

Weekly Hotel Industry News Roundup from Asia Pacific

New Westin Flag on Langkawi Island, Malaysia

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. and Langkawi Island Resort Sdn Bhd, an affiliate of PT Rajawali Corporation, announced that Sheraton Perdana Resort will be rebranded as The Westin Langkawi Resort & Spa as of January 2007. The resort is undergoing a significant upgrade and will feature Westin signature amenities and services, 30 hotel villas, a luxury destination spa and an additional 11,000 square feet of meeting space.

Ascott Expands in Singapore

The Ascott Group has signed conditional sale and purchase agreements to acquire the landmark Asia Insurance Building and Hotel Asia in view of expanding its portfolio of serviced residences in Singapore. The 20-storey Asia Insurance Building, located near Collyer Quay in the Central Business District, was the tallest office building in South-east Asia when it was built in the 1950s. Asia Hotel, located along Scotts Road, is near Singapore's shopping and entertainment belt. The group, which currently owns 800 units in six properties, plans to double its portfolio by 2010. Its worldwide plan is to achieve 25,000 units by the same year.

Surge in Thailand Arrivals

The Association of Thai Travel Agents has reported that arrivals at Bangkok's Don Muang Airport surged by 42% in the first five months of 2006. A total of 1,223,546 million passengers passed through the airport between January and May 2006, compared to 860,844 in the same period last year. China led the way, with 216,919 arrivals - a 102% increase over the same period last year, followed by Korea with 101,383 arrivals - up 68%. Japan came in third with 155,537 arrivals - a 34% increase. The UK was the biggest European market, generating 60,654 visitors - up 73% on last year's figures. Germany, with 42,583 visitors (a 21% increase on 2005), was the second biggest European market. The Tourism Authority of Thailand targets 13.8 million foreign tourists and US\$20 billion receipts in 2006.

Indian Hotels Company Ltd. Partners With Eurocape in South Africa

Indian Hotels Company Ltd. (IHCL) has announced a partnership with Eurocape, the developers of the US\$137.9 million Mandela Rhodes Place, to develop Cape Town's newest addition in luxury hotel rooms and residences. The first phase of Mandela Rhodes Place is due for completion by the end of 2006. It will include an array of restaurants, bars, winery, wellness centre, offices, gymnasium, swimming pool and a rooftop garden. The second phase of construction is scheduled for completion by the end of 2008 and will feature a 174-room five-star hotel and 20 private residences. The US\$41.3 million hotel and residences development at Mandela Rhodes Place marks the company's first major investment in South Africa, with two other hotels planned in Johannesburg and Durban as part of their Indian Ocean expansion plan. IHCL owns and operates 75 Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces worldwide.

Accor Premiere Vacation Posts US\$75 Million in Revenues

Accor Premiere Vacation Club (APVC) recorded gross revenue of more than US\$75 million in the past year with a strong recovery of the holiday timeshare industry. The company spent US\$45 million buying properties in Australia and New Zealand in the same period, which brought the portfolio to 15 resorts and properties, with three more deals due to be announced. Club membership is growing by 6,000 new members per year, and the Gold Coast-based organisation plans to have more than 1,000 employees by the end of 2006. APVC is a joint venture between the Paris-based Accor Hotels and Melbourne developer Becton Group.

Victoria Room Rates Top New South Wales

Hotel room rates in Victoria, Australia have overtaken those in New South Wales (NSW) for the first time, mainly as a result of Melbourne's hosting of the Commonwealth Games in March. Victoria's revenue per available room has also overtaken NSW, and while every other state recorded increased occupancy levels during the March quarter compared with the same period last year, the NSW figure fell by two per cent. Prompting claims that the poor NSW performance was the result of lack of investment in tourism funding, Tourism and Transport Forum deputy CEO Owen Johnstone-Donnet warned that without appropriate investment, the job security of NSW's 182,000 tourism workers was at risk. He said March-quarter survey figures showed NSW's neglect in tourism funding had a direct monetary impact through falling room rates.

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