

JULY-AUGUST 2025

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# TTGmice



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## 27 top incentive ideas

From a vintage-style train in Thailand and island hopping in Indonesia, to clambering over natural formations in the Philippines and getting up close with wildlife in Australia, top achievers have a world of options to pick as their reward



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Longhaul markets return to Macau

MICE tourism a key pillar for Gulf destinations

Singapore's bold move to triple MICE receipts



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# Beyond boundaries



**Rachel AJ Lee**  
Assistant Editor

I am incredibly fortunate that my job includes travelling.

A big part of that involves fam trips, where destinations open their doors for media like myself to truly experience what they offer.

This has led to some unforgettable moments: a seaplane ride to an oyster farm in Sydney (the post-flight queasiness is long forgotten, but the vivid memory remains!); getting up close with a herd of adorable llamas at Shamarra Alpacas Farm in Akaroa, New Zealand; and even a deeply relaxing body-melting massage and sound healing session at Ayana Resort Bali.

These fam trips often feel very much like incentive travel, and honestly, I sometimes find myself a little envious of corporate groups who get to enjoy similar experiences. It shows just how vital such trips are for boosting morale (to my group editor Karen, my morale has definitely been boosted). When colleagues embark on such incentives trips together, they create unforgettable shared experiences that will strengthen team bonds.

For this issue, we have put together 27 incentive ideas across Asia-Pacific (pages 12-17), to inspire planning for the year ahead. Looking to go further? We also picked out five standout European event venues (pages 8-9) from the IMEX Frankfurt show floor.

And despite geopolitical uncertainties as we went to press, we chose to keep the Middle East destination report in (pages 18-20), to show the incredible efforts destinations such as Dubai, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia have made in the business events scene. We are certainly hoping for a swift and positive resolution to the situation.

Over in the Asia-Pacific region, Singapore is putting its foot on the gas, aiming to triple business event tourism receipts by 2040 – dive into their strategy on pages 26-28. Macau (pages 22-24) is also seeing huge wins, kicking off 1Q2025 with a big jump in events and attendees, thanks to a strong comeback from longhaul markets like the US, Europe, and Australia.

We do not know what the future holds, but we do know that keeping teams motivated is more important than ever, and that business events are vital for driving economic progress and building invaluable human connections.



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# Event excellence meets superior experiences



With world-class venues and facilities coupled with internationally recognised MICE talents, it is no surprise that Macao's ICCA ranking continues to rise

**M**acao is pulling out all the stops to deliver successful events for event organisers. By making strategic investments in every aspect that makes a successful event – from developing world-class infrastructure to providing diverse entertainment options and developing skilled talent in the sector – Macao aims to enhance and create memorable experiences for delegates.

It comes as no surprise that in the latest GlobeWatch Business Analytics – Country & City Rankings for 2024 by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), Macao jumped from 20th to 14th place in the Asia-Pacific region between 2023 and 2024 – its best-ever performance to date and a testament to the city's

global status as a MICE hub.

A stacked roster of events – from sports to medicine – lined up throughout the year is further proof of the city's popularity for business meetings. Global organisations that have chosen Macao as their preferred event destination include:

- The Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) Annual Conference (500 attendees, June 10 to 13)
- MDRT Global Conference (7,000 attendees, August 24 to 27)
- 25th Asian Congress of Surgery (500 attendees, October 24 to 26)
- 18th World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention (4,000 attendees, November 2 to 4)
- The 50th Portuguese Association of Travel and Tourism Agencies Congress (700 attendees, December 2 to 4)

## Supporting industry growth

As important as it is to attract external conferences, it is equally important to develop the capabilities within.

With that in mind, the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute of the Macao SAR (IPIM) is working closely with industry and universities to cultivate professional talent in the MICE sector.

Since May this year, Macao has held eight MICE training courses and workshops, including UFI Certified Professional (UCP), ICCASkills CICS. These cover the topics from event planning and bidding, safety in construction, marketing, to crisis management.

More than 360 participants have been trained through these initiatives. Upcoming trainings include:

- UFI-VMA Venue Management School (UFI VMS) (English): July 22 to 25, 2025
- UFI-VMA Venue Management School (UFI VMS) (Chinese): July 22 to 25, 2025
- UFI-Exhibition Management School (UFI-EMS): September 7 to 10, 2025
- ICCASkills CICE – September 14 to 18, 2025

"I have witnessed the unwavering determination of Team Macao in elevating the overall capacity of business events, spanning government divisions to private industry. The industry is notably supportive and driven. Organisations are keen on adopting a holistic approach to prepare staff across all levels and divisions with a comprehensive understanding of business events. Learning opportunities are provided not only to sales and marketing teams but also to those directly or indirectly involved in business events activities," said Waikin Wong, ICCA's senior



Macao continues to attract global, high profile events (above) through a winning combination of solid infrastructure and venues, industry support and talent development (below)

regional director Asia Pacific.

Commenting on Macao's unique advantage as a MICE destination, she noted that Macao offers cross-sectoral collaboration, geographical advantages, strong industry commitment, diverse facilities, as well as professionalism and cultural richness that attract and contribute to global business events and association conferences.

The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI) has also recognised Macao's facilities and development potential, designating it as a key UFI training centre. UFI President Hugh Jones praised Macao's

progress in developing events facilities and industry progress, citing it as an ideal destination for hosting exhibitions and conferences, due to its significant growth potential and successful training initiatives.

UFI will continue to conduct accredited international professional industry programmes in Macao, such as the UFI Certified Professional (UCP), Venue Management School (UFI VMS), and Exhibition Management School (UFI EMS), with Jones affirming UFI's commitment to provide ongoing training in Macao, on top of the 11 UFI-certified exhibition that Macao currently hosts.



## New highlights in Macao

Beyond developing industry talent, Macao is enhancing its appeal for business events by combining world-class MICE facilities with unforgettable entertainment and luxury experiences.

New developments further boost Macao's offerings. They include:

- House of Dancing Water: recently relaunched with a new show featuring aerial acrobatics and advanced technology
- Capella at Galaxy Macau: opening in mid-2025, it will add 57 luxurious suites and 36 Sky Villas
- H853 Entertainment Place at Lisboeta Macau: will feature new exhibition and attraction spaces
- Wynn Palace's Gourmet Pavilion: opened in April 2025, offers diverse Asian cuisines



**Organise your next event in Macao now.**

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## CONTENTS

### To our readers

**1** Beyond boundaries

### Connect

**5** What you missed online

### Smash it

**8** Grand gatherings

### Corporate talk

**10** APAC business travel thrives despite global flux  
GBTA APAC Committee bolsters ranks

### Spotlight

**11** Unpacking India's momentum

### Cover story

**12** 27 top incentive ideas

### Destination: Middle East

**18** A region rises

### Destination: Macau

**22** Worth the wait

### Destination: Singapore

**26** Stepping stones

### Community

**30** Catch up with Gabrielle Doman-Kishi

**31** Synchronised vision  
Appointments



## Top 5 headlines this month



From left: NZ Tourism and Hospitality Minister Louise Upston unveils the new Tourism Growth Roadmap at the opening of Meetings 2025; decision-makers from hotels in northern Phuket meet

### New Zealand ignites tourism sector with NZ\$35 Million Growth Roadmap

New Zealand has launched a NZ\$35 million (US\$21.1 million) Tourism Growth Roadmap, unveiling a comprehensive package of initiatives set to accelerate international tourism and boost business events.

It comes hot on the heels of and includes a recent NZ\$13.5 million in new marketing funds aimed at Australia, the US and China.

### New international connections unlock MICE opportunities for Kobe

Kobe's business events industry is expected to experience a boost following the launch of international flights to and from the city.

The new routes connect Kobe with Seoul, Shanghai, Nanjing, Taipei, and Taichung. All of these routes will operate daily, except for Taipei, which will have five round trips per week.

### North Phuket hotels unite to elevate region's MICE potential

A consortium of hotels in north Phuket has come together under a new private-sector

initiative to reposition the region as a compelling destination for corporate groups.

Led by The Slate and involving up to 20 hotels, the campaign was sparked during a leadership luncheon in Bangkok earlier this year, where Jeff Fongmool, founder and CEO of MICE Magnet Asia, proposed the creation of a unified identity.

### Eco-awareness and unique locales drive MICE interest in Sabah

Sabah's business events sector is experiencing a notable upswing, driven by strong government support and promotional efforts, and rising interest from regional and international markets looking for fresh destinations.

### Tourism Australia and Amway sign MoU to drive incentive travel

Tourism Australia and Amway, the world's largest direct selling company, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The objective of the partnership is to help Australia attract more of Amway's Leadership Seminar and Diamond Invitational group incentives in the future.

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## Q&A

### From law to landmark

Bringing a fresh perspective to the helm of the Philippine International Convention Center, Nicolette Ann Cruz, a lawyer specialising in infrastructure practice, has assumed the role of general manager.

Her appointment comes at a pivotal time as the iconic venue gears up for two landmark events in 2026 – its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the hosting of the ASEAN Summit.



### Vision for tomorrow

From general manager to CEO, Adam Mather-Brown's decade-long immersion in ICC Sydney's culture shapes an authentic and forward-thinking approach, prioritising team and continuous improvement.

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AWE plays a vital role in boosting Hong Kong's economy while attracting an array of high-profile global events

# WHERE GLOBAL MICE THRIVES: Connecting tech, aviation, sports, and beyond

AsiaWorld-Expo's successful slate of large trade events shows why it is the venue of choice on the global stage

As one of the leading event venues in Hong Kong, AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) houses an impressive 70,000m<sup>2</sup> of rentable space. This includes 10 column-free exhibition halls – perfect for all types of events.

The venue is set to get an upgrade as the Hong Kong Government is going ahead with the AsiaWorld-Expo Phase 2 project. This expansion will increase AWE's convention and exhibition space to 100,000m<sup>2</sup> and it will also house the largest indoor multipurpose performance arena in Hong Kong that can hold up to 20,000 spectators.

Strategically located adjacent to Hong Kong International Airport and seamlessly connected to the city's rail and road transport network, AWE is ideal for delegates that will be continuing their trip in mainland China or to other parts of the world.

AWE's calendar for the second half of the

year is packed with events, ready to host a range of world-class exhibitions and conferences from distinguished technology and aviation showcases to high-profile sports events. Here are some of the upcoming signature events at AWE:

## From buildings to batteries

Events organiser Informa Markets is holding four shows at AWE from July 15 to 17.

They include Build4Asia, a long-established platform for the security, building and electrical engineering industry. Delegates can look forward to a series of interactive forums, workshops and design galleries.

Build4Asia will be co-located with three other technology-focused exhibitions – The Battery Show Asia, Mobility Tech Asia, and the inaugural Data Center Asia. The latter three are making their debuts in Asia for the first time after successful parent shows in

the US and Europe. The co-location of these events aims to bring in more buyers from related sectors, letting attendees easily make connections across sectors in one location.

### All about aviation

AWE, located adjacent to the airport, leverages its strategic position to host major aviation and logistics events. Last year, AWE welcomed the inaugural Super Terminal Expo, which is confirmed to return in November this year.

Additionally, new aviation-related events are scheduled for 2025, including Routes World 2025 in September and the first-ever Airspace Asia Pacific 2025 in December. Routes World 2025 is expected to attract over 3,000 aviation leaders from across the globe. These events will further strengthen Hong Kong's prominent role as a leading aviation hub.

### Football fever

From September 3 to 4, the World Football Summit (WFS) will have its first-ever edition in Hong Kong. With over 10,000 expected attendees and more than 100 exhibitors, this landmark edition will gather the most influential stakeholders and decision-makers across the global football ecosystem.

From club presidents and CEOs of leading sports brands to players, coaches, and tech executives, WFS Hong Kong offers a unique platform for high-impact networking, strategic visibility, and business development.

### Made for MICE

Also converging at AWE is the 92<sup>nd</sup> UFI Global Congress by The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, and the landmark event for the global exhibition industry. From November 19 to 22, the event is expected to draw hundreds of industry leaders, innovators, and decision-makers from around the world.



Hong Kong was chosen as the host city for the prestigious 92<sup>nd</sup> UFI Global Congress, a flagship event of the global exhibition industry

Aligning with AWE's theme, 'Explore All in AWE', the event extends its welcome to UFI guests with the theme 'Explore All in AWE-some Hong Kong', offering a rich experience of Hong Kong's vibrant culture.

AWE works closely with UFI to curate an unforgettable journey that immerses participants in the essence of Hong Kong. A key highlight is the Congress Dinner, which celebrates Hong Kong's distinctive character, while showcasing the city's role as a gateway to Asia and a hub for cultural and professional excellence.

The Congress will feature a special host country session titled 'Gateway to Growth', where esteemed speakers from diverse regions will share insights on unlocking opportunities within the Greater Bay Area (GBA). Attendees will also have the chance to explore the '1-hour living circle' of the GBA.

### VIP treatment for VIP guests



Planners looking for that extra touch of personalised service for their high-profile business travellers will be pleased to know that AsiaWorld-Expo provides just that with access to the VIP lounge at Hong Kong International Airport.

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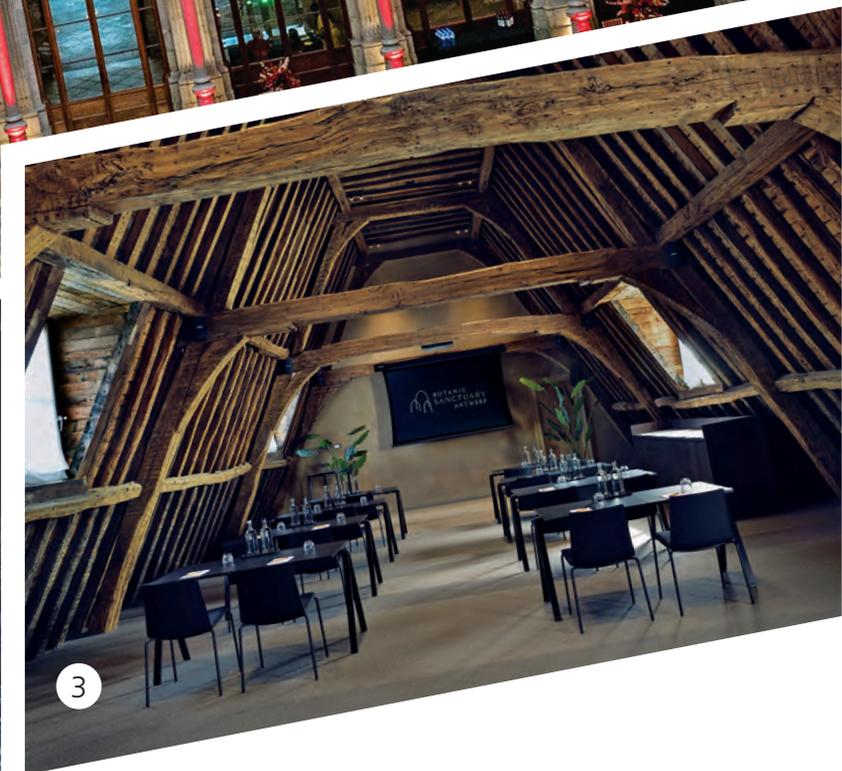
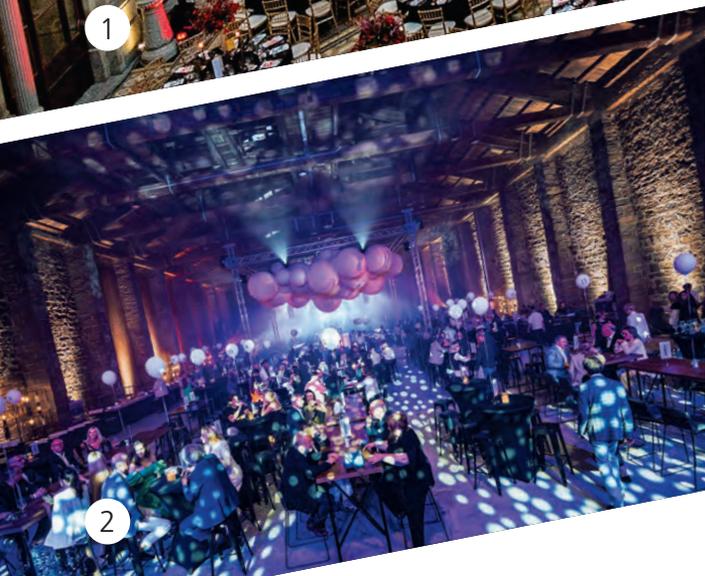
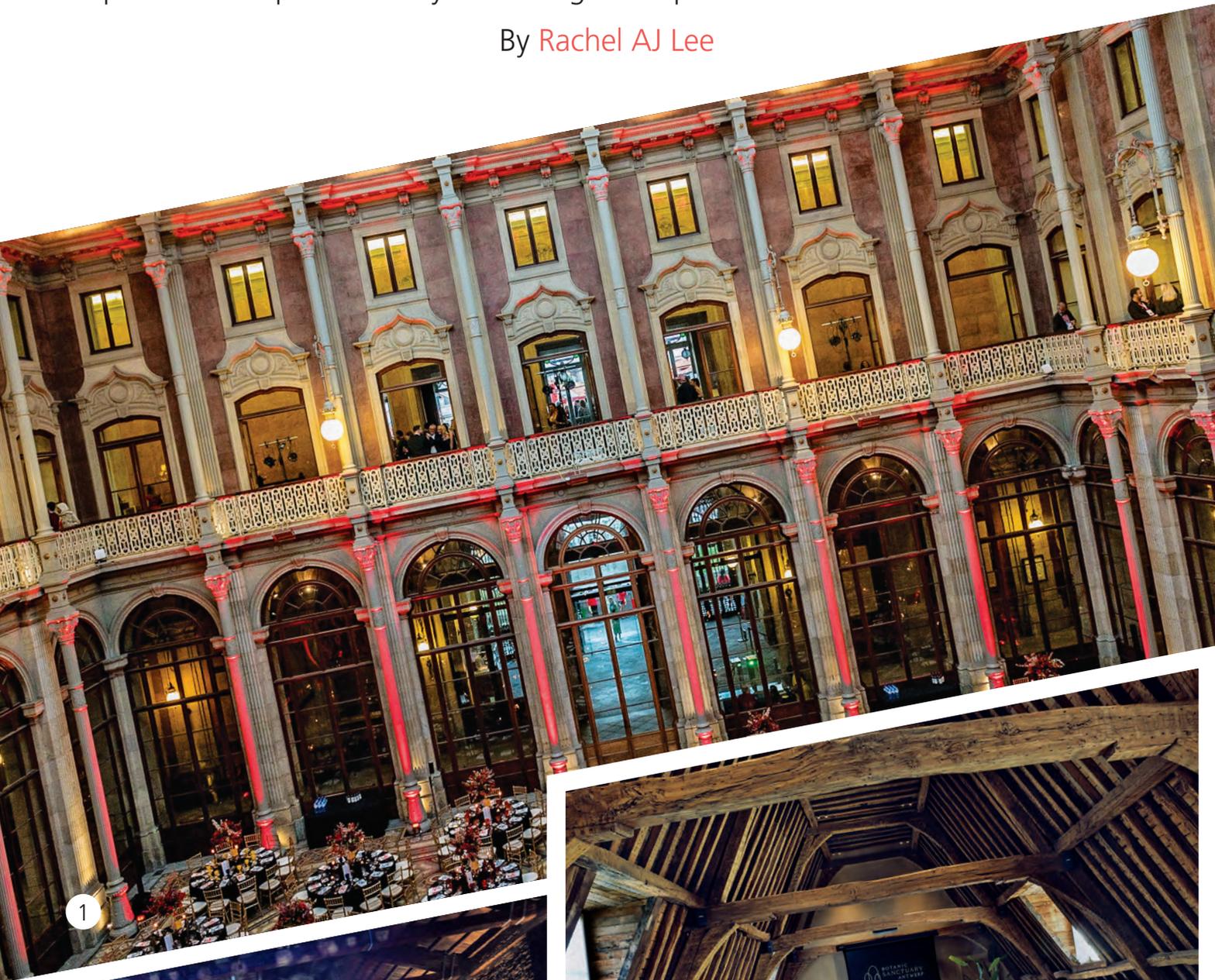


The Battery Show Asia is one of three shows under Informa Markets making its Asian debut

# Grand gatherings

From a glittering neoclassical palace to a historic monastery, here are five event spaces in Europe that every discerning event planner should have on their radar

By [Rachel AJ Lee](#)



### 1. Palácio da Bolsa, Portugal

Built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Palácio da Bolsa serves as the headquarters of the Porto Commercial Association, and is a National Monument recognised for its impressive neoclassical architecture and luxurious interiors.

The 506m<sup>2</sup> marble atrium, Pátio das Nações, is able to take 550 pax banquet-style, while the gilded Arabian Room can take up to 220 pax banquet-style. Inspired by the Alhambra Palace in Granada, The Arab Room – covered in intricate gold leaf and Arabic motifs – took 18 years to complete, and is used to welcome heads of state and official delegations.

### 2. Magazin Grando, Slovenia

Located right by the sea in Portorose on the way to Piran, is this former salt warehouse. Dating back to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, salt workers brought the annual yield from their personal storage buildings in salt pans to this warehouse at the end of the salt-harvesting season.

The building features 2.5m-thick walls and approximately 28m-long supporting beams, with even longer one-piece wooden beams above them – the longest of their kind in Slovenia. Magazin Grando's capacity ranges from 200 to a maximum of 1,500 people, and can be divided into four sections.

### 3. Botanic Sanctuary Antwerp, Belgium

This five-star hotel is housed in a former monastery dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Originally part of the Saint Elisabeth hospital complex founded in 1238, the monastery once served as a spiritual and healing centre run by religious orders. Over the centuries, it was expanded to include a chapel (still standing today as the oldest structure on-site), a rectory, guesthouses, and a medicinal herb garden that evolved into Antwerp's renowned Botanical Garden.

The property offers 108 rooms and 14 event spaces ranging from intimate rooms to grand halls, with capacities of up to 350 guests. On-site catering is provided by Silverspoon, led by three-star Michelin chef Viki Geunes.

### 4. Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre, Iceland

This striking waterfront landmark in Reykjavik was designed by Danish firm Henning Larsen Architects in collaboration with Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson, and offers a variety of multifunctional spaces.

Eldborg is the striking centrepiece of Harpa, instantly recognisable for its bold, fiery red interior inspired by Iceland's volcanic landscapes. The hall seats up to 1,700 guests, and is apt for concerts, performances, and large events. Meanwhile, Silfurberg is the venue's largest conference venue, seating up to 840 guests in a flexible, high-tech environment. There are also four cosy meeting rooms for up to six people each on Harpa's fourth floor.

### 5. Finlandia Hall, Finland

After three years of renovation, Finlandia Hall – designed by Finnish architect Alvar Aalto – reopened earlier this year in January 2025. Housed in the main building, the largest meeting space is the Finlandia Hall Auditorium with 1,672 seats, while other spaces include the Congress Hall with 900 seats, and the Helsinki Hall Auditorium with 340 seats. There are also 15 smaller meeting rooms.

F&B options include Finlandia Bistro, serving modern dishes made with Finnish ingredients; and Finlandia Café & Wine, a 100-seater option with a viewing terrace. There is also a shop specialising in Finnish products, as well as two apartments that can be booked. Originally designed as staff residences, the restored apartments have been decorated in Aalto's style.



# APAC business travel thrives despite global flux

By Rachel AJ Lee

While the recent US tariffs may have a slight dampening effect on the global corporate travel market, this very disruption presents a significant opportunity for the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region to flourish.

"There are five APAC markets – China, Japan, South Korea, India, and Australia – in the top 15 business travel spending markets, making up a total of US\$551.7 billion. Indonesia is also moving up quickly, and I think Singapore may surpass Thailand in the next few years," Suzanne Neufang, CEO of Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), said.

She pointed out: "When there's trade disruptions, there are opportunities for someone else. I think the business travel sector will be looking

at enabling new partnerships, with or without the US."

When asked if there has been a noticeable decline of inbound corporate travel into the US, according to GBTA research, government actions have not deterred most foreign companies from holding meetings in the US. However, 12 per cent of buyers outside the US said their company has cancelled meetings in the US, or have relocated meetings (14 per cent) or events (10 per cent) outside the US.

Neufang explained that the statistics are currently "heavily skewed toward Canadian reluctance", and based on the recent GBTA's Convention Supplier Summit in Denver, there has been no change in global attendance. Neufang also expects the situation in US to stabilise soon, given that the

FIFA World Cup will be taking place in the country in 2026.

Still, this small shift could be an opening for APAC destinations. "As APAC is a little bit concerned (about the situation), the region can tap onto this uncertainty and benefit from it by attracting more events here," she explained. It helps that business travel professions are very resilient, as they are used to travelling even during uncertainty and disruptions, she adds.

GBTA is largely optimistic about APAC's potential, and for the last three years, been the association's fastest-growing region. Over the past two years, the GBTA office in Singapore has grown to five people, while the annual GBTA APAC Conference, has seen consistent year-on-year growth, and may soon outgrow the Raffles City

Convention Centre location.

"We have just established Advisory Boards in India and China, and have done networking events in other APAC destinations like Japan. We also have a fairly large delegation from China this year at the GBTA APAC Conference.

"The conference itself isn't just for Singapore anymore, but an international event," Neufang stated.

**GBTA's  
CEO  
Suzanne  
Neufang**



## GBTA APAC Committee bolsters ranks



From left: Amex GBT's Kaori Pereyra-Lago; MSD International's Adeline Kang; and Cvent's Navodit Srivastava

The 10-member Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) APAC Meetings & Events Committee, formed in February, will be adding three more members in the coming weeks to achieve a 50-50 buyer/seller mix to better develop strategic meetings manage-

ment (SMM) programmes and encourage higher adoption in the region.

While SMM is not new, committee chair Brenda Quek said Asia-Pacific is "not as mature" compared to other regions, citing differing organisational structures and where

there is no one-size-fits-all.

Quek, EY global meetings and events services lead and APAC travel lead, added corporate structures may often have different travel programme and meetings and events strategies and non-aligned interests.

As managed travel and meetings and events programmes differ, corporate travel managers need "to know the meetings and events process".

"They may struggle a bit if the meeting objective is not aligned and it is also dependent on where meetings and events sits in the corporate structure. While TMCs can offer venue sourcing, the event planner needs an end-to-end plan where the buyer is looking to drive efficiency, increase audience engagement and offer stakeholder ROI," she continued.

At the GBTA APAC Conference *Revolutionising SMM with*

*Event Technology education* session, presented by the APAC committee, 81 per cent of attendees polled would consider a meetings and events strategy.

"The education journey is important. There was unanimous consensus the region is not as mature, and the committee's goal is to create small learning modules like podcasts and webinars based on topics suggested," Quek commented.

Consolidation with proper thinking for a framework and cost is important, was suggested. Another observation was the situation of Internal meetings teams managing events remaining largely unchanged from a decade ago, and there needs to be a move towards working with agencies and providers of end-to-end sourcing. – **Caroline Boey**

# Unpacking India's momentum

As India's burgeoning economy fuels business expansion and global collaboration, the exhibition industry is experiencing a strong post-pandemic resurgence, according to Messe Stuttgart India's CEO Gaurav Sood

By Rohit Kaul

## Congratulations on your appointment as the CEO of Messe Stuttgart India. Could you share more about your priorities?

Messe Stuttgart has made remarkable strides in India, particularly with the success of shows like LogiMAT India. Our portfolio also includes DIDAC India, Asia's largest education-focused exhibition. My immediate priority is to continue strengthening these flagship events, while exploring opportunities to expand our event portfolio and deepen industry partnerships.

This year, we are launching a new show, DIDAC Skills, which will address the growing demand for skilling, reskilling and upskilling India's workforce. We also aim to introduce more of Messe Stuttgart's global portfolio to the Indian market in the near future.

## What is the current state of the exhibition industry in India and which key business sectors are driving its growth?

The exhibition industry in India has witnessed significant growth post-Covid. Most companies have not only recovered but have surpassed their pre-pandemic performance.

According to data from the Indian Exhibition Industry Association, the sector is currently growing at a CAGR of approximately 10.3 per cent. The industry is projected to reach a value of US\$1.3 billion by the end of this year, up from US\$700 million in 2019.

This upward trajectory reinforces the crucial role exhibitions play in India's economic progress. Several sectors are fuelling this growth namely e-commerce, FMCG, infrastructure, manufacturing, healthcare, IT and pharmaceuticals. As these sectors expand, exhibitions are becoming vital platforms for business development, networking, showcasing innovations and tracking industry trends.

## What are the key factors contributing to the current momentum?

Rapid industrialisation, digitisation and continuous technological innovation play a major role. The vibrant startup ecosystem and government initiatives like 'Make in India' have further boosted

manufacturing and its ancillary industries.

Exhibitions have evolved into dynamic platforms where companies can present new products, engage with clients and distributors and receive direct market feedback.

## Are there many international exhibitors at these exhibitions?

We are seeing a steady increase in international participation at Indian exhibitions. At some of our recent events, up to 20 per cent of exhibitors have been international, accompanied by strong overseas visitor delegations. Countries such as Australia, Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Spain, Taiwan, Singapore and the US are actively participating.

## With the economic and infrastructure development of India's secondary cities, how do you see these markets evolving as exhibition venues?

The growth of tier-two and tier-three cities has led to a decentralisation of economic activity, creating new opportunities for the exhibition sector. Improved connectivity via air and rail and increasing commercial activity in these regions are opening doors to untapped markets and industry clusters that were previously underserved.

While these emerging cities present promising avenues for hosting exhibitions, infrastructure remains a challenge. Compared to metro cities, tier-two and tier-three markets often face limitations in terms of venue quality and reliable suppliers. However, with thoughtful planning and strategic focus on regional industries, these markets are becoming increasingly viable for exhibitions. We are already seeing major players exploring and organising events in these locations.

## Recently, India has seen the addition of modern event venues like Yashobhoomi (India International Convention & Expo Centre) and Bharat Mandapam. How are such developments impacting the ability to host large-scale events?

These state-of-the-art venues are a tremendous boost for exhibition organisers like us. They enable us to host large-scale, high-quality events seamlessly and significantly improve the overall experience for both exhibitors and attendees. Additionally, these venues help position India as a serious contender in the global business events arena.

## What are the key challenges that need to be addressed?

One of the critical issues we face is the lack of a streamlined approval process. We are advocating for a single-window clearance system, which would simplify permissions and improve the ease of doing business. Currently, organisers have to liaise with multiple government bodies for approvals, which slows down the planning process.





# 27

## TOP INCENTIVE IDEAS

From a vintage-style train in Thailand and island hopping in Indonesia, to clambering over natural formations in the Philippines and getting up close with wildlife in Australia, top achievers have a world of options to pick as their reward

By TTGmice reporters



01

### Harmony in motion

In the heart of Toyama Prefecture, groups can experience a two-day, one-night tranquil retreat in the World Heritage Site of Gokayama, renowned for its untouched landscapes and traditional way of life. All accommodations are in the village's famed thatched-roofed homes, where meals featuring mountain-grown vegetables and fresh fish are served around traditional irori hearths.

Optional add-ons include Japanese papermaking, a performance of local folk songs and a visit to the village museum. Fees for the package, which is available year-round, start at 13,000 yen (US\$91) per person.



02

### A walk on the wild side

Discover an unforgettable experience at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary (CWS), where conservation and culture come alive. CWS has been conserving native wildlife and nurturing the local indigenous heritage for over 75 years. Enjoy private tours of the onsite Wildlife Hospital, caring for over 14,000 animals annually, and immerse yourself in traditional Aboriginal dance and storytelling. Groups of up to 200 people can be hosted at The Homestead banquet-style, where paddock-to-plate dining showcases Australian flavours and produce.

Incentive groups can customise a private experience to get up close encounters with access to the enclosures, have a morning tea in the Koala Nursery with specialist conservation talks and activation, or go on behind-the-scenes hospital tours or enclosure tours to see the animals up close.

03

### Island hopping

The Tanjung Kelayang Reserve, a 350-hectare UNESCO Global Geopark on Belitung Island, Bangka-Belitung Province, Indonesia, is a protected natural environment. Bluemind Experience facilitates a full-day programme for up to 50 participants within this reserve.

The day will commence at the Sheraton Belitung Resort beachfront, where participants will embark on a private boat journey through the Geopark's islands. This excursion reveals 213-million-year-old rock formations, notably Pulau Batu Berlayar (Sailing Rock), with its striking granite emerging from turquoise waters.

The trip then proceeds to Pulau Lengkuas (Galangal Island) to visit the 1882 lighthouse and snorkel among vibrant coral reefs. Following a fresh seafood lunch on Kelayang Island, the itinerary includes visits to Garuda Rock Island and Pulau Pasir (sandbank).

Evenings offer the possibility of culminating on a Private Island for an awards ceremony or a themed dinner beneath the stars.



04

### The rock challenge

Embark on a half-day, adrenaline-packed adventure to the Rock Viewpoint in Khammouane Province's Phou Hin Boun National Protected Area with Green Discovery Laos.

Not for the faint hearted, this adventure sees nine guests brave Laos' only spider net bridge, climb the via ferrata to fly above one of Asia's largest limestone forests, soak up stunning vistas of the nature reserve from various ziplines and suspended bridges before enjoying more splendid views during lunch at Phou Pha Marn Visitor's Centre.



06

### Desert delights

For incentive groups heading to Dubai, a quintessential experience awaits in the majestic desert. Arranged by FCM Travel, this adventure begins with exhilarating 4x4 transfers across the golden dunes.

As dawn breaks, groups can soar above the stunning landscapes on a hot air balloon adventure. This serene aerial journey offers an intimate setting to enjoy breathtaking vistas, complemented by a traditional breakfast served amidst the scenic desert backdrop. This experience is best enjoyed outside of the summer months.



Richard Jullian/shutterstock

05

### White Lotus lore

The Lotus Awakening Escape is an extraordinary four-night retreat through Phuket and Koh Samui.

From lotus rituals at ancient temples to sound healing, walk in the footsteps of *The White Lotus* characters in a journey that blends heritage, culture, and serenity with curated experiences that offer an insight into the three Anantara properties that were settings for the HBO show. Immerse in shooting locations through experiences like the Passage of the Lotus and exclusive Tree Tops dining, including a stay in the White Lotus Villa – Belinda's accommodation throughout the show.

07

### Coastal discovery

This 3.5-hour outing organised by Go Park Sports takes nine guests to Sham Chung, a Hakka village established in the north-west of the Sai Kung Peninsula more than 140 years ago.

Starting from Go Park Aqua, the journey begins with a boat ride, offering scenic views of the Kei Ling Ha Hoi coastline and surrounding mountains. In 15 minutes, the boat arrives at Sham Chung Pier. A guided stroll then leads through lush meadows to the revamped Epiphany of Our Lord Chapel, followed by a walk across a vast grassland, concluding with a Hakka-style lunch in the village.



**08** **Hidden gems**

Swissôtel The Bosphorus, Istanbul offers a Bosphorus Prestige Experience programme good for groups of up to 10. Onsite experiences include signature treatments at Pürovel Spa & Sport such as Turkish hammam rituals; Turkish wine and *raki* (traditional alcoholic beverage) tastings led by local sommeliers; and a sunset cruise with live music, cocktails and views of Istanbul's iconic skyline. Meanwhile, offsite experiences include VIP guided tours of the Old City; a private culinary walk through Karaköy or Galata with local chefs; and Turkish coffee fortune-reading workshops.

**09** **Celestial nights**

This incentive experience takes groups through Masungi Georeserve's limestone paths, guided solely by stars and lanterns for a truly intimate and unique journey. At a scenic rock peak, a group of up to 20 participants can enjoy traditional hot chocolate and rice cakes while stargazing with experts from the Philippine Astronomical Society, who will share captivating stories of the cosmos. The evening culminates with an organic dinner, wrapped in banana leaves and prepared by the local community, served deep within the forest – a memorable finale for the team.



Philippine Astronomical Society



**10** **Sacred beliefs**

Follow in the footsteps of Angkorian kings and discover Cambodia's most sacred mountain and birthplace of the Khmer Empire, Phnom Kulen. Khiri Travel Cambodia has curated a thrilling overnight adventure that combines history with culture, heritage, nature and local life. The 13km trek, led by a local ranger, snakes through jungle and farmland, taking in hidden 9th century temples and ancient relics. After camping overnight, the adventure continues with a visit to an artisan community and lunch at a local house before returning to nearby Siem Reap.



**11** **Race to the top**

Situated at the Lisboeta Hotel, the brand-new Fun Fun Kart opened its doors earlier this year, introducing Macau's first indoor karting experience. Designed for private events, team-building, and corporate buyouts, the 170m race track features a design inspired by Macau Grand Prix's iconic Guia Hairpin. The electric go-kart fleet features Italian OTL Karting Superleggero models, and is suited for group sizes ranging from 40 to 100 people. Beyond racing, the venue also serves as a dynamic space for events or parties, providing F&B options and live entertainment, including a DJ until 23.00.

**12** **Afloat on an Airstream**

Begin the day with a cruise aboard The Airstream Project, a handcrafted, electric-powered vessel inspired by classic 1960s Airstream trailers, WWII aircraft, and Italian speed boats. Designed for groups of up to 18, this stylish and serene journey with Pure Cruise New Zealand takes groups through the native bays and coves of Lake Rotoiti. Relax with a delicious morning tea served on board while soaking up the scenery. Along the way, groups have the option to swim from private beaches, explore glow worm caves, or unwind with a soak in the natural geothermal hot pools. With fold-out lounges that bring guests even closer to the lake's beauty, this tailored cruise is delivered with warm, local hospitality and thoughtful touches at every turn. The minimum charter length is three hours, priced at NZ\$1,300 (US\$773) inclusive of GST, with additional hours at NZ\$400.





Dream Forest Langkawi

### 13 Legends awaken

Step into the enchanting realm of Dream Forest Langkawi, where cultural heritage and innovation intertwine on a curated evening walk through a tropical rainforest. Experience a mesmerising lights and sound storytelling dinner at the Tree Village, where Langkawi's legends spring to life.

A lively cultural *caklempong* (a traditional Malay percussion instrument) performance, traditionally featured during ceremonies and celebrations, adds a dynamic musical experience, inviting delegates to immerse themselves in the island's rich heritage.

Arranged by Canary Tours, this activity is good for up to groups of 100 delegates.



### 14 No wasting allowed

Go on a guided walking tour to the back of the house at Desa Potato Head in Bali, and learn how waste is treated and turned into something useful.

The tour ends with a workshop for guests, such as making bio candles and amenities out of waste, or transforming plastic waste into products in the Plastic Panel workshop. Each participant will also get to take home the product they create during the workshop, packed in a naturally dyed pouch made from upcycled linen.

This 90-minute tour can take up to a maximum of 15 participants at one time.



Tourism Australia

### 15 Ancient traditions

Luxury Lodge of Australia El Questro Homestead in the Kimberley, Western Australia, offers a new cultural and spiritual immersion experience called Injiid Marlabu Calls Us.

This two-hour experience invites guests to engage deeply with the land and waters and is led by Traditional Owners.

Up to 25 guests can participate in an ancient healing ritual and pathfinder, and explore the significance of the Coolamon, a carrying vessel that plays a significant role in Aboriginal Australian 'Motherhood'. The experience is available exclusively to El Questro guests on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

### 16 Echoes and evolution

Uncover the secrets of Singapore's past and present on this 1.5-km walking tour with The Traveller DMC – Singapore Night Odyssey: Unveiling City Secrets & Colonial Heritage – an ideal addition to any incentive itinerary.

The three-hour experience begins at the renowned Raffles Hotel before winding its way towards CHIJMES, a historically significant complex featuring Gothic architecture. The tour then proceeds to Capitol Singapore, a meticulously restored Art Deco landmark. Participants will also explore the Civil District, home to prominent landmarks such as the Supreme Court, City Hall, and Parliament House.



DerekTeo/shutterstock



### 17 A hilly charm

Once the summer capital of British India, Shimla is located in the Himalayan foothills.

Incentive groups of up to 80 people can enjoy a dining experience at WelcomHeritage Elysium Resort & Spa's Prince's Perch, a greenhouse-style rooftop dining venue that provides an unparalleled 360-degree panoramic view of the location.

Some of the delicacies served includes Fish Mornay (fish baked in creamy cheese sauce), Railway Mutton Curry (mutton cooked with spicy onion, tomato and potato, flavoured with coconut milk), and Bouquetiere de Legumes (steamed asparagus and green peas).

**18 Living earth**

Uncover what it is like to live alongside an active volcano in Kagoshima, southern Kyushu.

The customisable walking tour traverses Sakurajima, a town of a few thousand residents known for its volcano, fertile volcanic soil that produces giant daikon radish, and pottery made from volcanic ash. A volcanology expert will introduce the history of the 13,000-year-old volcano, including how the island of Sakurajima became connected to the mainland following an eruption in 1914.

For groups of up to 40 people, the experience is led by one guide and costs ¥55,000 (US\$384).



**19 Cruising in style**

This 78-foot, double-decker event yacht redefines luxury on the water, offering over 278m<sup>2</sup> of floating entertainment space in Victoria Harbour.

Beyond standard harbour cruises, additional itineraries can include a Southern Island cruise by Repulse Bay or a seafood dinner at Lamma Island. To enhance the experience, live bands and F&B options are available, as are additional activities like yoga workshops, perfume workshops, and wine tastings.

The maximum cruising capacity is 50 guests. A standard harbour cruise package begins at HK\$48,000 (US\$6,115) + 10 per cent service charge for 50 guests, covering free-flow non-alcoholic beverages and essential AV equipment (screens, TV, microphone, projector, speakers).

**20 Natural wonders**

Explore the rock formations, moss-covered boulders, and moist crevices sculpted by centuries of water and air that lend a stunning, almost mystical quality to the Tutulari Inararo Avatar Gorge in Pampanga, Philippines. This paradise within the ancestral domain of the indigenous Aeta community was discovered only several years ago.

Then hike off to Puning Hot Spring, formed by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo, to soak in its hot and cold pools and get buried in a hot sand before being covered in mud, for a relaxing and cleansing ablation. This tour is organised by Pinatubo Mountainero, for up to 12 pax per group.



**21 Executive escapes**

Located near Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan, India, Aamaghati Wildlife

Resort offers accommodation perfect for exploring local wildlife, including tigers. Jungle safaris are available upon request, accompanied by expert guides. On clear nights, stargazing can also be enjoyed.

Suitable for groups of up to 250 people, evenings can feature an outdoor high tea under a Mango tree, complete with displays of local arts and crafts like pottery and bangle making, alongside musical performances. A unique touch: each room number begins with 'T', mirroring the numbering system for tigers in Ranthambore National Park.

**22 A timeless journey**

Step aboard The Blue Jasmine, a luxury rail journey like no other, winding through five culturally rich provinces of Thailand aboard a restored 1960s sleeper train.

This exquisite nine-day experience blends historic elegance with immersive, off-the-beaten-track excursions – from temple-strewn Ayutthaya to artisanal Sukhothai. Culminating in a riverside finale at the heritage Siri Sala villa in Bangkok, this private charter delivers exclusivity and Thai heritage at its finest.

Offered by DTH Travel, the Blue Jasmine train can comfortably accommodate up to 37 passengers across its 10 wagons.





**23** **Fold of honour**  
 For a captivating cultural experience, delegates can explore the rich symbolism behind the *tanjak*, traditional Malay headgear. More than just folded cloth, the *tanjak* signifies rank, heritage, and identity. With over 208 documented folding styles, each variation tells a unique story.  
 Participants will learn how the *tanjak* serves as non-verbal communication, conveying status, allegiance, and pride through intricate folds that honour centuries of tradition. This activity is organised within a heritage building in Kuala Lumpur by Dusky Leaf Adventures.

**24** **Up and away**  
 Treat your star employees to the ultimate high and discover Laos from the sky with a luxurious helicopter ride with Khiri Travel Laos.  
 Fly high above the stunning Nam Ngum Reservoir, often called "The Sea of Laos". Witness Vang Vieng's dramatic limestone mountains from an incredible vantage point, or uncover the secrets of the Plain of Jars from the sky. The company also provide helicopter transfers from Vientiane to Luang Prabang, ensuring a stylish and efficient journey for delegates.



**25** **Gastronomic jaunt**  
 Organised by Macau Explorer Cultural Travel and Go Out Mall, this three-hour culinary tour is guided by a reputable chef, providing a hands-on culinary experience for incentive groups.  
 For example, chef Justin Paul (formerly of Michelin-star Golden Peacock) will lead participants through a local wet market to handpick fresh ingredients for a subsequent cooking session.  
 The tour, designed for eight to 20 participants, also includes exploring Macau's hidden alleys and sampling iconic street snacks.

**26** **Puppet legacy**  
 Delve into Cambodia's rich culture with a shadow puppet theatre class.  
 The sacred art form of *Sbek Thom* – a UNESCO listed cultural treasure – has been entertaining Cambodians since pre-Angkorian times with towering puppets made of intricately-carved leather used to tell the tale of the *Reamker*, the Khmer version of the Ramayana.  
 The Sovanna Phum Art Association offers private puppet-making and dance workshops in Phnom Penh, giving visitors the unique chance to learn more about the UNESCO-listed art form that teeters on the brink of extinction.

**27** **Sky-high sojourn**  
 Embark on an unforgettable aerial journey with Volcanic Air, exploring Rotorua's iconic volcanic landscapes. This experience starts with a 30-minute scenic floatplane flight, providing breathtaking views above Mount Tarawera and the Waimangu Volcanic Valley.  
 Ideal for groups up to 15, the experience culminates with a private landing at Lake Rototi's secluded hot pools. Here, guests will enjoy a 90-minute soak in seven geothermal springs, accessible exclusively by air or water.





# A region rises

Dubai, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain lead the Middle East's business events surge with landmark events and infrastructure investments

By Rohit Kaul

Three destinations in the Gulf region – Dubai, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain – are demonstrating strong growth in the global business events market, where these nations have reported increased event wins and significant investments aimed at attracting international business events.

For example in 2024, Dubai secured a record 437 events across various sectors, projected to attract an estimated 210,731 delegates to the city in the coming years.

Among the key event wins for 2025 include the WFNS World Congress of Neurosurgery with 4,000 delegates; 2025 Asia Pacific Cities Summit & Mayor Summit with 1,200 delegates; 2025 Pan Arab Radiology Conference with 1,500 delegates; 2026 Global Symposium on Health System Research with 3,000 delegates; and 2026 FIP World Stamp Exhibition with 1,000 delegates.

“As part of the Department of Economy and Tourism and aligned with the Dubai Economic Agenda D33, Dubai Business Events (DBE) is committed to positioning the emirate as a premier business event destination.

◀ **The glittering Museum of The Future set against the Dubai skyline**

“The bureau's strategic partnerships with hotels, venues and event service providers, combined with Dubai's connectivity, safety, and diverse attractions, solidify its reputation as the top MICE destination in the Middle East,” said Karina Lance, associate vice president, DBE.

Over in Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom successfully secured the bid for Riyadh Expo 2030, an event anticipated to be transformative. This year, Saudi Arabia will be hosting major events like Global Infrastructure Expo (September 15-17), the largest infrastructure trade event in Saudi Arabia; Saudi Event Show (September 17-18) for the business events industry; and Cityscape Global (November 17-20), the region's top real estate gathering.

“Saudi's T-MICE (tourism MICE) strategy is aiming to position our country as a global hub for MICE tourism,” said Alhasan Aldabbagh, president of APAC Markets at Saudi Tourism Authority. He added that in Asia Pacific, key markets include China, India, South Korea and Japan.

Fahd bin Abdul Mohsen Al-Rasheed, chairman of the board of directors, Saudi Conventions & Exhibitions General Authority (SCEGA), pointed out that Saudi Arabia's business events sector has grown

steadily at around nine per cent per year since SCEGA's establishment in 2018.

Moving forward, Saudi Arabia's business events ambitions are underpinned by a US\$800 billion investment in the tourism sector, which includes the development of state-of-the-art venues designed to host large-scale events. Complementing this is a rapidly growing hospitality pipeline, with 500,000 hotel rooms coming online by 2030, ensuring there is ample capacity to accommodate business events delegates.

“We are investing a lot in (business events) infrastructure. In Riyadh alone, we're building one million square meters of exhibition space, adding 7,000 hotel rooms, increasing the capacity of our airport to 120 million passengers a year, and launching a new airline called Riyadh Air, which will connect us with 100 new cities around the world,” Fahd elaborated.

“With 60 per cent of the world's population just an eight-hour flight away and direct connections to 170 international destinations, Saudi offers unparalleled accessibility for global delegates. This strategic advantage combined with its forward-thinking vision and world-class infrastructure makes Saudi the destination of choice for hosting impactful events on the global stage,” added Alhasan.



**Guided by the vision of our city's leadership, business events continue to play a vital role in bolstering tourism to Dubai and supporting its wider economic priorities...**

Ahmed Al Khaja  
CEO, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment



Business tourism is also a key pillar of Bahrain's five-year tourism strategy, said Fatima bint Jaffer Al Sairafi, minister of tourism, and chairman of the Bahrain Tourism & Exhibitions Authority, during the ICCA Congress 2024 in Abu Dhabi.

"A key project supporting that is Exhibition World Bahrain (EWB), which is a gamechanger that has helped the Kingdom to position itself as a regional and international MICE hub. It is one of the biggest venues in the region with cutting-edge facilities," she commented.

Landmark events last year include the 9<sup>th</sup> UN Tourism World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism and the 29<sup>th</sup> Routes World 2024, both making their inaugural appearance at EWB and in the Middle East. Together, these events attracted thousands of participants from over 100 countries, and over 100 international exhibitors.

Recently, EWB introduced an incentive programme to support major international organisers and associations to host their events in Bahrain at the venue. The programme is a collaborative effort, directly supported by Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority.



### Hot air balloon experience in AIUla

Fatima also pointed out that even though there is a mandate to promote our countries independently as a business events destination, Fatima stressed that there is "real power when we promote our countries in the GCC collectively".

It is good news that the long-pending Unified Tourist Visa for Gulf Cooperation

Council (GCC) countries has received official approval and is set for rollout soon. The visa will allow seamless travel across the six GCC nations – UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait – under a single permit. It is expected to launch by late 2025 or early 2026. – **additional reporting by Rachel AJ Lee**

## Case in point

# Savouring success

By Rohit Kaul



In April 2025, FCM Travel cooked up an unforgettable five-day programme in Dubai for 190 leaders from a top multinational in the food manufacturing industry.

Delegates from across the GCC and Middle East converged for an enriching blend of leadership training, operational insights, and vibrant cultural immersion.

The luxurious Sofitel Dubai The Palm served as the delegates' home base. Upon arrival, attendees were given ample personal time to explore at their leisure, with FCM providing tailored suggestions to help them savour the best of Dubai.

Day two kicked off with a leadership training at the company's headquarters, followed by a visit to the factory. As the sun

set, delegates gathered for a group dinner at Asil Dubai, a modern Middle Eastern restaurant in Dubai Marina.

The third day's programme began with a guided half-day city tour that showcased Dubai's iconic landmarks. Lunch was a global culinary journey at World Eatery, offering a diverse spread to satisfy every taste bud. The evening culminated in a memorable Marina Dinner Cruise, blending entertainment with relaxed networking.

Day four was a choose-your-own-adventure, allowing delegates to either explore the city independently or unwind and enjoy the resort's amenities. The programme concluded on the fifth day with a relaxed morning, followed by check-out and seamless airport transfers.

As this was the client's inaugural experience with FCM, the team meticulously planned for every contingency. On-site technical staff, spare microphones, and backup plans for weather disruptions, medical emergencies, or accommodation issues ensured a flawlessly executed programme.

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# Worth the wait

Macau's outlook remains upbeat for the rest of the year, driven by the return of longhaul markets and successful new market expansion

By Prudence Lui

Macau began 2025 on a strong note, recording 413 business events in the first quarter, an increase of 77 events year-on-year. These gatherings attracted 188,000 participants and attendees, marking a 3.7 per cent rise compared to the same period last year.

In February 2025, Macau's Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) made its first foray into the Middle East. Seeking new markets, IPIM carried out investment and business events promotion activities in Dubai, UAE, and Riyadh, participating in two Middle East Market Tourism and MICE Destination Promotion and Networking Seminars organised by Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

MGTO also organised "Macao Tourism + MICE Product Updates Seminar & Travel Mart" from April to July 2025 in major Asia-Pacific cities. An MGTO spokesperson stated that South-east Asian cities also remain a key target market.

For 2H2025, Macau's business events industry is relatively upbeat despite geopolitical uncertainties.

Bruno Simões, the founder of DOC DMC Macau, anticipates a robust last quarter, similar to what he experienced in 2024. "Despite some volatility in the first half of the year, I expect confidence to return as companies seek to maximise their annual budgets.

As such, Simões is "actively pursuing events" such as a major sports event, which is a "fast-growing segment in Macau". The company is also hosting a conference focusing on business opportunities in Portuguese-speaking countries, aligning with its role as a bridge between China and Lusophone markets.

Meanwhile, Sands China has enhanced its meeting offerings with the launch of The Londoner Grand – a Luxury Collection Hotel on June 8, 2025.

"When we converted Sands Cotai Central into The Londoner Macao, it truly became a 'resort within a resort' complex. This means we can now offer a more exclusive and intimate meetings experience than you might ordinarily find at The Venetian," explained Sands China's vice president of sales, Stephanie Tanpure.

The Londoner Macao boasts five hotels, where The Venetian and The Parisian each have only one.

"The Londoner property's focus on lux-

ury MICE offerings has been significantly intensified. We're now collaborating with many of our retail brands and welcoming numerous C-suite MICE groups, often comprising 15 to 25 high-level executives, for luxury event or meeting programmes," she revealed.

The company's eyes are on the Saudi Arabia market, which is primarily a "high-net-worth market".

"There is a niche for C-suite events, where our properties are well-suited to support that calibre of traveller. And Hong Kong has also recently started direct flights into the region, which is obviously a key gateway for us," Tanpure explained.

To better market the new property, the group will be attending ILTM Asia Pacific in Singapore, and ILTM Cannes. A mega fam trip in 1Q2026 is also in the works, Tanpure told *TTGmice*.

"About 300 international luxury MICE planners will be invited with a concentration of longhaul markets like UK, US, Europe and the Middle East," she said.

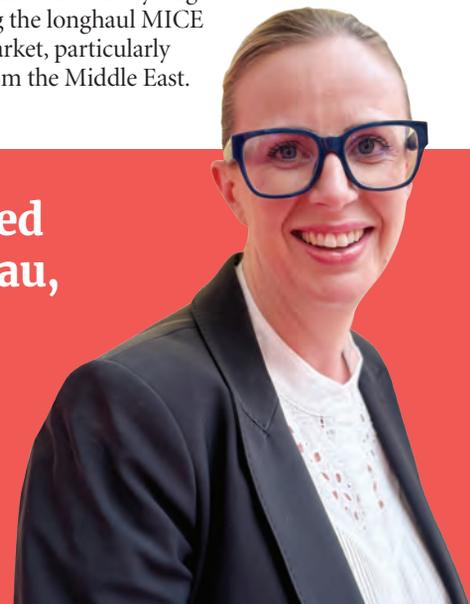
The St. Regis Macao's general manager, Stuart-Wayne Douglas, added: "Macau is actively targeting the longhaul MICE market, particularly from the Middle East.

## ◀ The Londoner, Macau



We are very optimistic and excited about the future of MICE in Macau, especially in light of the Government's diversification strategy, which aims to boost Macau's MICE industry.

Stephanie Tanpure  
Vice president of sales, Sands China





ft1 photo/shutterstock

Macau's striking skyline

The destination is simultaneously enhancing its Muslim-friendly credentials through initiatives such as the Halal Horizons Pavilion, which features certified products and prayer facilities, as well as industry training programmes.”

Future efforts will include fam trips for trade professionals and media, Arabic-language digital campaigns, and continued development of Halal-compliant services.

“These initiatives aim to position Macau as a competitive, culturally-sensitive business events destination for high-value Middle Eastern travellers, while also appealing to Muslim markets in South-east Asia and China. Such efforts align with Macau’s broader strategy to diversify its visitor base beyond gaming and traditional source markets,” Douglas indicated.

The property is strengthening its luxury business events positioning by hosting exclusive wellness events with brands like Lululemon, targeting high-net-worth travellers and corporate clients.

“These curated experiences – combining fitness, mindfulness, and networking–

enhance the hotel’s appeal for premium leisure stays, corporate retreats, and incentive travel,” he stated.

Tanpure further observed that international longhaul markets have also returned.

Sands Resorts Macao will welcome its largest US group since before the pandemic from August 24-27, the 2025 Million Dollar Round Table Global Conference. Following this, several groups from Australia are expected, with additional incentive groups from the US and Europe anticipated later this year.

“I believe that from this summer, following the Million Dollar Round Table conference, we’re on an upward trajectory to welcome significantly more of our international business back to both Hong Kong and Macau,” she opined.

Within Asia-Pacific, groups from South Korea and Japan are also returning.

She added: “People are wanting to get back and hold global events (as opposed to regional events during Covid due to travel restrictions), and we’re seeing some RFPs coming in for 2027 and 2028. - **additional reporting by Rachel AJ Lee**



# Across borders

By **Prudence Lui**

In March 2025, a direct sales company specialising in health and wellness products hosted a five-day incentive trip for 600 of its top-performing female delegates. Attendees travelled from Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Europe, and the US to participate.

According to event planner DOC DMC Macau & Hong Kong, the client selected Macau because the destination had the capability to comfortably accommodate a large group, and offered unique entertainment options like the Macau 2049 show.

While the client managed most of the itinerary, including show bookings and sightseeing, DOC DMC Macau & Hong Kong’s role was to provide reliable transport, professional guides, and support. A key challenge was the multiple luggage handling points via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge.

This route necessitated customs and immigration checks at both ends, significantly impacting luggage management for the 600 delegates. Each guest’s luggage required handling at six different points, creating enormous challenges in manpower planning, time management, and security, as every item needed meticulous tracking and matching.

To tackle this, a dedicated sub-team was formed, with each unit focusing on specific handover points along the route. They implemented a clear labelling system and



colour-coded identification tags to streamline the process. Detailed manifests were created in advance, and a real-time tracking system monitored all items. A standby team was also available on-site to resolve any last-minute issues or locate missing items. Ultimately, all luggage was delivered safely, on time, and without loss.

In total, 18 cross-border coaches were deployed to facilitate direct transfers from Marriott SkyCity in Hong Kong to Studio City in Macau. This operation demonstrated the capability in managing complex cross-border logistics for large incentive groups.

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# Stepping stones

Singapore aims to triple business event tourism receipts by 2040, exploring a new MICE Hub and event incubation amid global shifts and cost concerns

By **Rachel AJ Lee**

**T**he Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has set an ambitious goal to triple the tourism receipts generated by business events by 2040, aiming for the sector to contribute around 10 per cent of its targeted S\$47 billion (US\$36.5 billion) to S\$50 billion in overall tourism revenue.

To achieve this triple-fold goal, several initiatives to build Singapore's future pipeline of business events are underway. This includes exploring the feasibility of a MICE Hub in the downtown area, and launching a new Business Events Inspired pilot programme.

When asked about the difference between the MICE Hub, and venues such as Marina Bay Sands and Suntec City Convention Centre which already exist alongside lifestyle offerings, Ong Huey Hong, assistant chief executive, industry development group, STB, indicated that Singapore "needs to continue to look at expanding its MICE capacity".

"We want to triple our MICE contribution to tourism receipts, so we definitely need to have the capacity. We have observed that MICE travellers do not just visit Singapore for a business event. They are also interested in leisure offerings, such as F&B and lifestyle experiences, hence we are looking into the development of this MICE Hub," added Ong.

Together with Singapore Association of Convention & Exhibition Organisers & Suppliers, STB will also be introducing a new Business Events Inspired pilot programme to catalyse and grow the pipeline of business events in Singapore. This will be officially launched at the Singapore MICE Forum this month (July), Ong told *TTGmice*.

Under this pilot programme, event organisers will have access to mentorship, events consultancy services, and seed funding to develop quality events, with the goal of incubating them into impactful

international events.

Edward Koh, STB's executive director, conventions, meetings & incentive travel, told *TTGmice* at IMEX Frankfurt 2025, that Singapore's events pipeline is "very busy" up till 2032.

This year, major business events in Singapore include the inaugural World Sleep Congress 2025; LSI Asia 2025, the first edition of this medtech conference in Asia; the World Robot Olympiad International Finals; and the 30<sup>th</sup> edition of SEMICON South-east Asia, with over 18,000 delegates expected.

Looking ahead, the city-state is set to host the Herbalife Extravaganza 2026 with an anticipated 25,000 arrivals; while Sibos 2027, a major banking and finance conference, is estimated to attract 7,000 delegates.

Several new tradeshow will also be launched next year. Among these is the Passenger Terminal Expo Asia 2026, marking its debut in the Asia-Pacific region and expected to draw 3,500 aviation leaders. German trade fair organiser Messe Berlin, with its Asia Pacific Headquarters in Singapore, will launch Smart Health Asia 2026, a new event aimed at health and tech executives focused on digital innovation in healthcare. Additionally, UK-based event organiser Hyve is bringing its first event to Singapore with Breakbulk Asia 2026, the world's largest gathering for the project cargo and breakbulk industry, anticipating 3,500 attendees.

When asked about how Singapore's business events industry is shaping up given global uncertainties, Koh stated: "Singapore's image is still very strong. Our image is an image of trust, which is a currency in short supply these days, and appreciating. We're also not changing our brand – our brand of connectivity, accessibility, and innovation – and are trying to deepen it, to provide planners with assurance."

Wendy Teo, director of sales & marketing, Grand Hyatt Singapore, noted: "Singapore's strengths as a MICE destination is that it is safe, predictable, and has a stable



**With more people staying in the region, there are opportunities in certain markets we can tap into, such as regional corporate meetings.**

Wendy Teo  
director of sales  
& marketing,  
Grand Hyatt  
Singapore



◀ Singapore skyline

economy. Our challenge would probably be the higher costs of holding an event here. The reality is when an event planner chooses a different hotel or destination, it always boils down to costs.”

“Singapore remains one of the most desirable MICE destinations, but cost sensitivity is real – especially with the strong Singapore dollar. Organisers are increasingly comparing regional alternatives that offer compelling value,” Piotr Kupiec, general manager for Novotel and Mercure Singapore on Stevens, agreed.

But despite price sensitivities, Kupiec highlighted STB’s Business Event in Singapore (BEiS) Build Foundation incentive scheme, which helps local stakeholders defray costs when pursuing business events leads.

“While discussions with STB are still exploratory, we are proactively looking at how we can align with the BEiS Build Foundation scheme, particularly in the areas of digitalisation, experiential fam trips, and high-impact programming for emerging industries,” he shared.

Improving Orchard Road’s visibility is a priority for Teo. She explained: “The Marina Bay area usually gets more attention due

to the large-scale events it regularly hosts, thanks to the Bay Precinct Strategy. On our end, we need to change the perception that Orchard Road is just for shopping. Many hotels along Orchard Road also offer great meeting facilities, and the best part is that delegates can go out for a good meal, or some retail therapy to wind down.”

Overall, Teo remains “cautiously optimistic” about the hotel’s business events prospects, given that it only reopened a year ago after an extensive refurbishment.

While many loyal clients have returned, global uncertainties continue to prompt a “wait-and-see approach”.

For Kupiec, demand remains strong among sectors like FinTech, GreenTech, and Health & Wellness for the rest of 2025.

“If we are losing events in one direction, I would be very concerned. But the industry is very dynamic, and we win some, we lose some. Singapore continues to win a lot of events because (planners) see the value (in holding an event here),” Koh concluded.



**A business event in Grand Hyatt Singapore’s ballroom**

**Case in point**

**Pulse of progress**

By **Rachel AJ Lee**

Professional Convention Management Association’s (PCMA) flagship Asia Pacific conference, The Business of Events (BOE), was held at Marina Bay Sands from April 13-15, 2025.

Themed Master. Mind., Day Zero started off with a strategic think tank, whereas Day One kicked off with an AI-focused keynote by Addo’s CEO Ayesha Khanna, followed by breakout sessions across six themes.

Day Two expanded the conversation with 12 PCMA Labs – supercharging applied learning through hands-on experiences. Complementing these deep dives were two plenary sessions. The opening keynote offered an industry reflection on current opportunities by MCI’s global

executive vice president Oscar Cerezales; while the closing session featured David Knoff, an Antarctic Expedition Leader, discussing leadership and resilience based on his 537-day experience in Antarctica.

PCMA indicated that one of the challenges was balancing content relevance for a highly diverse Asia-Pacific audience, especially given the varying speeds of development across markets; there were 320 attendees from 15 countries.

“We solved this by curating a future-focused programme that blended global insights with local action, ensuring every session was highly practical, regardless of the participants’ market maturity,” Florence Chua, managing director, PCMA APAC, said.

Another challenge was maintaining engagement beyond the main stage. To address this, the interactive Labs and peer-led discussions enabled participants to actively participate, indulge in diverse perspectives and co-create solutions, rather than consuming content passively.

Through MBS’ partnership with Singapore’s National Arts Council, local musicians Shazza and Lewis Loh were also engaged to serenade the crowd during the networking on Day One and before the opening keynote on Day Two respectively.



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# Catch up with Gabrielle Doman-Kishi

The Westin Yokohama's Hotel and restaurants marketing manager shares how F&B plays an important role during business events

By Kathryn Wortley



## **What excites you most about the business events industry today?**

I am excited about business events becoming more human. Nobody enjoys an event that treats you like a conduit for your business.

Events that focus on connections, culture and creativity are much more engaging than those that are purely transactional and ROI-focused. While everything else in our lives seems to be increasingly robotic, the trend for business events seems to value humanity.

## **What makes a business event stand out for you?**

A standout event is one where I do not even notice the behind-the-scenes. There is a flow and professionalism that only comes from exceptional pre-event communication between all teams. That does not mean everything has to run to schedule or everything is pitch-perfect, but that the event team has aligned and can expect the unexpected.

## **How do you think F&B can add value to a business event?**

A love of good food and beverages is something every single one of us has in common.

A business event with a sad buffet of congealed foods reminds me of the saying, "how you do anything is how you do everything". It's a reflection on your brand. F&B is storytelling in edible form. It can be a great branding opportunity, spotlight the local culture and elevate networking moments.

## **What would you say is the best part of your job?**

It is an awful cliché to say that no two days are the same, but it is true. I thrive on different challenges, meeting new people, being creative and shaping a story. I get to think big and then figure out the nitty gritty of execution. I love the feeling of a project being well done and put to bed, then it starts over again with something totally different.

## Agency action

# Synchronised vision

By Kathryn Wortley

For The J Team, a Tokyo-based destination management business specialising in the planning and execution of business events in Japan, teamwork is so integral to operations that “team” is part of their company name.

Synergy among staff is the philosophy driving the business.

It is vital because of the nature of business events, an industry that involves numerous stakeholders and complex logistics, as well as bespoke elements and various participant needs.

“The key choreographed moments in any given event can be the inspiration of a single creative mind, but they have little lasting meaning unless they are underpinned by the highest level of service and attention to detail at every stage, significant or obscure, of the planning, preparation, production and after-care” of an event, explained James Kent, the company’s director and chief operating officer.

“This can only be achieved by a team in which everyone understands their role, and in



The J Team

which everyone shares the same ethos.”

To help ensure this environment, all staff are encouraged to give their all, and “to execute their assigned role to the best of their ability,” said Kent.

Team members, many of whom are Japan long-term residents, have embraced the company culture,

motivated by “a deep passion for Japan and a desire to help each guest at an event enjoy Japan as much as they can”, Kent shared.

He added: “The J Team was formed in 2009, when a crack unit of outsiders understood that Japan was still one of those places that held a lot of mystery and felt challenging for planners – and that those planners wanted something more from this country.”

Today, business event stakeholders are much more discerning about how Japan can add value to their events, such as through aspects of traditional culture, cuisine and creativity, but the team is equipped and motivated to meet their evolving needs, Kent noted.

## Grow

# Eco-conscious efforts

PCMA has just launched its **Sustainable Events Blueprint Certificate**, an on-demand course designed to equip event strategists with the skills, tools, and insights needed for leadership in sustainability.

This programme offers actionable strategies for creating environmentally responsible events, regardless of experience level. It focuses on designing events that align with global standards like SDGs, ESG, and net-zero commitments to minimise environmental impact and meet stakeholder expectations.

Attendees will gain practical skills in measuring, implementing, and communicating event sustainability through expert-led insights and data-driven decision-making.

## Appointments



Amy Lu

### Amy Lu

The Standard, Singapore has appointed Lu as general manager. The Taiwanese brings 19 years of regional hospitality experience and previously served as director of operations at Andaz Singapore for five years.

### Darren Burden

Burden will become Suncorp



Darren Burden

Stadium’s general manager, replacing retiring general manager Alan Graham. He is currently executive director at Hong Kong’s Kai Tak Sports Park which recently opened in March.

### Michel Scheffers

Amari Bangkok has appointed Scheffers as general manager.



Michel Scheffers

He most recently served as area general manager Southern Thailand, overseeing Amari Phuket and Amari Vogue Krabi.

### Prachoom Tantiprasertsuk

The vice president – operations (Central & Southern Thailand) and government & business relations, has been appointed president of the Thailand Incen-



Prachoom Tantiprasertsuk



Sheldon Hee

tive and Convention Association for the 2025–2026 term.

### Sheldon Hee

The International Air Transport Association has appointed Hee as regional vice president, Asia-Pacific. Based in Singapore, Hee will lead IATA’s operations across 39 countries and 53 member airlines in the region.



**In times of uncertainty, people meeting face to face is more critical than ever. Business travel enables that, regardless of whether it is a health scare, economic scare, or trade uncertainty. Business travellers need to do their jobs differently because they do not have the same partners anymore. We just have to figure out how to adapt and do it differently.**

Suzanne Neufang  
CEO, Global Business Travel Association



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