

hospitality




Meet the people behind the experiences of some of Asia's loveliest places to vacation. General Manager extraordinaire Ben Bousnina speaks about putting heart into a vacation experience, while Bulgari Bali's GM shares why the swanky property is a must visit. Discover the breakthroughs in technology which makes some hotel rooms very clean places as well as keep abreast with the new arrivals unto the hospitality scene.



Honesty Rewarded

For more than a decade, Aziz Abdullah, has been a taxi driver in Melaka and has acknowledged many good wishes from his passengers for his kind hospitality and warmth. Recently, the management of Hotel Equatorial Melaka rewarded him for being honest when he had returned several valuable items, which were left behind in his taxi by a Japanese tourist.


Hotel manager, Y.Bhg Dato Syed A. Rahman during a simple yet significant ceremony, presented award, which consisted of an accommodation stay in a Deluxe room, inclusive of breakfast and dinner. Among those attended were Hotel's Director of Sales & Marketing Mario Indran, Front Office Manager Karen Lim, Public Relations Manager Chris Murray, Food & Beverage Manager Johnny Chiam and Public Relations Executive Grace Leong.

Noted Japanese guest, Mr. Takeuchi "Thanks to the honesty of Aziz Abdullah in returning my valuable items, we can now formally recognize that the taxi drivers in Melaka play a big part in making this historical city a wonderful destination for a vacation." 



Malaysian and proud! De Palma Hotel Ampang's flag raising ceremony

Flags Ahoy

A bustling final quarter of 2008 saw De Palma Hotel Ampang bustling with activity. The home-grown Malaysian brand celebrated in true Malaysian style the festivities of Ramadhan, Malaysia's National Day and Hari Raya Puasa. Guests to the hotel were served the special savoury porridge called 'bubur lambuk' which was available to all and sundry throughout the fasting month. The Hari Raya celebrations which followed saw a gathering of business associates and staff officiated by De Palma Management Services Exco, Zawiah Mohd Than. De Palma Hotel Ampang also marked the 51st celebration of Malaysian independence with a flag raising ceremony led by Datuk Hj Mohd Ilyas Zainol Abidin Group General Manager De Palma Group of Hotels. 

Royal Plaza On Scotts Bags 'Best Independent Hotel' Award

Royal Plaza on Scotts (RP) was awarded the 'Best Independent Hotel' award at the annual 19th TTG Asia Travel Awards 2008 which honours the very best in the Asia Pacific travel and hospitality industry. RP's win for the 'Best Independent Hotel' award is a representation of the impartial votes by industry peers and TTG readers across the region. Winners of the various award categories were judged based on criteria including the consistency of services and facilities, product offerings and most professional sales team in terms of innovative ideas and servicing. 



The new Lanai Suite

Parkroyal Penang Introduces New Rooms

Parkroyal Penang, Malaysia recently completed a RM4.4million rooms upgrading project, making 110 of their rooms and suites more luxurious and comfortable. Work had been done to the Grand Deluxe Seaview with Balcony rooms, Premier Junior Suites with Balcony and Ocean Palm Suites with Balcony. The resort and spa's room inventory has reduced to 309 rooms and suites as some of the rooms are combined into a new room category, the Lanai Suite.

Resort General Manager Mark Losi explained, "We want our guests to enjoy comfortable and pleasant stays in a lifestyle experience at our tropical resort. The areas of improvement included the extension of balcony with timber flooring to our Grand Deluxe Seaview Room and Lanai Suite balconies, the installation of new 32" LCD televisions, DVD players, new desk and minibar cabinet, new furniture, new bathroom black marble vanity top, new colour scheme and new bathroom sliding door with an attached ceiling-to-floor mirror for all 110 of the rooms and suites.

Parkroyal Penang, Malaysia, a 5-star resort and spa centrally situated on famed Batu Ferringhi beach, is a perfect getaway for holidaymakers and business travellers. The resort has three restaurants, two bars, a garden bar, two swimming pools, a 70-foot waterslide, a children's pool, watersports activities, a tennis court, a gymnasium, two garden massage huts, a kids' club with fun activities and Nintendo Wii, a Spa (St. Gregory) and state-of-the-art conference facilities. 



level.8 office suite

Up Another Level

Strategically located in the heart of the Financial District, level.8 by M Hotel is designed to take care of business. Boasting new office suites and a contemporary business centre furnished with essential amenities and more, level.8 was created specially to ensure business needs are facilitated in every way. From customizing tenancies to suit budgets, hosting meetings in the modern meeting rooms to providing dedicated secretarial and hotel services, the new concept succeeds on all levels.

At level.8, enjoy ergonomic facilities coupled with exclusive privileges. Well appointed with wired and wireless broadband Internet access, all office suites are available for tenancy from a month to a year. In addition to organizing and ensuring conferences are executed seamlessly through its complete secretarial support, level.8 lets businessmen experience a greater level of comfort and assurance with 24-hour services including food and beverage catering and IT butler assistance all available via 1 Touch. For added convenience, level.8 offers comprehensive and flexible virtual office packages with individual mail boxes for the hectic business executive who is constantly on the move. **ha**

Seven Haven

The multi-award winning Hilton Kuala Lumpur has unveiled Level Seven, a new event venue and meeting space designed specifically to respond to the changing needs of the modern business traveller. Following extensive research, Malaysian design firm Axis Network Design Consultant Sdn Bhd found that business guests want a hotel with the feeling of home and like their stay to be tailored to their individual needs.

The comforts of home are recreated at Level Seven with spacious living rooms and plush lounge to offer guest the ultimate relaxation during coffee breaks. Level Seven's living rooms are appointed with fashionable and comfortable lounge seats that would be found in a chic home and the open interactive kitchen means guests can interact with the chef while waiting for fresh out of the oven pastries and bakery.

The introduction of a unique product innovation, the switch-able 'magic glass' panels give aesthetic and functional flexibility to internal wall partitions. Wall partitions can take on a clear or opaque appearance where daylight transmission can be regulated or can become a massive flat-screen with remarkable image clarity – all at the flick of a switch.

On the technology front, 65 inch plasma screen TV and high-speed wireless internet service at Level Seven bring guests closer to the fast pace world and keep up with today's demanding lifestyle. To give Hilton Kuala Lumpur a sense of place with localized feel, Malaysian elements such as the 'wayang kulit' (shadow puppets), 'takraw' ball (rattan ball) and 'batik' (a local art designed with motif by wax-resist dyeing technique) carpet were integrated into the design to embrace the country's heritage. **ha**

Hospitality Asia Contributor Honoured

Malaysian-based travel writer and Hospitality Asia contributor, David Bowden was recently acknowledged by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) for his valuable contribution to the nation's travel industry. He was acknowledged as a "Friend of Thailand" by the Thai Minister of Tourism and Sports, His Excellency Weerasak Kowsurat at a gala awards presentation in Bangkok. The writer was one of just 24 journalists from 19 countries to be acknowledged in the category of "Friends of Thailand – International Media." **ha**



David Bowden accepting the award from Weerasak Kowsurat

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C. To Assume Management Of The St.Regis Fort Lauderdale

The award-winning Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C. has reached agreement with ownership group Castillo Grand, L.L.C. to assume management of The St. Regis Fort Lauderdale, a 192-room oceanfront hotel, which also includes lavish private residences, on the beaches of Florida's scenic Gold Coast. The management transition will be effective August 11, 2008, with The Ritz-Carlton, Fort Lauderdale becoming the tenth location in the state for the company named by The Luxury Institute as "The Most Prestigious Luxury Brand."

Open since May 2007, the resort was designed by Miami-based architectural firm Arquitectonica. Interiors were created by the noted decorators Hirsch-Bedner. The 24-story building stands out for its white curvilinear exteriors, inspired by the grand ocean liners of another era and whimsical murals reminiscent of famed French painter Jean Cocteau. In addition to the 192 guest rooms, the hotel includes eight oceanfront suites and 20 suites overlooking the Intracoastal waterway. Room décor is casually elegant in tones of cream, yellow, and beige. Vintage black and white photos evoking the Fort Lauderdale of the 1940's accent the spacious rooms. A range of modern services from wireless access to LCD televisions and in-room fax, copier and printing offer guests every convenience. **ha**

Reinventing The Balinese Experience

The Conrad Bali will offer an even greater level of contemporary luxury with the launch of 55 new palatial suites.

But that's not all – each guest of the Conrad Suites will have their own Personal Assistant to design their individual Balinese experience and cater to their every whim.

The luxurious Conrad Suites are unlike anything else in Bali. Set in a secluded haven, surrounded by tropical gardens and reflective ponds, each Conrad Suite is a minimum of 110 sq m. Every Conrad Suite features two Plasma TVs, DVD/CD Player, separate dining and living room, spacious bathroom with rain shower, soaking tub with TV, a private terrace with dining table and day bed, and access to the exclusive Conrad Suites Lounge, private Beach Club and pool.

To complement the new Conrad Suites, five new Spa Pavilions set within tropical gardens and reflective pools will be introduced. A new Wellness Centre will extend the resort's Jiwa Spa which has been voted "The Best Resort Spa in Bali".

To complete the new guest experience, Conrad Bali has introduced a sophisticated Japanese restaurant called Rin.

Serving Kaiseki-style cuisine with a contemporary flavour, Rin extends the exceptional range and quality of dining options available at the resort. **ha**



General Manager Ian Wilson (left) receives the award from Simon Israel, Chairman of Singapore Tourism Board

Raffles City Convention Centre Wins Business Event Venue Excellence Award

Fairmont Singapore's Raffles City Convention Centre (RCCC) outshone a stellar list of competition and added another remarkable laurel to its growing repute as one of Singapore's finest business events destination, with a major win at the Singapore Business Events Awards.

RCCC, located at level 4 of Fairmont Singapore bagged the prestigious Business Event Venue Excellence award. This award recognizes outstanding business events venues, which have demonstrated unique venue appeal, facilities and versatility in settings as well as excellence in service, elevating the standard of world-class MICE facilities in Singapore.

Now into its second year, the Singapore Business Events Awards is organized by the Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau, a group of the Singapore Tourism Board. It is focused in the MICE industry, which has been identified as a key segment in driving growth of the tourism industry.

RCCC is an outstanding, strategically located and internationally-recognized meetings venue equipped with cutting-edge and multi-faceted features, and complemented by a personalized and dedicated Conventions Services team and passionate individuals involved in the day-to-day operations of this sprawling 70,000 square feet venue. **ha**



Ho Hoy Sum (front row 3rd from left), sharing the joy of receiving the award with staff from various departments of the hotel

Five For One

One World Hotel Petaling Jaya is now officially a 5-Star hotel as certified by the Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia. "We are proud that we are able to make a big leap forward in achieving our hotel's vision that is to be the preferred 5-star business-class hotel in Malaysia and a testimony of our continued commitment to provide guests with excellent service and quality standards; complemented by grandeur, elegance and unequalled amenities and facilities," said Ho Hoy Sum, the hotel's General Manager. "We are confident that we will be able to maintain the standards of service and products that are in-line with the 5-star guidelines set by the Ministry. Moreover, we are committed to providing personalized service that exceeds expectations to all our guests. Since the hotel started operations in June 2007, we have received positive feedback in terms of service and facilities from our guests both local and international." **ha**

Fairmont Singapore Bags Prestigious Double

Fairmont Singapore has been voted and selected as one of the Top 50 Hotels in Asia and Top 500 Hotels in the World in Travel + Leisure (T+L) magazine's World's Best Awards survey for the year 2008 during its recent 13th annual poll. Readers of T+L magazine, widely considered a leading authority in international travel and destination news, once again selected their favourite hotels, spas, airlines, cruise lines, outfitters, cities, and islands around the globe through a questionnaire designed by the editors of the magazine. **ha**



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A True Pearl

Distinctive Phuket lifestyle resort, Indigo Pearl, has been voted among Asia's Top 25 Best Leisure Hotels and Resorts in the Smart Travel Asia 'Best in Travel Poll 2008'. Indigo Pearl emerged from a field of over 1,000 to join the Best Leisure Hotel & Resort in Asia rankings.

The resort was ranked in such illustrious company as Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay, Sofitel Metropole Hanoi, Soneva Gili by Six Senses in the Maldives and Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi, Chiang Mai. Set amidst lush tropical gardens, pools and post-modern art, Indigo Pearl offers stylish accommodation ranging from the Kelly Quarters with terraces overlooking the abundant gardens to expansive individually themed suites which feature a range of luxuries from ensuite spa areas and Jacuzzis to a private swimming pool in the signature Bensley Suite.

With its gourmet cuisine, range of activities from yoga and Thai cooking classes to deep sea fishing and diving, Indigo Pearl offers a distinctive and memorable experience. Signature features of Indigo Pearl include seven gourmet restaurants and bars; three striking swimming pools (one adults only); and its original venues, which are subtly inspired by Phuket's tin-mining heritage. **ha**



Centara Grand Beach Resort Samui

Centara Grand Beach Resort Samui Completes Renovation

Centara Hotels & Resorts, Thailand's leading hotel group is delighted to announce the completion of an extensive Bht 200 million plus renovation to its award winning property the Centara Grand Beach Resort, Samui.

Designed in a colonial architectural style with its own extensive landscaped gardens and situated directly on the beachfront at Chaweng, the 4 storey hotel has 203 deluxe sea facing rooms and suites all with private balconies, in a complex of units designed to accentuate the natural tropical environment.

A central feature of the hotel, the stunning lobby with its sweeping staircase – reminiscent of a set from "Gone with the Wind" - received Bht 12 million of loving care to ensure that it retained the style and elegance for which it is justly renowned. Over Bht 160 million was lavished on the 203 guest rooms and suites – Bht 90 million on the normal rooms and suites and an incredible Bht 70 million on the pool suites.

Starting at 60 square metres, the Pool Suites offer luxurious accommodation. All feature private plunge pools and all include membership of The Club – with five complimentary food servings daily and complimentary cocktails and canapés every evening amongst a host of other benefits. To complete the renovation a further Bht 20 million was lavished on Spa Cenvaree – Centara Hotels & Resorts signature Spa brand which features at Centara Hotels & Resorts properties around Thailand. **ha**



The main reception of the Towers Executive Lounge

Towering Expectations

Sheraton Towers Singapore unveils their new Towers Executive Lounge on Level 3, reserved exclusively for guests who have purchased the Towers Executive Room Package. Occupying about 243m², the Towers Executive Lounge affords guests an unrivalled view of the city fringe and surrounding greenery with its floor-to-ceiling glass windows.

The Main Lounge, with seating capacity for 68 guests, is segregated into three areas for buffet dining, lounging and TV viewing; a Library Lounge (with a seating capacity of 14) for guests to read, relax and watching movie from LCD TV mounted onto a backlit onyx feature wall, and a 2-workstation Internet area. The area has wireless Internet ability, lighting dimming control, professional sound system powered by Bose and a remote control curtain.

The room décor is tasteful and done in neutral shades of beige accented with walnut burl finishes and feature accent wallpaper – executed by internationally renowned interior designer, Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA).

In addition to the Towers Executive Lounge, there are function rooms with daylight ambience. Each room is about 50 m² and equipped with audio visual facilities and in-room console to allow for drinks and food set-up. Should guests require a larger space, there is the spacious 65 m² The Board Room, located adjacent to the function rooms.

The Board Room can host 14 guests with additional seating at break-out corners. Modern audio/video equipment in the Board Room includes 42" LCD TV panel and projector screen. The Board Room is equipped with Herman Miller chairs, which are ergonomically constructed. A feature wall at the far end of the Board Room showcases a collection of artwork and artefacts providing a more conducive atmosphere for meetings. **ha**



Centara Grand Island Resort and Spa will deliver a unique Premium 4-star resort experience

Centara Hotels & Resorts Announces New Resort In The Maldives

Centara Hotels & Resorts, Thailand's leading hotel group, has announced it will invest in and manage a new property in The Maldives, which will be the first property of Centara Hotels & Resorts outside of Thailand.

Scheduled to open in May 2009, Centara Grand Island Resort and Spa, located on South Ari Atoll, will deliver a unique Premium 4 star resort experience. The resort is relatively close to Male Airport with an air transfer time of just 25 minutes or transfer by speed boat in 85 minutes.

For diving enthusiasts the resort enjoys an excellent house reef complete with a sunken ship wreck and is within easy reach of the top dive spots in Ari Atoll. The Centara Grand Island Resort and Spa will be tailored to provide an exceptional experience for both couples and the family market.

Barefoot luxury will be combined with an active and varied social programme for both adults and children alike and the resorts objective is to offer much more than a day-time water oriented resort experience.

Adults will enjoy premium levels of service with a variety of dining options, pools, recreational activities, Sports and Fitness options, bars and lounges with nightly entertainment, and Centara Hotels & Resorts very own 5 stars Spa experience - Spa Cenvaree. Children will benefit from the new Centara Hotels & Resorts Kids Club concept offering two venues – Kid Camp and E-zone for ages 4 to 9 and 10 to 17 respectively.

Guests will be able to choose from seven categories of beach front and over water accommodation which will range from 76 sq m Beach Suites complete with separate living room, large terrace and indoor and outdoor showers, up to 146 sq m Luxury Beachfront Pool Villas which come complete with their own private pool and membership of the exclusive Island Club – which offers guests in selected categories of accommodation a “resort within a resort” experience specially designed for discerning travellers. **ha**

World Executive Club Lounge Opens

Covering the entire 51st Floor of the Centara Grand at CentralWorld and an exclusive haven for Club members, the World Executive Club Lounge offers sweeping views of the city skyline and combines the attributes of a private retreat for members with all the facilities and support expected of a Business lounge.

All guests staying in Executive suites at the Centara Grand at CentralWorld are entitled to complimentary access to the World Club Lounge and all of the benefits of World Club membership.

The Lounge is open 24 hours a day .With the seating artfully arranged to create discreet areas where members can meet to discuss the events of the day with colleagues without concern, the Club Lounge is sure to be the meeting point at the start and finish of every business day. Members receive a whole range of complimentary services in the Lounge including Executive Breakfast, Afternoon Tea and an all day snacks, tea, coffee and refreshments service as well as late night snacks and refreshments. **ha**



Living large and up high with the World Club Lounge



Holiday Inn Park View Singapore becomes the first hotel in Singapore to achieve accreditation in food safety

Singapore Hotel Achieves Accreditation In International Food Safety

Holiday Inn Park View Singapore is proud to announce its successful accreditation of International Organisation of Standardisation 22000:2005 Food Safety Management System Standards (ISO 22000:2005).

The hotel is the first in Singapore to be certified with this award by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Limited (LRQA). ISO 22000:2005 is an international certification standard that defines the requirements for an effective food safety management system. This certification complies with HACCP's role (a systematic preventive approach to food safety management by addressing food safety risks in the production process), that was further developed into an auditable standard by ISO and concluded in the formation of ISO 22000:2005.

Even though the food safety level was high before the ISO 22000:2005 implementation, the passion to exceed expectations was what drove the team to excel. **ha**

Heaven On Earth

Robert Lagerwey, General Manager of Bulgari Bali speaks about his stellar property and the highly personalized service which has made the resort legendary in a relatively short time.

What are the biggest challenges of running a resort like the Bulgari Bali?

We think in terms of opportunities, as in how we can continue to develop our people, product and services. Innovations are a core focus of our entire staff and they are highly involved in suggesting and creating new approaches, new experiences and un-expected surprises for our guests. As the resort is maturing after two years of operation we continuously re-visit how we can ensure consistent delivery of our service promise to our guests and partners. Expectations are high and we can simply not afford to disappoint. So the only challenge I see is the challenge we impose onto ourselves.

How do you procure and train staff to exceed the service standards which guests would expect from a property like Bulgari Bali?

We have various processes in place to ensure to hire the best talents possible. It means being involved from top to bottom in our organization. In terms of training we have dedicated programmes for our staff and we continue to innovate and update them based on the needs that we foresee at any given time. It means a total commitment to our staff development at all times and put the resources behind it without fail. It is a great motivation for our staff to continue to be developed and being able to grow in their current levels and/or move to the next levels in our organization. With the same token our guests benefit of course in their experience. Retention of staff is a natural result of the people investment we continuously drive. We believe in continuous development and growth of our human capital and made that our number one priority.

With such impeccable standards and amenities in place, what else is there to improve on?

Bottom line is to remain extremely humble, have good listening devices in place throughout your organization to know how your people feel and perceive their workplace and know that they are happy working there. You want to make sure that they continue to be engaged with each other, our company and our guests. We live and breathe service in our resort and all of us want to know our guests, what they like, what they don't like and inevitably what we can do better. It means that you have to get out and touch every guest during their stay in a meaningful manner and ensure that they leave with a great feeling and wish to come back. **ha**



The Heart Of Hospitality

How did you become an hotelier?

I began by working at the reception at Club Med. I'd welcome people and drive them around in the buggy and it was then that I developed a passion for being with people. I jumped from reception to F&B and entertainment and finished as the Regional Director of Club Med for Indonesia, Thailand and the Maldives. I spent 16 years in Malaysia after that. I remember when the ten-minute drive from Ampang became a two-hour commute! I spent two and a half years in the Philippines as well.


You've always been a resort man. Have city hotels never interested you?

In a city hotel a guest is most likely a business traveller who just wants the key to his room so he can get on with his business. They want everything to work fast and well. In a resort there is mummy, daddy, kids and maybe even grandparents. They arrive in leisure and they look for happiness versus the businessman who seeks brand standards. I like this kind of people, these happy families who want to trust and love this place they have chosen for a vacation.

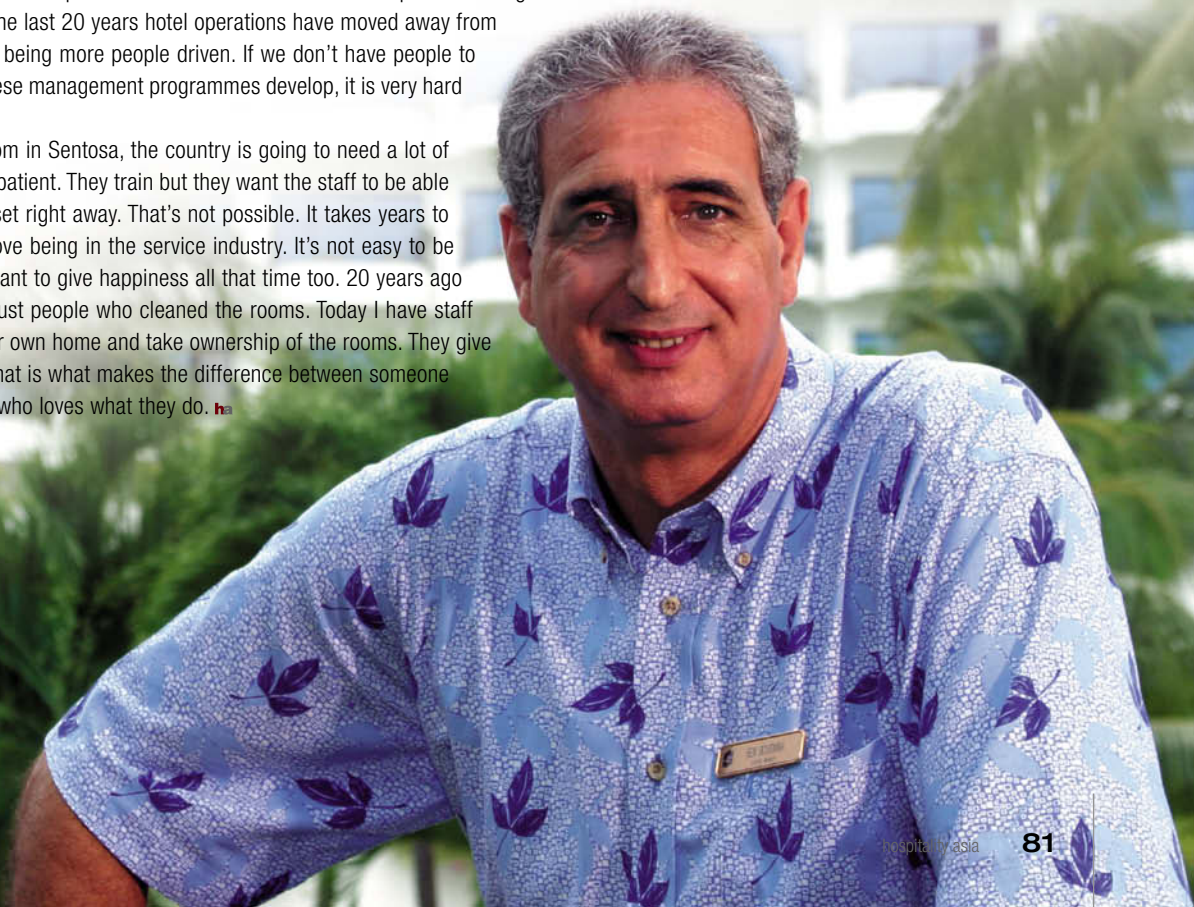
So you're a people person?

Very much. My relationship with my staff is very different from the standoffish, snobbish European executive. I have cultivated my relationships and the fact that I have learnt my profession by myself, experienced it by myself, went all over the world by myself makes me know that it is very important for young people to have a mentor. I believe that my first guests are my staff. If a resort is to succeed the staff need to be in a holiday mood. To get that mood, you cannot 'manage' them by rigid standards and procedures. I spend a lot of time with my staff and I believe in a caring atmosphere for them. I really believe my forte is developing and training people.

I believe the only person who can talk to a local is a local. But first they must learn how to lead and not just manage. Relationships need to be built. Fear must not be present. Using fear is no way to manage. In the last 20 years hotel operations have moved away from being purely finance driven to being more people driven. If we don't have people to follow the leaders which all these management programmes develop, it is very hard to go forward.

With the development boom in Sentosa, the country is going to need a lot of people soon... People are not patient. They train but they want the staff to be able to reach the milestones they set right away. That's not possible. It takes years to teach someone how to truly love being in the service industry. It's not easy to be with people all the time and want to give happiness all that time too. 20 years ago the housekeeping staff were just people who cleaned the rooms. Today I have staff who think of the resort as their own home and take ownership of the rooms. They give themselves to their jobs and that is what makes the difference between someone who does a job and someone who loves what they do. 

If there ever was a man made for resort management it is Ben Bousnina. The affable General Manager of Rasa Sentosa Resort, Singapore epitomizes the service warmth and hospitality every guest seeks at a resort. Though French by nationality, Bousnina has embraced the culture of the Southeast Asian countries which he has called home for over two decades, marrying the European science of hospitality with the heart of Asian service.



With there being less and less opportunities to escape to places for some real fresh air, Malaysian company Enviroverks (M) Sdn Bhd is making it their mission to promote healthy, clean indoor environments, particularly where the hospitality business is concerned. Utilizing an Integrated Environmental & Engineering approach to hygiene and sanitation, the company draws on the expertise of PURE Solutions North America. PURE Rooms™ provide comfort for hotel guests suffering from allergies and respiratory illnesses. A PURE Room™ follows a seven-step process designed to kill 98 to 100 percent of indoor allergens and bacteria. A Class – 2 medical-grade air purifier does most of the work. All-natural PURE Tea Tree Oil keeps the heating and cooling system contaminant-free. Hypoallergenic linens and covers, along with partner hotels' strict no-smoking policy, keep air fresh and help assure a comfortable and healthful hotel stay.

Now the company has appointed a partner in Sabah – Kingtech Systemation Sdn Bhd – to look into the needs of hotels, resort and other hospitality businesses in East Malaysia, thus heralding a new era of super clean rooms in that region. And with partners in the Philippines and Singapore, Southeast Asian penetration is looking positive, what with strategic plans being made to also move into Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam India and the Middle East to market and distribute the company's range of products.

With up to 1,000 new rooms opening in Kuala Lumpur alone, Enviroverks targets to have at least 20 percent of the total rooms in Kuala Lumpur transformed into PURE Allergy Friendly Rooms by end 2009. A strong marketing programme is being rolled out to educate not only hoteliers but also guests requesting a higher quality of rooms, especially immono-compromised travellers.

The Clean Indoors In A Hotel Environment



For more on Malaysia's pioneering Indoor Environmental Science Company, log on to www.enviroverks.com.my or call +6 03 2287 0079/78.

While the PURE revolution has yet to boom in Southeast Asia the way it has done in North America, it is only a matter of time if Enviroverks (M) Sdn Bhd Chief Executive Officer Nitesh Malani has any say in the matter. The young entrepreneur campaigned and successfully won the opportunity to transform regular guestrooms at the Sheraton Subang Hotel and Towers, Malaysia, into PURE Allergy Friendly Rooms.

With the general consensus being that PURE Rooms are the rooms of the future, it is little wonder that the professional team at Enviroverks is constantly engaged in bettering living conditions as well as educating and supporting the systems they have set in place in major hotels. **ha**



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20600-03

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20600-02

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10600-02

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Service With A Difference



Andreas Knussi, Executive Assistant Manager of Concorde Hotel Kuala Lumpur

PestBusters has earned a reputation for implementing pest management systems which really work. A non-dependence on chemical treatments is only one of the things which set it apart from the rest of its contemporaries.

Andreas Knussi, Executive Assistant Manager of Concorde Hotel Kuala Lumpur shares his experiences with the company's services.



How did you first find out about PestBusters?

PestBusters was one of the few pest companies recommended by our Executive Housekeeper. I believe they have a good track record with several hotels. With a comprehensive presentation by PestBusters and after a walkabout, my team and I were committed to work with them.

What made you want to know more about their services and processes?

Their approach and method are different from other pest companies. The hotel team underwent trainings and were more knowledgeable in the aspects of hygiene, cleanliness to lessen pests in the hotel.

Why did you finally decide to appoint them as your property's pest management provider?

The decision was made after seeing results and seeing how devoted and professional the team was. Comments from other hotels were considered as well prior to appointing the company. The different approach/methods used have been positive in controlling pests. This indeed educated our staff. We had the full commitment of hotel staff and hotel tenants on the importance of keeping working areas clean as they go. Together as a team, PestBusters and key department heads have changed staff mindset of how to manage / control pests issues be it at the hotel or at their own homes. We saw results in a month, much faster than compared to previous companies.

What were the major changes they made to your organization to ensure freedom of pests?

With the tropical climate, in general, we always face challenges with pests. Now, with the flush out system done for the entire hotel building emphasizing also on entry points, the hotel has managed to minimize and control the pest situation. PestBusters' brief and methods have been an eye-opener to the Concorde team.

Were PestBusters' methods eye opening to you and why?

Yes. Previously, we believed that the task of controlling the pest situation could be resolved with an overnight fumigation which usually takes place every month. Now the staff has a better understanding of the importance of changing processes for a healthier environment for guests and ourselves. Staff are able to adapt to changes upon seeing positive results thus they practice new working standards and understand little aspects like various chemicals usage for different pests.

If you were to recommend PestBusters to another property, what would you say?

If one is looking for new approach that's effective; seeing results within a short period of time, I would recommend them. They are worth investing in to ensure a comfortable and pleasant hotel experience. **ha**



Jon Nielsen
General Manager
InterContinental Singapore

InterContinental Hotels Group has appointed Jon Nielsen as General Manager of InterContinental Singapore. With 20 years experience within InterContinental Hotels Group, Nielsen has spent the past ten years in Asia, working in Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore.

During his time in Thailand from 2002 to 2006, as Resident Manager of InterContinental Bangkok and Holiday Inn Bangkok, he was an integral member of the transition management team, leading these two properties through a successful rebranding exercise and their subsequent integration into the IHG family.

Most recently, Nielsen was the opening General Manager of the new InterContinental Hanoi Westlake, the first InterContinental Hotels Group property in Vietnam. Undertaking the development and execution of the complete pre-opening plan, his strong leadership brought this 359 room luxury hotel through to a successful opening.

With an extensive Food & Beverage background and a deep understanding of hotel operations, InterContinental Singapore is set for greater excellence in this dynamic industry under Nielsen's management. **ha**

Marcel Hinderer

General Manager
Miri Marriott Resort & Spa, Malaysia

Marcel Hinderer has been appointed General Manager of the 220-room Miri Marriott Resort & Spa. In his new role, he will lead a team of over 250 associates and oversee all operations and the development of the highly-acclaimed, award-winning 5-star resort. A native of Germany and a 17-year veteran of the hospitality industry, Hinderer joins the Miri Marriott Resort & Spa from his post as Operations Manager of the Sydney Marriott Hotel in Australia, where he spent more than seven years.

A graduate of the Les Roches Hotel Management School in Switzerland, Hinderer started with Marriott as an apprentice at the Stuttgart Marriott Hotel in 1992, and gradually forged an outstanding career that has taken him from Germany to Switzerland, the United States, Lebanon, West Malaysia and Australia. Throughout his extensive career, he has been versatile, holding positions in various disciplines including front office, guest relations, culinary, food and beverage, reservations, revenue management and room operations.

A very result-oriented hotelier, Hinderer believes in maintaining the highest standards in service quality and is committed to ensuring guest comfort and satisfaction. He will focus on enhancing service quality, guest experiences and associate training and development to mould the Miri Marriott Resort & Spa into a truly world-class resort built around the customer. **ha**



Eric Chiu

President of Asian Development
Las Vegas Sands Corp

Las Vegas Sands Corp. announced that the company has promoted Eric Chiu to the newly created position of President of Asian Development. In this new role, Chiu will add a variety of government relations and business development activities to the list of responsibilities he has had since joining the company in late 2002.

Chiu has been heavily involved in the company's business opportunities in the region, which include Sands Macao and The Venetian® Macao, the anchor of the company's Cotai Strip™ development. He has also been the company's lead representative as it relates to proposed development projects in Mainland China and elsewhere in the region.

A native of the People's Republic of China and a professional civil engineer by training, Chiu has had extensive experience in managing large scale construction and development projects in mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Canada and Europe. Chiu also has significant development experiences, having worked for prominent international companies such as BMW Automobile Beijing, where he served as General Manager, as well as a variety of roles for other leading property development companies in the region. **ha**



Yothin Uthaphu

General Manager
U Chiang Mai
Thailand

Yothin Uthaphu was appointed as General Manager for U Chiang Mai in April 2008. Yothin has had an extensive career in the hotel industry with solid sales background.

He has had many years of experience in sales both in Thailand and Vietnam, where he was Senior Sales Manager for New World Hotel Saigon in 2000. After a couple of years he returned to Thailand and held the position of Key Account Director handling leisure business for Accor Asia Pacific, Thailand. Prior to this appointment he was Hotel Manager at Cha-Da Beach Resort & Spa, Krabi, Koh Lanta for two years.

U Chiang Mai consists of 41 superior and deluxe rooms. The hotel is located in the heart of Chiang Mai city on Ratchadamnoen Road, only 20 minutes from Chiang Mai International Airport and a few minutes' walk to famous walking streets. The hotel's unique concept allows guests to enjoy their room for 24 hours from arrival, with breakfast whenever/ wherever and the U Choose programme which enables guests to choose their preferred amenities such as music, pillow and tea selection online prior to check in as well as other unique services that will be provided by the U Team. **ha**

Anthony Wee

General Manager
Palace Beach and Spa,
MINES Resort City Malaysia

Palace Beach and Spa is pleased to announce the promotion of Anthony Wee as General Manager of this five star hotel. Wee's role will be primarily to take charge of the overall operations of the resort.

Armed with more than twenty years of experience in the hospitality industry, mostly in beautiful beach resorts, Wee brings with him a wealth of resort management and hotel pre-opening experience from his various postings in West and East Malaysia, including a luxurious resort as part of his impressive resume.

Wee's contributions were significant ever since his joining in early 2007 as Resident Manager of Palace Beach and Spa. He proved his leadership qualities in improving rooms and facilities for guests since May 2007. His success in overseeing the hotel's operations and revenue management also was one of the reasons catapulted him to his current position.

Acknowledging his team's efforts for his new appointment, Wee mentioned that Palace Beach and Spa will embark on continuous efforts in improving service standards and hotel facilities to provide every guest with an experience to remember. Wee will undoubtedly bring his team at Palace Beach and Spa to greater heights in yield management, products and service standards. **ha**



Richard Wallace

General Manager
Courtyard by Marriott Hua Hin at
Cha-Am Beach
Thailand

John Northen, Area Vice President South East Asia recently announced the new appointment of Richard Wallace as General Manager for Courtyard by Marriott Hua Hin at Cha-Am Beach.

Wallace is an Australian hotelier who has succeeded in winning several hotel awards through his 20 years in hotel management roles. He has previous experiences in government administration, accounting, general administration and human resource management plus two years in the newspaper industry. Born in Melbourne, Wallace lived in Queensland and studied local government and Human Resource management.

Courtyard by Marriott Hua Hin at Cha am Beach offers extensive recreational and entertainment options for families; and an impressive list of amenities for business travelers seeking a calm yet productive environment. From the stunning guest rooms that feature plush bedding, dramatic ocean views and high-speed Internet access, to the tempting choice of restaurants and lounges that cater to every taste, guests are certain to find a rewarding experience. For business retreats, 10 function rooms are available, in addition to wireless in all public areas. **ha**



Tony Cousens

Senior Vice President, Asia Pacific
Jumeirah Group

Tony Cousens has joined the Jumeirah Group as the Senior Vice President, Asia Pacific. His role in the company is to oversee the brand development and operations of all new Jumeirah properties in Asia Pacific.

Jumeirah properties are regarded as among the most luxurious and innovative in the world and have won numerous international travel and tourism awards, the most famous being the Burj Al Arab, an icon in Dubai. To date, the Jumeirah portfolio includes luxury hotels and resorts in Dubai, London and New York. Expansion plans to grow the portfolio of luxury hotels and resorts worldwide by 2011 are well underway, with further projects currently under development such as in Shanghai, Phuket, London, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Mallorca and Bermuda.

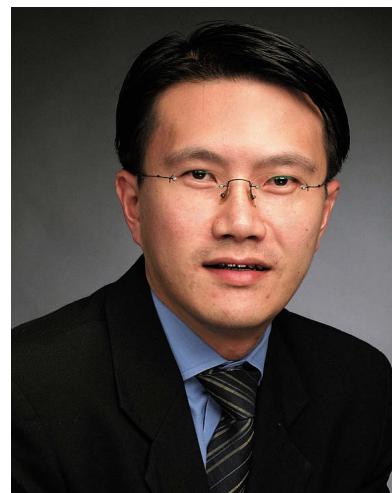
After spending 25 years with Four Seasons, Le Meridien Hotels & Resorts and the last few years as General Manager at The Marina Mandarin Singapore, Cousens admits that this move has been exciting and challenging, especially as the group develops the Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts and brand in Asia Pacific. **ha**

Jay Krishnan

Regional Director of Corporate
Communications
Carlson Hotels Worldwide – Asia Pacific

Carlson Hotels Worldwide – Asia Pacific, one of the world's largest privately-owned hotel companies, has appointed Jay Krishnan as its first regional Director of Corporate Communications. Krishnan will be based at Carlson's regional corporate office in Singapore and joins the company with a decade of public relations industry experience. Her most recent position was Assistant General Manager of Communications and Branding with the A.P Moller – Maersk Group Asia Pacific, where she was responsible for driving external communications activities throughout the region for the world's largest container shipping company. Prior to that, Krishnan was at Grayling Public Relations, a U.K based consultancy, managing a portfolio of corporate accounts for multi-national clients.

In her new role, Krishnan will report directly to Martin Rinck, President and Managing Director, Carlson Hotels Worldwide – Asia Pacific. In Asia Pacific, Carlson currently has about 9,000 rooms in operation and more than 10,000 rooms under development within its five brands – Regent Hotels & Resorts, Radisson Hotels & Resorts, Park Plaza Hotels & Resorts, Country Inn & Suites by Carlson and Park Inn. Carlson Hotels Worldwide is one of the world's 10 largest hotel companies ranked by the number of properties it manages globally. **ha**



Colin Wang

Executive Assistant Manager
Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel
Singapore

Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel Singapore is pleased to announce the appointment of Colin Wang as the Executive Assistant Manager. Wang joins the hotel from Millennium Gloucester Hotel London, where he had served as Front Office Manager. Having been with the Millennium & Copthorne Group since 1996, he started as a Duty Manager in Copthorne Orchid Hotel Singapore. Thereafter, he joined Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel as part of the pre-opening team and was promoted to Assistant Front Office Manager in 2001.

He was transferred to Millennium Hotel Abu Dubai in 2002 to be part of the pre-opening team and was also promoted to Senior Assistant Front Office Manager. He was responsible for rebranding the Dubai airport hotel to what is now known as the Millennium Hotel Abu Dubai. After a year, he was transferred to Orchard Hotel Singapore and was promoted to Front Office Manager.

In his new capacity, Wang will report to John Sartain, General Manager of Grand Copthorne Waterfront and will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the hotel. **ha**



Rudolf van Dijk

Hotel Manager
Four Seasons Hotel Singapore

Four Seasons Hotel Singapore is pleased to announce the appointment of Rudolf van Dijk as Hotel Manager. Rudolf van Dijk's career with Four Seasons started in 1998 at Four Seasons Hotel New York, where he was the Director of Food and Beverage. His first foray into Asia came in 2003 when he was promoted to Hotel Manager at Four Seasons Hotel Shanghai. This was followed by another posting in 2005 to Bangkok in the same capacity. Preceding his arrival, he was Hotel Manager at Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Marunouchi.

Rudolf, as he prefers to be called, is a graduate of the Hague Hotel School, Netherlands and spent the early years of his career in food and beverage operations. Just prior to joining Four Seasons, he was the Director of Food and Beverage of the renowned Sandy Lane Hotel and Golf Club in St James, Barbados.

Rudolf van Dijk takes over from Michael Branham, who has relocated to Four Seasons Tokyo at Marunouchi as General Manager. He arrives in Singapore with his wife Mechteld and children Emma, and twins Luke and Tom. **ha**

Bennet Chang

Executive Assistant Manager
Eastern & Oriental Hotel Penang,
Malaysia

Bennet Chang is currently Executive Assistant Manager of the Eastern & Oriental Hotel in Penang, Malaysia. With over 19 years of experience in the international hospitality industry, Chang has held various senior management positions with companies such as Shangri-la Kuala Lumpur, Regent Kuala Lumpur, Duta Grand Hyatt Kuala Lumpur (pre-opening)/Hyatt Hotels & Resorts Malaysia, Palace of the Golden Horses, Parkroyal Kuala Lumpur, Marina Mandarin Singapore and Hotel Istana Kuala Lumpur (previously part of Meritus Hotels & Resorts group).

A graduate of the Hotel Institute of Montreux (HIM) Switzerland, Chang holds a Swiss Hotel Management Diploma and an American Hotel & Motel Association (AHMA) Hotel Management Diploma with specialization in Marketing & Sales Management, Accounting & Financial Management and Food & Beverage Management.

In his current capacity as Executive Assistant Manager, he helms the marketing and sales division overseeing Marketing Communications, Sales, Reservations and Revenue management; leading the hotel's positioning to greater heights whilst assisting the General Manager in the overall management of the hotel. **ha**



Tim Bilfinger

Manager
The Club at The Saujana Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysia

Tim Bilfinger hails from Germany and has recently joined The Club at The Saujana Kuala Lumpur as its opening Club Manager. The Club at The Saujana, a luxury boutique resort opened in mid 2008.

Bilfinger has extensive experience in the hospitality industry. After having completed his degree in Tourism Management in Zurich Switzerland, he worked his way up from being a bar attendant to eventually becoming Resident Manager with the prestigious Aleenta Resort & Spa in Thailand and Island Hideaway Dhonakulhi in Maldives.

Work and travels have taken him around the globe, from Europe to the Caribbean, from Australia to New Zealand to South Africa and various parts of Asia to a 5-star resort and marina of 43 luxurious villas called the Island Hideaway in Dhonakulhi in Maldives; until he found his way to Malaysia. This has helped him become quite a linguist. He is able to converse and write in Dutch, French, English and of course German. Bilfinger can also manage some basic conversation in Spanish. Away from work, he enjoys trekking, tennis, scuba diving and sailing and spending quality time with his wife. **ha**



Karina Davies

Director of Sales & Marketing
Fairmont Singapore

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts announces the appointment of Karina Davies as Director of Sales & Marketing for Fairmont Singapore. Hailing from British Columbia, Canada, Davies brings with her 24 years of unparalleled experience within the group.

Having joined the company in 1984 (Banff Springs, Canada), she has since held several progressive operational and sales positions, including Director of Sales & Marketing of The Fairmont Hotel Macdonald and The Fairmont Vancouver Airport. She joined The Fairmont Waterfront in 2003 in her most recent position as Director of Sales & Marketing.

A high achiever, Davies was one of Fairmont Hotels & Resorts Presidents Club recipients in 1998 as one of the Top 15 Sellers - and led her team to Fairmont Hotels & Resorts Sales Team of the Year in 2001 at The Fairmont Vancouver Airport Hotel.

In her first venture outside North America, her initial goals will be to develop greater colleague productivity as well as to successfully implement Fairmont's brand standards and objectives. She will spearhead Fairmont Singapore's dynamic team of sales directors and managers to ensure that room revenue targets at the hotel are achieved and maximized. **ha**

Belladonnah Lim

Director of Marketing Communications
Fairmont Singapore

Belladonnah Lim has been promoted to Director of Marketing Communications for the Fairmont Singapore. In her new capacity as a Director of Marketing Communications, Lim's core responsibilities will evolve in developing strategic marketing communications plans for the hotel and take the lead in an encompassing press and public relations efforts/campaign, introducing Fairmont's renowned brand dimensions to a much larger audience locally and in key selected cities within the Asia-Pacific region. Directing Fairmont Singapore's publicity and promotional efforts, Lim oversees the annual Advertising Business, Budget & Action Plan and Public Relations programme. She also initiates creative promotional ideas in support of the marketing goals for Rooms, Food & Beverage divisions and the award-winning Willow Stream Spa.

She has accumulated 11 solid years experience in the hospitality industry under her belt and has been spearheading Fairmont Singapore's (formerly Raffles The Plaza, Singapore) marketing communications efforts for the past three years. She played a pivotal role in the smooth brand transition of the property in December last year, paving the way for Fairmont's triumphant entry into the highly challenging Asian hospitality market. Prior to joining the Fairmont Raffles Hotels International group, she played multifarious leadership roles in Marketing Communications and Public Relations. **ha**



Lim Ee Jin

Director of Marketing Communications
Meritus Mandarin Singapore

Lim Ee Jin joined the Meritus Mandarin from Marina Mandarin, with effect from 25 February 2008, to oversee the hotel's communication strategies, working in tandem with the Sales & Marketing and Food & Beverage divisions. Her responsibilities include the consistent delivery of excellence in the hotel's hospitality experience across all brand building touch points, and the enhancement of the brand equity through strategic platform initiatives.

In line with the hotel's upcoming renovation works which include the re-positioning of the Mandarin Gallery, a new hotel facade and lobby, she will be tasked to oversee the communications for the re-branding of the hotel's F&B dining and meeting concepts, scheduled for launch in the third quarter of 2009.

A graduate with an Honours Degree in Hospitality & Tourism Management from the Nanyang Technological University of Singapore, Lim last worked at Swissotel The Stamford, Raffles The Plaza and Ogilvy & Mather. **ha**



Elaine Lim

Director of Sales
Meritus Mandarin Singapore

Taking on the position of Director of Sales from 24 March 2008 Elaine Lim brings with her a decade of invaluable sales and marketing experience, particularly in MICE, having held positions in five-star properties such as the Raffles The Plaza and Swissotel The Stamford, The Oriental Singapore, Raffles Hotel Singapore, Marina Mandarin and Pan Pacific Hotel. She was most recently the Director of Event Booking Centre at the Mandarin Oriental Singapore.

With her new appointment, Lim will assist the Director of Sales and Marketing in driving the hotel's corporate, group and leisure sales efforts and bringing the hotel's performance and positioning to greater heights. **ha**

Amolaya Panchasarp

Director of Sales – Corporate
Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld

Michel Horn, General Manager of Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld recently announced the appointment of Amolaya Panchasarp as Director of Sales – Corporate with immediate effect.

Amolaya holds a Bachelor degree in Liberal Arts from Rangsit University and an MBA degree from Drexel University, USA. She has almost 10 years experience in the hospitality business with international hotel chains including Le Meridien Hotels & Resorts and Le Royal Meridien. Prior to joining Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld as Director of Sales - Corporate, Amolaya was Director of Sales – Corporate and MICE - at InterContinental Hotel Bangkok and Holiday Inn Bangkok.

Centara Grand and Bangkok Convention Centre is located at CentralWorld, right at the heart of Bangkok's prime business and shopping district. Bangkok Convention Centre is a unique concept – a new, state of the art Convention Centre, fully integrated with a five star hotel and world class shopping and entertainment facilities.

The Bangkok Convention Centre and the Centara Grand hotel, complemented by the World Ballroom, together make a new, stunning landmark on the city skyline. The dynamic design, inspired by the shape of a blooming lotus and its symbolic theme. **ha**



Low Chan Fai

Executive Housekeeper
Meritus Mandarin Singapore

Low Chan Fai joined Meritus Mandarin Singapore in March 2008, bringing with him a commendable 12 years of expertise in housekeeping, having held positions in hotels such as the Grand Hyatt Singapore and The Ritz-Carlton Millennia Singapore.

A graduate with an Honours Degree in Management from the University of London, Low started his hospitality career at the Mandarin Hotel which is now known as the Meritus Mandarin, as a Management Trainee attached to the Rooms Division. He was then promoted to Housekeeper after his one-year traineeship. Subsequently, he was also involved with the pre-opening of overseas hotels such as the Intercontinental Century City Chengdu, Park Hyatt Dubai and Grand Hyatt Dubai.

As Executive Housekeeper, Low will supervise all operating aspects of Housekeeping including guest rooms, public area, laundry and is responsible for providing guests with an exceptional experience and comfort which is synonymous with a world-class luxury hotel. **ha**



Photograph from www.phonearea.net

The range of Nokia phones featuring the Mail for Exchange mobile email application

Nokia Brings Microsoft Exchange ActiveSync Corporate Mobile Email Solution To Mobile Devices

Nokia announced that it is expanding its device range which enables Microsoft Exchange ActiveSync to all Nokia S60 3rd Edition devices. 43 Nokia devices will now feature the Mail for Exchange mobile email application, making Nokia's device range the largest ever to enable the solution chosen by more businesses than any other messaging solution. Nokia also announced today that Mail for Exchange will be available out-of-the-box in future releases of Nokia Eseries and Nokia Nseries devices.

With this announcement, Nokia is enabling about 80 million mobile phone users – which is the number of Nokia S60 3rd Edition converged devices shipped globally to date – to connect to their email accounts on the Exchange Server.

Nokia owners whose companies use Exchange can set up Mail for Exchange for free on their devices in various ways without paying additional services or subscription fees – from the email set-up plug-in on the home screen, by launching the application from the Download! folder, or via the Settings Wizard. Once the application is set up, users utilize their current data plan service to get real-time access to their office email, calendar, contacts, tasks and company directory over a secure connection.

By connecting to the Exchange Server 2007, Mail for Exchange enables features such as Autodiscover, which drastically simplifies the set-up process by requiring the email account holder to only enter their email address, password, domain and usernames; 'Out of Office' messaging, enabling busy professionals to set their out-of-office messages directly from their Nokia device; synchronization when roaming, a must-have feature for travelling businesspeople; and also Flag status for follow-ups. **h3**



Fullerton's new and improved website

Fuller Website

The Fullerton Hotel Singapore has unveiled a brand new look for its website, offering ease of navigation and functionality. Rich cream and brown background colours have been chosen to reflect the contemporary style of the property, while each section offers an intuitive journey through the website.

For newcomers to Singapore, the website features give each visitor an experience of the hotel with its flash-enhanced 'Experience a Day at The Fullerton' video and slideshow with full screen images seamlessly showcasing the best of the hotel's facilities.

To commemorate the rich and historic significance of the Fullerton Building, which formerly housed the General Post Office, Chamber of Commerce and Singapore Club, a special interactive History section guides the visitor through the development of Singapore and the milestones of the building.

Guest-focused features include the option to sign up for regular newsletters from the hotel or update one's particulars. Website visitors may also choose to navigate via the Flash or HTML versions of the website.

"With a fresh new look, our website offers all our guests a premier online experience and reflects the level of luxury they can expect at The Fullerton Hotel Singapore. We are always looking to innovate and offer new products for the enjoyment of our guests, such as through the development of this website." said Louis Sailer, General Manager, The Fullerton Hotel Singapore. **h3**

Going Ambient

Philips' first Ambient Experience Concept Suite in Asia Pacific, at Fairmont Singapore, is designed and developed around four themes – Rise, Perk, Lush and Rest – which captures the mental and emotional state of the hotel guest throughout the day. Studies have shown that colours have an effect on triggering our emotions, based on conscious, subconscious and biological influences. For example, rooms in bright warm colors tend to have a stimulating effect on people that increases productivity. Blue light calms people down and increases their ability to concentrate, while green relieves tension in the blood vessels, and promotes muscle and tissue growth. Different lighting effects and colors are therefore an intrinsic part of the ambient experience in the concept suite across the four themes. Sound and visual effects are the other key factors in enhancing the desired emotional state according to the four themes. This is achieved through a clever combination of Philips sound systems and TVs, using appropriate music or video content. All these elements are brought together by the Philips Pronto universal remote control where, at the touch of a button, guests can change the ambient setting in their hotel room to suit their mood or situation. **h3**

David Bowden

Don't get me wrong; there's nothing like having your weary body smeared in oil in preparation for a good firm rub down. I have no issue with the physical process of a good spa treatment but I do take to task the fluff that often stands between me and a good work out – you know, the PR communications that seem to be a necessary part of the whole journey (spa people talk about journeys not processes).

It would appear that every new spa needs a spiel to lure potential clients into a euphoric state of total contentment. Take for example the use of Dead Sea salt (not any salt, mind you) in spa treatments, the application of ochres sourced from the parched Australian interior for facials, the use of ancient Tibetan gongs or, the need to incorporate some medicinal plant harvested from a long lost West Papuan tribe living in the mystical mountainous cordillera enshrouded in low-lying clouds, in a body scrub.

In Australia wellness spas have attempted to impress me with their usage of traditional Aboriginal cures and rejuvenative treatments. To my knowledge, the Aborigines being the original inhabitants of Australia were hunters and gatherers who foraged the barren landscape eking out a living. The idea that after a hard day's hunting kangaroo and emu, the men folk returned to their lean-to for a soothing deep tissue massage using locally-sourced goanna oil sustainably harvested by the women of the tribe seems to be a wild stretch of the imagination. However, according to the blurb from one spa, this is what I was supposed to believe.

Most spas happily announce that their spa treatments are the cure-all for body, mind and soul and make this claim as if they were the first to ever think of the concept. How many times have you seen this written about a spa and I wonder whether those who make the claim have given it too much thought? Well I have mostly while various

Here's The Rub

I've seen it all and I really have to wonder where the PR boffins source all this bumpkin and if they think that spa users really care. The implications of all this are that these treatments have magical rejuvenative powers and without them, your spa treatment will for some reason or another be less than satisfying.

While travelling around the world I am constantly amazed and bemused with the long traditions and heritages that many cultures claim to have with wellness products and spa treatments. I can appreciate that botanical cures for illnesses are quite common in most cultures but the concept that many of these have medicinal value when applied to naked flesh may be a long stretch of the imagination.

Malaysia's Cameron Highlands is renowned for tea plantations and there's nothing finer than a good cuppa for a pick me up. The suggestion that soaking my body in a bath tub brimming with tea will do the same for it seems to be rather fanciful. However, it must be me who has it wrong as I have now visited several spas making the claim that green tea has a purifying effect that stimulates the skin, boosts antioxidant activity, stimulates blood circulation and regenerates new cells.

treatments have been administered and I conclude that my body usually feels pretty good at the end of an extensive work out but I have reservations about mind-altering experiences and I am sure as anything that no treatment has altered my soul in any way shape or form.

One of my all-time best wellness experiences was in Taos in New Mexico which is one of those places that is bit out there. Taos attracts lovers of art, lifestyle change people, wellness and holistic travellers as well as being a spiritual home for various native Indian people. Yes, it's a bit alternate.

One of the better known resorts in the small town offers some rather unique in-room guest services including something called sound and vibrational therapy, spiritual cleansing with Grandmother Jean of Native American heritage and, this is the one I like best of all – an animal communication session where you can discover what your pets are really thinking. Yep, they were all there proudly listed in the resort compendium so I have to believe that they are real activities and that there are real people out there seeking these services. Sadly, I didn't enquire about what follow-up action there was from the resort therapists once guests discovered what their pets were thinking but I am sure there would have been a whole battery of therapy sessions available. **ha**