

Asia Talk | Destination News for Asia's Travel Connoisseurs

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Are You a Passionate Travel Connoisseur Like Us?



We hope you will show your support at this year's World Travel Awards by casting a vote for Destination Asia. As passionate travel enthusiasts, to be shortlisted and recognized at the most prestigious travel awards is a fantastic achievement – now we look to top the group of nominees! This year's World Travel Awards Asia & Australasia Gala Ceremony takes place on 21 October 2015 in Singapore.

In 2015 we are shortlisted for:

- [Asia's Leading Destination Management Company](#)
- [Asia's Leading Tour Operator](#)
- [Asia's Leading Travel Agency](#)

Please take a minute to register and cast your vote by [clicking here](#). Note that voting closes on 30 August 2015. We thank you for your vote!

The Strand Cruise Launches in Burma



The iconic history and heritage of The Strand Hotel in Yangon, Burma, has now been extended to the launch of a small ship on the Ayeyarwady River. The locally built vessel (R.V. Strand), comes complete with 27 cabins boasting floor to ceiling Juliette balconies, a pool deck, sun deck for outdoor dining, a wellness centre, reflexology station, beauty parlor and cocktail lounge.

A regular schedule of three and four night sailings between Bagan and Mandalay are due to start early January 2016. The rates include all excursions, onboard meals and soft drinks, local beer and house

wine during meals, port charges, English speaking guides and Wi-Fi connectivity. Passengers booking one of the two Strand Suites are entitled to a one hour spa treatment of their choice and a night at The Strand Hotel pre or post-cruise with private airport transfers.

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Langkawi to Become an International Hub



The Malaysian island of Langkawi has been selected as the next international hub by low cost carrier airline Air Asia. The airline plans to put five planes in Langkawi, with the expectation of creating one to 1.5 million passengers through Langkawi in a short time frame. Langkawi will become Air Asia's sixth international hub in Malaysia after Kuala Lumpur, Kuching, Johor Bahru, Penang and Kota Kinabalu.

The island presents exceptional encounters in areas of outstanding beauty. These can be explored with Destination Asia Malaysia on an exciting 4WD Rhino Fun Adventure. On a four-wheel Yamaha Rhino, we traverse rugged terrain and journey into local village life. Our path takes us into the rainforest on a guided tour like no other that is full of adventure and surprise.

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Alcohol Restrictions Over Thai Religious Holidays



Two religious days (Asarnha Bucha Day and Buddhist Lent Day), are celebrated in Thailand on 30 and 31 July consecutively. We would like to advise our partners that, for clients in Thailand at this time, from midnight on the eve of July 29 to midnight 31 July, some hotels will have restricted sales on alcohol in a mark of respect.

On 30 July (Asarna Bucha Day), government offices, banks, businesses and most shops will be closed, but department stores will remain open. All restaurants are banned from selling and serving alcohol. On 31 July (Buddhist Lent Day), only government offices will be closed though all restaurants again are banned from selling and serving alcohol.

We understand the inconvenience this may cause and appreciate your understanding.

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Ochudou Trail Offers Easier Route up Mount Fuji



Mount Fuji is one of Japan's most iconic images, instantly recognizable for its snowcapped symmetric beauty. For many it represents a challenging climb, but for some it is a challenge too far. We can now offer a hiking route that allows the less experienced climber a chance to explore this stunning mountain. An expert alpine guide will take guests on a light four hour hike along the spectacular and well maintained Ochudou trail, departing from Mt. Fuji's Fifth Station.

On the pleasant trek we learn about the geology of the volcano and the wildlife that can be found here. The tour includes, in addition to the guiding, car transfers to and from Tokyo, a delicious boxed lunch, hiking poles, rainproof clothing when required and binoculars for wildlife watching.

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Discover Hanoi's Private Antique Collections



Destination Asia Vietnam has created a unique program that connects with local residents who have an exceptional understanding of Vietnamese antiques and the arts. Joining guests with family life, we peel back the cover of society to reveal the quirky character of Hanoi in all its beauty. Starting at Hanoi's Museum of History, we gain an overview of the country and its history. From here we depart for West Lake area and walk by the antique shops along Nghi Tam street. We visit Mrs Ha who invites us in to see her family's quiet private space full of rare antiques and classical music.

Our next stop is downtown Hanoi and the private residence of Professor Nguyen Bang Giang. Passing a small modest shop on the ground floor guests can enjoy the Professor's grand private collection spread over three floors. Here we listen to accounts from Mr Giang and his wife who are passionate about everything from Vietnamese archaeology to bonsai growing.

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Singapore Night Light Festival Illuminates the City



Taking place over two weekends every August, the Singapore Night Festival transforms the heritage

rich precinct of Bras Basah/Bugis into a midsummer's celebration. The festival's high energy is focused on Armenian Street, which becomes pedestrianized on these days, though the extravaganza spreads out across the city. Visitors can enjoy the festivities which stretch to CHIJMES and Raffles City on one side – and Plaza Singapura on the other.

The Night Lights celebration is always a highlight, when interactive light installations turn the facades of the National Museum of Singapore, the Peranakan Museum and Singapore Art Museum into transient works of illuminating art. Visitors can expect mesmerizing street acts, delicious hawker food and performances by some of the country's top musicians during this celebratory festival.

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Ancient Buddhist Ceremony at Sunrise



This early morning experience places visitors in the heart of an ancient and enchanting ceremony, revealing the importance of Buddhism in daily life. Before the sun has risen we depart our hotel for Phnom Krom, a distinctive Angkorian temple positioned on top of a hill with three towers dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. Here we observe the monks chanting their morning prayers as the sun breaks over the horizon to reveal Tonle Sap Lake.

Following the ceremony, each guest will receive a personal blessing by one of the monks, during which he will perform a traditional blessing by pouring bowls of water (or flowers if preferred) over the guest. It is believed this traditional Khmer blessing ceremony cleanses bad spirits of the past and brings good luck for the coming year. A picnic breakfast can also be arranged in the surrounding countryside.

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Introduction to Wet Markets and Chinese Cooking



Hong Kong invigorates every sense through its dazzling lights, tumultuous terrain and of course – its fabulous cuisine. Destination Asia Hong Kong has masterfully created a culinary program that places guests in the heart of the city's gastronomy scene. Teaming up with famous Chef Denice Wai, the host of Chef Corner cooking TV program, we have produced a guided wet market tour and professional cooking class experience. We try to work around Chef Denice's travel commitments and can't always guarantee her availability for the program.

Led by our chef, we depart on a guided tour of a local wet market, learning all about the colorful ingredients before us and how to integrate Western and Eastern cooking techniques to great effect.

From the market we then head to the kitchen for a private cooking class, preparing a number of Chinese dishes that can be enjoyed along with complimentary drinks. The class requires a minimum of two people, though guests can join in with others on the day. To add a touch of elegance, guests are treated to luxury Mercedes Benz return transfers.

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Banyan Tree Opens 10th Resort in China



Huangshan is steeped in picturesque mountain scenery. Huangshan mountain itself is a UNESCO World Cultural and Heritage Site, comprised of 72 peaks, three of which rise to 1800 meters above sea level. Recognizing the area's rise in tourism, Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts has opened the Banyan Tree Huangshan, its 10th resort in China, complete with 76 villas and suites.

The ancient cities of Xidi and Hongcun, both UNESCO World Heritage Sites, are within close proximity of the resort. Each villa and suite is furnished with wooden bamboo carvings and wooden roof slopes with white walls tipped by black scales, finished in the traditional horse-head style local to the area. The resort also presents three meeting rooms for between 10 and 56 people. Destination Asia China offer a number of divulging experiences in this region that connect with the stunning natural environment.

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Luang Prabang Half Marathon Kicks off Early



The third Luang Prabang Half Marathon will take place on Sunday 18 October 2015. Following the success of last year's format, the race will again commence in the early morning, when runners share the roads with monks and novices who are returning from their daily alms ceremony. The sight of monks dressed in their robes is a unique picture for many runners and adds an exceptional atmosphere to the event. This year runners will arrive from 40 countries across the world who are welcomed with open arms by locals.

The small size of the town creates an intimate community event with spectacular backdrops. The races are sponsored and runners make a donation to run. The past two years has seen USD\$200,000 raised, supporting Friends International who opened their training restaurant, Khai Paen in Luang Prabang; and the building of a pharmacy at the Lao Friends Hospital for Children.

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Luxurious Culinary Cruise Around Flores



Offer your clients a culinary cruise around Flores and its neighbors onboard the private 'Made In Italy' boat. Already in successful operation for three years, the eight hour dining journey combines a cruise through this stunning Indonesian archipelago with fine dining, snorkeling, swimming and on-board relaxation.

The cruise departs at 11 am, at which point Chef Marco Bertini starts creating a spectacular seven course set menu inspired by his Tuscan heritage, with wines, cocktails, spirits, espresso, San Pellegrino and plenty more. The cruise continues until the sun goes down and we return to the harbor at 7 pm. The boat has a capacity for 10 people maximum and can be join-in or hired for private functions. The timing of activities and dining during the day are flexible and can be tailored to each individual group's desires.