

ISSUE 253

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Spanish hotel chain to open first INNSiDE hotel in KL this month

Spanish hotel chain Meliá Hotels International is expanding its INNSiDE brand in Asia with the opening of two new INNSiDE hotels in Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok respectively.

According to a media statement, the first INNSiDE hotel in the country is located in the vibrant commercial hub of Cheras. The 238-room INNSiDE by Meliá Kuala Lumpur Cheras is expected to open its doors this month. The hotel will have a range of eco-friendly features throughout, such as the use of wheat straw yoga mats and solar-powered LED lighting. Hotel facilities include communal areas for work and play, swimming pool and fitness studios.

Globally, there are 38 INNSiDE hotels in 14 different countries, including Spain, the UK, the US, Germany, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, China, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Netherlands, all located in established neighbourhoods of popular travel destinations such as Madrid, Manchester, Prague and Paris. [READ MORE](#)



Bertam Alliance secures RM82 mil sub-contract to build hotel in Sabah

Bertam Alliance Bhd has bagged a sub-contract contract worth RM82 million from Akas Permai Sdn Bhd for the construction of building and infrastructure works for a hotel in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

In a Bursa Malaysia filing, Bertam Alliance said the sub-contract has been awarded to its wholly owned subsidiary Bertam Development Sdn Bhd (BDSB), which is principally engaged in property development, as well as building and construction.

Its client Akas Permai is a private limited company that is principally engaged in construction.

BDSB shall commence the sub-contract works with immediate effect and the date for completion shall be Nov 30, 2024.

Bertam Alliance said the letter of award is expected to have a positive contribution to the group's earnings per share, net assets per share and gearing. [READ MORE](#)



Melaka cruise terminal project to be revived, says Transport Minister

The Ministry of Transport (MOT) is in discussions with the Melaka state government to continue the Melaka International Cruise Terminal (MICT) project, which had its investment operating licence revoked previously due to several issues.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke said the MICT, which involves reclamation works under the Melaka Gateway project, was almost complete and would have various negative implications if it was discontinued.

"The ministry has received an application from the Melaka Gateway developer to revive the cruise terminal project, and it is in the process of obtaining licence approval to continue the project from the ministry, especially the Melaka Port Authority.

"We have no problem supporting the continuation of this project, but we need to take into account the views of the state government, and I have instructed officials from the Port Klang Authority to contact the Melaka state government to discuss, in particular, the cruise terminal issue," he told reporters here on Sunday (March 5). [READ MORE](#)



AirAsia X resumes services to Shanghai

AirAsia X Bhd (AAX) has resumed its flight services to Shanghai, China with four weekly flights from Kuala Lumpur starting March 2.

The carrier plans to ramp up capacity and increase the frequency of services to Shanghai with 11 weekly flights by the second quarter this year, akin to its pre-pandemic frequency.

In a statement, AAX said its inaugural flight from Kuala Lumpur departed with an encouraging passenger load. Its flight from Shanghai to Kuala Lumpur recorded almost 100% full with 373 passengers on board.

“Our first inaugural flight to Shanghai was a decade ago and today, we are thrilled to be back in China and celebrate the resumption of this historically very popular destination. In addition, we have also restarted our weekly flight to/from Hangzhou recently with 97% passenger load to Kuala Lumpur,” chief executive officer Benyamin Ismail said.

“China is one of the world’s major economies and the reopening of flights to China is a positive sign for AAX and the tourism industry in general. As China has only just started to reopen, this is only the beginning of the recovery process. [READ MORE](#)



Tourism and retail groups urge government to withdraw luxury tax plan

Eight tourism and retail trade associations have urged the government to withdraw the proposal to impose a luxury tax, saying the definition of luxury is subjective.

"Value is perceived based on quality, specifications, reliability, design, efficiency and market demand. A single price point cannot be a determinant for value or luxury. Every product has differing input costs and is not the sole derivative for the decision on pricing," they said in a joint statement on Sunday (March 5).

The tourism and retail groups comprise BBKLCC Tourism Association Kuala Lumpur, Batu Road Retailers Association, Bumiputra Retailers Organisation, Federation of Malaysia Business Associations, Industries Unite, Malaysia Retailers Association, Malaysia Retail Chain Association and Malaysia Shopping Malls Association.

On Feb 24, Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced in the revised Budget 2023 that the government is proposing a luxury tax for items such as branded watches and fashion items from this year. [READ MORE](#)



Travel demand fuels a boom in Asia Pacific — in hotel rates

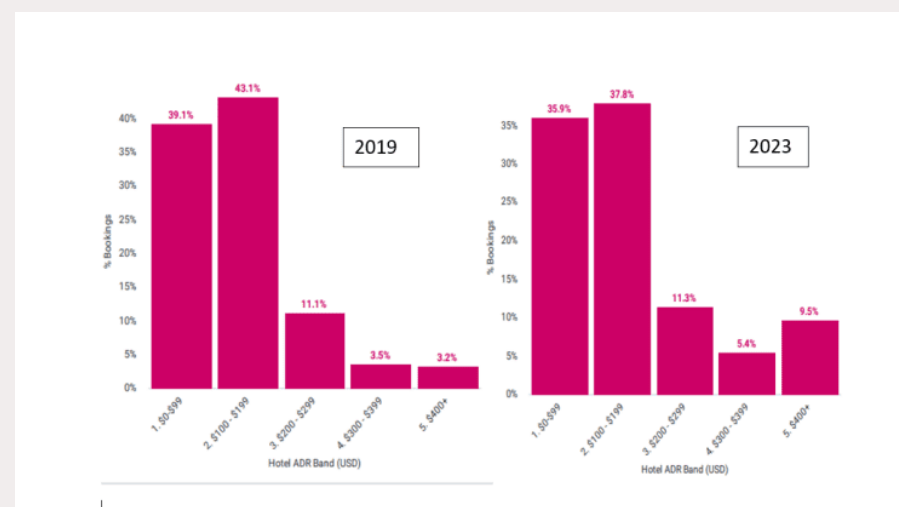
Finding a great hotel deal may be harder than ever before.

Hotel rates are at an “all-time high,” Alan Watts, Hilton’s Asia-Pacific president, told “Squawk Box Asia” on Thursday. Rates are being fueled by travel demand that is like “a feast ... to offset the famine,” he said, referencing the pandemic.

According to earnings reports, Hilton’s average daily rates increased by 8% in the fourth quarter of 2022, compared with the same period in 2019. Similarly, Marriott and IHG hiked prices by 13%, while Hyatt had a 14% daily rate increase.

The travel boom in Asia Pacific has been “phenomenal,” said Watts. Data shows this is especially true in places where Chinese travelers are going.

Average hotel rates across Southeast Asia have gone up more than 10% since 2022, according to data from the travel booking company Traveloka. But rates have climbed more than 45% in destinations that are attracting the most Chinese travelers, said the company’s chief strategy officer, Joydeep Chakraborty. [READ MORE](#)



Asia's first Maison Delano property to open in Seoul

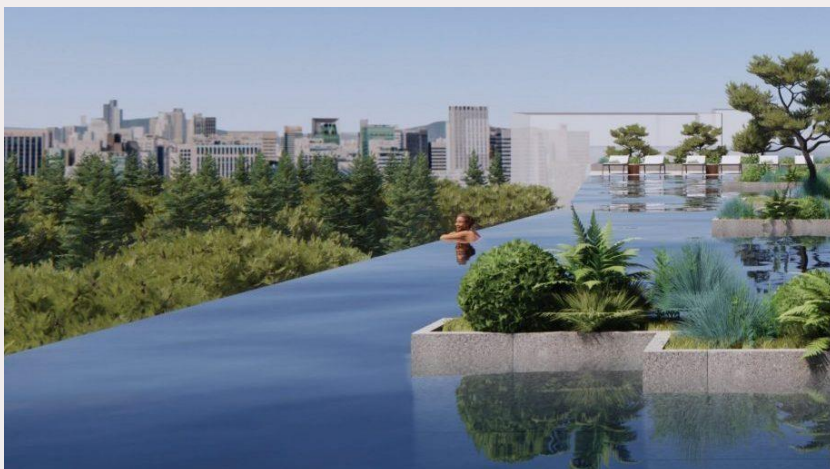
Accor and joint venture partner Ennismore are to open the first property under the Maison Delano brand in Asia.

The 81-room and 52-residence Maison Delano Seoul will be situated in the Gangnam district of the South Korean capital, and will feature a sunken garden courtyard, rooftop infinity pool, members' club, spa and fitness centre, as well as “exceptional culinary and mixology experiences”.

The property is set to open in 2026, and will feature what the architects referred to as “a reinterpretation of the traditional Korean Pavilion”, with a ‘park facade’ “cocooning the entire building facade and sunken courtyard in trees and greenery to create a connection with nature as it flows in and around the building”.

Maison Delano is an urban spin-off of the Delano resort brand, which launched in Miami in 1995, although Delano South Beach has been closed since March 2020.

The brand is set to make its European debut in the coming weeks, with the opening of Maison Delano Paris. [READ MORE](#)



Japan's Tokyu Land Invests In Three Thai Hotels As Tourists Return

Japanese real estate developer Tokyu Land is betting on hospitality in the Land of Smiles, with the company's Singaporean arm investing in a trio of Ibis-branded hotels in separate resort areas in Thailand as tourism stages a partial post-Covid comeback.

Tokyu Land Asia will acquire an ownership interest in the hotels, which are owned and operated by Thai developer Origin Property in the beach destinations of Phuket, Krabi and Hua Hin, according to announcements by both parties. All the hotels are franchise properties under Accor Group's Ibis brand.

Tokyu Land said in a statement on its corporate website that it anticipates a resurgence in hotel demand as the Covid-19 pandemic subsides in Thailand and foreign tourist arrivals pick up. The new investment brings Tokyu Land Asia's portfolio in the southeast Asian nation to a total of eight projects, including four hotels.

Thailand, which lifted its pandemic-related entry requirements last October, saw 11 million foreign visitors in 2022, surging from 428,000 the previous year and exceeding the country's target of 10 million. The government expects 25 million tourists in 2023, compared to nearly 40 million in 2019.

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