

China to outspend US in luxury travel

In June, a think tank of 15 leaders from various luxury travel sectors met at the ILTM Asia (International Luxury Travel Market) Leaders Forum to discuss the changing climate of luxury travel. Among their conclusions, the panel agreed that China will immediately surpass the US in travel expenditure, both domestically and internationally.

Top cops

If you're planning a holiday in the Philippines, rest assured you'll feel safe. The Philippines' Department of Tourism has completed the first phase of its Tourism Oriented Police for Community Order and Protection (TOP COP) programme, featuring a Tourist Police force trained in areas like customer relations, police matters, crisis management and first aid. Officers will be deployed in tourist-frequented areas such as Manila, Boracay Island, and Puerto Princesa City.

High flying

A holiday in the archipelago of the Maldives can get off to a slow start if you have to fly from Male International Airport to your final destination. Kuramathi Island Resort has opened its own lounge, featuring sunloungers, dedicated staff to assist with booking restaurants, excursions and spa treatments in advance, WiFi, snacks and beverages, so that guests can start their holiday that much sooner.

Budding landscape

Singapore's Gardens by the Bay, adjacent to the Marina Bay Sands Integrated Resort, will comprise 101 hectares at three waterfront sites. The first phase, opening June 2012, will be 54 hectares and will include two conservatories displaying plants from the Mediterranean and tropical montane regions, horticultural themed gardens and events and dining spaces.



New heights
With regular seaplane flights in operation, Sri Lanka will now be easier to explore

Sri Lanka gets accessible

IF you've ever travelled to Sri Lanka (and we highly recommend you do), you'll know that it's host to fabulous luxury boutique hotels, gorgeous natural scenery, delicious cuisine and friendly, charming people. It's also, unfortunately, not very easy to get around once your flight lands. Roads are narrow and windy, people drive in a way that makes seatbelts an absolute necessity (it's not advisable to rent a car and attempt to drive yourself), and maps are confusing and often incorrect. It's also time-consuming, with the average drive time from Colombo Airport to the tea plantations of Nuwara Eliya running about six hours – which, if you are on a week-long holiday, is not welcome news.

But now it's possible to get to your final destination in a matter of minutes, thanks to a new fleet of

seaplanes operating flights to popular destinations such as Kandy, Kogala, Nuwara Eliya, and Dikwella on a daily basis, and to Bentota three times a week. Plans to extend the service to Jafna and surfing hotspot

that plagued the country for over 25 years, has seen remarkable growth in the luxury tourism sector, with luxury boutique properties finding their way onto its picturesque shores and lush mountains over the



Closer to heaven
Boutique hotels like Maya in the remote area of Tangalle will benefit from the new service

Arugam Bay on the east coast are currently in development as well.

Sri Lanka, which has only recently opened up as a tourist destination after the end of a civil war

past few years, and big-name properties set to open in the coming years, including Anantara in Bentota, and Shangri-La hotels in Hambantota (2013) and Colombo (2014).

China's most innovative luxury hotel

THE latest luxury hotel in China features panoramic ocean views, elaborate décor, and, not surprisingly, it'll cost you. But for good reason – it's housed in an old Soviet aircraft carrier, the *Kiev*, billed as 'China's first aircraft carrier hotel' (we weren't aware of any other existing aircraft carrier hotels, but there you have it).

China's rising economic power has spurred the country to flex its military muscles, much to the concern of Western nations. And while it may be showing that it's a force to be reckoned with by recently putting its first aircraft carrier, the *Varyag* – also formerly part of the Soviet fleet – to sea trials, there is growing public interest in the *Kiev*.

“It's been reported owners spent nearly 100m yuan (US\$9.6 million) transforming the aircraft carrier into a luxury hotel”

Prices to stay onboard the floating hotel have yet to be finalised, but they surely won't be cheap. According to the *South China Morning Post*, its owners spent nearly 100m yuan (US \$9.6 million) to transform the vessel into a luxury hotel. One of the five Presidential Suites features a white, circular bed, silver lame drapes and a cowskin rug, while another photo shows a luxurious king-size bed accented by silk pillows, and surrounded by chocolate-hued velvet sofas and gold damask patterned wallpaper.

IN FOCUS



Paris Hilton, US socialite and heiress, waves to fans as she arrives at the SM Megamall in Manila, the Philippines, to open the fourth outpost of her Paris Hilton Handbags & Accessories line of stores. Hilton told the crowd, “I will be back very soon ‘cos I love it here. I’ve had the best time.” However, she is planning to return not to flog more handbags, but to open the Azure Urban Resort Residences, a resort-inspired residential development in the southern part of Manila that features a man-made beach. “I will personally help design The Azure Beach Club, creating a unique and special place that will bring happiness to many people. I am excited for people to experience it,” she said.

THE MONTH IN NUMBERS

2,484

The number of Porsche models delivered to China from January to July 2011, an almost fivefold increase over the same period last year. The most popular model in terms of sales was the Porsche Cayenne.

10/2011

The scheduled opening date for the new St Regis Tianjin. The 276-room hotel is located in the Heping district along the picturesque Hai River, home to many of Northern China's historic and natural attractions.

US\$ 570 million

The selling price of the Carlyle Hotel in Manhattan, NY, plus four other luxury hotels owned by Maritz, WOI & Co and Rosewood Corp., recently purchased by the family of Hong Kong billionaire Cheng Yu-tung.