

ISSUE 259

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Motac successfully lured 450,000 Chinese tourists during PM's visit to Beijing

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) has successfully lured 450,000 tourists from China after the signing of two agreements during Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's official visit to the country last month.

Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing said the success was the result of the promotion done by Tourism Malaysia in conjunction with the Prime Minister's visit to Beijing, China on March 29.

“During our promotion in Beijing, we have met with several travel agencies and have so far signed an agreement with two companies, one of which will bring 350,000 tourists to Malaysia and the other will bring 100,000, while the rest are still in the process of documentation.

“There are some things that need to be resolved relating to visas and airline seats. As such, we will hold a series of discussions with airlines, the Immigration Department and the Ministry of Home Affairs about those matters.

“This was among the ministry's efforts to achieve the target of five million Chinese tourist arrivals this year,” he said at the MOTAC Iftar event with foreign diplomats here on Thursday. [READ MORE](#)



Hotel occupancy rates remain low despite upcoming holidays

Although next week is designated as “balik kampung”, a time to visit one’s hometown and spend time with family, just half of the hotels in the country are fully booked.

Hotel occupancy is lower this year compared to last year’s Hari Raya season due to the proximity of the recent school holidays and the upcoming festive season, said Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) president Datin Christina Toh. As a result, Malaysians are choosing to return home for the celebration, she added.

“Furthermore, people have already spent too much money on travel during the Chinese New Year and school holidays, so hotel occupancy for the Hari Raya holidays is slow.” “We are still hoping that tourists will book rooms at the last minute so that business at hotels will improve,” she said when contacted.

Toh added that hotels and resorts in tourist areas were seeing high occupancy rates.

MAH vice-president Lim Choong Sean, who is based in Johor, said that hotels in the state were seeing travellers mainly from Singapore. “The occupancy rate of Johor hotels currently stands at 60% foreign tourists and 40% local visitors,” he said. [READ MORE](#)



Shift in room-booking trends after pandemic

THE hospitality sector is seeing changes in room bookings now compared to pre-Covid-19 times as most hotel guests are no longer making reservations ahead of time.

Lotus Desaru chief executive officer R. Indra Ghandi said prior to the pandemic, hotel guests would book their rooms between three and six months in advance.

“Nowadays, bookings start coming in about three days or a week before a major festival,” she said when contacted. Indra attributed the shift in room-booking patterns to the several movement restrictions imposed by the government at the peak of the pandemic.

“Some people are worried that the government might implement further travel restrictions following the emergence of new Covid-19 subvariants. “But it is unlikely that the government will continue doing that now as people all over the world, including Malaysians, have resumed travelling far and wide after a three-year hiatus,” she said.

Room bookings for their two Johor hotels – Lotus Desaru Beach Resort and Spa and Lotus Seaview Beach Resort – for the Hari Raya Aidilfitri are slowly picking up. [READ MORE](#)



Melaka Sigua mini theme park to be completed next year

The development of Sigua (or Monitor Lizard) Mini Theme Park, with an estimated value of RM8 million, in Sungai Melaka is now entering the site clearance phase and is expected to be completed next year.

Melaka River and Beach Development Corporation (PPSPM) chief executive officer Datuk Murad Husin said the latest tourist attraction in conjunction with the Visit Melaka Year 2024 is in line with the rebranding of Taman Lanun or Pirate Park, which was closed five years ago.

"The restoration work has just started at 10 per cent. When completed later, it will be able to contribute as PPSPM's main product.

"We don't just want to highlight monitor lizards as this mini theme park will also feature other entertainment such as a Ferris wheel, an upside-down house and a helicopter simulator when it is ready next year," he told reporters after the PPSPM service appreciation and breaking of fast event.

On a separate note, Murad said the Melaka River Cruise (MRC), recorded an increase of almost 30% visitors in the first four months compared to the same period last year. He said a total of 220,091 tourists used the MRC throughout January until yesterday compared to 172,364 people last year.

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Firefly To Take Over Borneo Flights From Malaysia Airlines

Malaysia Aviation Group, the parent company of Malaysia Airlines, says it will transfer the flag-carrier's routes within Borneo to its LCC arm Firefly from May 16 as part of a "strategic route rationalization plan."

Firefly will launch once-daily Boeing 737-800 flights from Kota Kinabalu (BKI) to Kuching (KCH), Sandakan (SDK), and Tawau (TWU), as well as Kuching to Miri (MYY).

Firefly currently operates to East Malaysia from Penang, flying to KCH and BKI. Malaysia is separated by the South China Sea into Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia, which shares the island of Borneo with Indonesia and Brunei.

Malaysia Aviation Group CEO Ahmad Luqman Mohd Azmi says in a statement that Malaysia Airlines saw a good customer response since introducing 737 operations within East Malaysia in 2022 and will "remain responsive to the changing demands of its customers and leverage the prevailing market conditions."

The move frees up Malaysia Airlines 737-800s for international operations out of the carrier's Kuala Lumpur hub. [READ MORE](#)



Overseas share of Japan hotel investments at highest level since 2014

Foreign investors are buying up Japanese hotels at a scale unseen in almost a decade, as the nation's tourism recovery, weak currency and low interest rates drive appetite from abroad.

Overseas buyers were responsible for 47% of the ¥494.3 billion (\$3.7 billion) invested in hotel deals that closed in the past 12 months — the highest proportion since 2014, according to data at the end of March from research firm MSCI Real Assets.

A combination of low rates, the weak yen and market stability has made Japanese real estate attractive for global investors amid pervasive economic uncertainty in the past year, said Benjamin Chow, MSCI's Asia head of real assets research.

“There was a point last year where all our clients were going to Japan or had gone to Japan to look at properties,” Chow said.

The increased interest in hotels, which make up about a tenth of real estate deal activity in Japan, is notable because it remains one of the more niche property areas in the nation, Chow said. Foreign investors have historically been more drawn to residential or retail properties, he added. [READ MORE](#)



Australia's newest Dorsett Hotel to open in Melbourne on April 18

Dorsett Melbourne is opening on April 18, 2023 in Melbourne's CBD. Located at 615 Little Lonsdale St at the southern end of the CBD, Dorsett Melbourne will be a key component of West Side Place, a \$2.4b development by Far East Consortium.

West Side Place will add vibrance and a brand-new precinct to the heart of Melbourne city by attracting both local Melburnians and travellers alike.

Dorsett Hospitality International, Australian CEO Andrew Jessop says, "Dorsett Hospitality International is proud to be opening a new hotel in Australia's cultural capital, Melbourne. Off the back of the success of our first Australian opening on the Gold Coast, it was a natural next step to look towards Melbourne which has seen an incredible bounce back in tourism since covid. We look forward to continuing to grow our global footprint and to add to the Melbourne community."

Dorsett Melbourne comprises 316 guest rooms over 8-levels, designed by award winning architects Cottee Parker. Rooms and suites include pet friendly rooms for that "pawfect" getaway, and family rooms where the littlest guests can have their own memorable moment in a themed room.

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DoubleTree by Hilton announced for Jeddah

Hilton has signed a management agreement for its first DoubleTree property in the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah.

The hotel is owned by AlAhli REIT Fund, a listed investment fund managed by SNB Capital.

DoubleTree by Hilton Jeddah Al Andalus Mall will open next year, following an extensive renovation programme. As part of that renovation, significant upgrades will be undertaken to its guestrooms, restaurants and recreation facilities.

The hotel feature 164 guestrooms and serviced apartments, two food F&B outlets, a gym and an outdoor pool, and seven meetings and events spaces too.

Located on the King Abdallah Road, it is linked to Al Andalus Mall, and adjacent to the upcoming Sulaiman Al Habib Hospital.

Hilton currently operates 16 hotels in Saudi Arabia and has another 51 under development. It plans to expand its operations to more than 75 properties in the coming years, including the introduction of new brands such as LXR Hotels and Resorts, Canopy by Hilton, Embassy Suites by Hilton and Hampton by Hilton. [READ MORE](#)

