerset brand helps cement the commitment to sustainability and SAN reported last week that Ascott is one of the first hospitality groups to be conferred Recognised Standard status by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. [READ MORE](#)



Hmlet to launch first hotel in first quarter Aof 2023

Co-living operator Hmlet has announced a partnership with real estate companies TCRE Partners and JMD Group to launch its debut hotel property next year. The new 106-key hotel property will be called Owen House by Hmlet.

“Hmlet is excited to collaborate with TCRE Partners and JMD Group in their acquisition of this hotel asset,” says Joshua Li, chief real estate officer of Hmlet. “The launch of Owen House by Hmlet comes at an opportune time to ride the upswing in momentum for the residential leasing market and tourism recovery as Singapore’s borders reopen.”

The hotel is at 2 Owen Road, close to Farrer Park MRT Station on the North-East Line. According to a press release from Hmlet on Nov 22, the property is undergoing refurbishment works to reposition it as a new hotel.

Hmlet describes the design of the hotel as inspired by “the nostalgic yesteryear era of New World Amusement Park, reflecting the glitz and glamour of that time period with a modern art deco interpretation”. The property will offer rooms of up to 560 sq ft. [READ MORE](#)

