

GLOBAL MEET 2004

# Malaysia's MICE industry targets Europe, Middle East for growth

By Jane Hammond

**Malaysia has long recognised the value of the MICE dollar and is working hard to ensure it not only retains its market share but that the segment continues to grow.**

Malaysia's MICE industry is recovering from the effects of a global downturn and moving to position itself in markets outside its traditional catchment area of Asia.

Europe and the Middle East are being targeted by Malaysia as markets with the most potential to grow as the nation continues to sell itself aggressively as a premier MICE destination.

Part of the nation's marketing strategy has been the hosting of Global Meet Malaysia, an annual event, now in its third year, that provides a way for the country to showcase its value as a MICE destination.

This year 150 buyers from 33 countries attended the meet, which included formal speeches, a business session and post-tours to a range of Malaysia's established and emerging tourism destinations.

In a departure from earlier meets, this year's event included a booking session to help ensure that sellers and

buyers had a chance to meet and discuss requirements and services in a more targeted way.


The idea was for buyers to form "smart partnerships" with over 100 service providers in Malaysia comprising representatives from Malaysia Airlines, State and local authorities, hotels, convention venues, professional conference organisers, destination management companies, exhibition contractors, tour operators and souvenir producers.

Director General, Tourism Malaysia Kamaruddin Siaraf told the Global Meet the first seven months of the year had seen an increase of more than 70 per cent in total arrivals to Malaysia compared to 2003. He said the figures demonstrated that the market was recovering from the twin effects of SARS and fears over international terrorism.

Figures for the first four months of the year had seen an increase of more than 36 per cent in conference arrivals compared to the same period in 2003.

The top 12 countries contributing to the number of MICE arrivals were Singapore, Japan, China, Thailand, Australia, United Kingdom, Indonesia, India, Taiwan, Republic of Korea and Hong Kong.

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So, where did you have your last conference?

Who knows where your next big idea will be born? On a tropical isle ringed by brilliant blue waves? Or amidst the serenity of a 2-million year old rainforest. Perhaps, you'll find it right in the heart of one of Asia's most exciting and cosmopolitan cities. To discover the inspiration for your next meeting, incentive tour, conference or exhibition, Malaysia has everything you could hope for. Including an airline that'll fly you here from over 100 destinations around the world. **Malaysia Airlines. Going beyond expectations.**

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# Malaysia has the ingredients for successful events

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“We believe that the MICE sub-sector in Malaysia is a significant niche for Malaysian tourism growth. As such the Government has positioned itself to gain from the anticipated increase in international MICE traffic as we step further into the other established MICE markets outside the region, in particular Europe and the Middle East,” Mr Siaraf said.

“We believe that Malaysia has the ingredients to make the organising of any MICE event, easy, cost effective and successful.”

He said the nation’s attributes included its multicultural diversity, its continuous calendar of celebrations, a wealth of international hotels and facilities and a plethora of MICE venues and services.

“In terms of conference facilities, Malaysia offers sophisticated venues to host any MICE meeting. There are convention centres of various capacities as well as facilities offered in convenient locations in and around Kuala Lumpur. The newly opened Putrajaya Convention Centre is a state-of-the-art facility located in the new government administrative centre of Putrajaya.

“The KL Convention Centre, located right in the city centre and due for completion mid June 2005, is another mega, purpose-built convention centre which will provide additional facilities to host any meeting, conference or exhibition, big or small.”

The incentive market alone is estimated to bring Malaysia in excess of \$(US)93 million per annum. Earlier this year Tianjin Tiens Group Co. Ltd China brought in a group of 8,000 participants to Malaysia as part of an incentive deal and in 2003 Samsung Co Ltd brought 5000 people.

International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) ambassador for New Zealand Mike Kelly told the Global Meet 2004 that ICCA members believed that Malaysia had the potential to be the top destination in the Asia Pacific for international association meetings within five to seven years.

ICCA is one of the world’s foremost associations for the international meetings market. It has more than 670 member companies in 80 countries.

Mr Kelly said that in 2003 Malaysia ranked number 23 in the world ranking for global market share of the MICE industry. In the Asia Pacific region it ranked 6th.

“A top 15 ranking in the world figures is within the ranks of possibility in a short five to six years,” Mr Kelly said.



Photo courtesy of Tourism Malaysia/www.tourism.gov.my

“ Malaysia has a capacity to mobilise and organise vast numbers of individuals to help support major conventions and special events. ”

He said Malaysia had positioned itself well to take on the international market. But he warned that the nation could not afford to be complacent and it faced fierce competition from other major emerging MICE players like Beijing.

Part of the secret to staying ahead was the ability to keep abreast of changes and trends in the meetings industry.

“The MICE industry is in a time of great fragility. However we are now seeing strong general signs of recovery,” Mr Kelly said.

“Malaysia really does have all the ingredients for success; a stable political environment; it’s a safe destination; an aggressive and ambitious airline; the necessary infrastructure; accessibility; shopping; culture; competitive pricing and of course the world famous hospitality. In addition Malaysia also enjoys strong support on an ongoing basis from Government and in particular leadership from government.

“It has engaged the industry and has gone out of its way to make sure that it is seen and acts as a player in the industry.

“Malaysia has a capacity to mobilise and organise vast numbers of individuals to help support major conventions and special events. The scale with which students and other volunteers — sometimes numbering thousands — can be brought together and coordinated is impossible in a European or North American setting. It is a competitive advantage to have,” Mr Kelly said.

He said to build more business Malaysia needed to keep doing what it was already doing.

## Malaysia Airlines reports good early Kuching traffic

MALAYSIA Airlines says bookings on its new direct Sydney-Kuching service have been “good”.

The airline introduced the twice-weekly flights on November 2.

The flights, operated by Boeing 777s, leave Sydney for Kuching on Tuesday and Friday evenings.

The return service is via Kuala Lumpur.

A Malaysia Airlines spokesman said it was more than happy with bookings on the Friday evening flight and it was hoped load factors on the Tuesday service would improve.

The carrier also operates twice weekly Perth-Kuching flights.

SYDNEY LOSES PRESTIGIOUS FIGO TO KL

# Malaysia's new KL Convention Centre is right on the money with its research facility



— An artist's impression of the new KL Convention Centre —

Malaysia's latest convention facility, its \$(US)145 million Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre in the heart of KL, is taking shape and on track to open in June 2005 with on-site accommodation of more than 1400 rooms and support services extending to a new medical research facility, writes Jane Hammond.

The centre is designed to place Kuala Lumpur as the convention capital of Asia and to attract business from around the world.

Already nearly 130 events have been booked for the new centre from its opening on June 12 through until 2010.

Included in the list of major events is the 9,000 delegate FIGO — World Congress of Gynaecology and Obstetrics in November 2006. Until recently it was assumed that the conference would take place in Sydney but strong lobbying by the local gynaecological association and a state of the art facility helped sway the bid in Malaysia's favour.

The KLCC is owned indirectly by Malaysia's national oil company Petronas, a wholly owned government subsidiary. It is managed by a joint venture between KLCC Holdings and Ogden International Facilities Corporation Pty Ltd, Australia.

KLCC general manager Peter Brokenshire said Petronas was doing everything it could to attract major conferences to the new centre and was even constructing a new medical facility, in part to help bring major medical conferences to the KLCC.

"One of the reasons Petronas is building a medical centre is to assist the KLCC. They will keep a number of beds in that facility for medical research and exploratory surgery so that when we are bidding for international events, the local medical association can in all honesty say that there is research being done in the area here," Mr Brokenshire said.

"That is how lateral the Petronas thinking is. They think outside the nine dots."

He said the five-floor convention centre was coming on stream at an opportune time and would further enhance Malaysia's growing reputation as a premier MICE destination.

"I really believe that it is Malaysia's turn. A lot of the associa-

tions have been to our near neighbours — to Singapore, Hong Kong, Bangkok and even Bali but they haven't, for whatever reason, been to Malaysia and Kuala Lumpur. This facility is coming on stream at the right time," Mr Brokenshire said.

"The cost factor is another issue. Our five-star hotel rooms at \$(US)100 with breakfast are 40 per cent cheaper than the regional average.

"Already the discussions we are having in the UK and Europe are for events as far out as 2012 and 2014."

Centrally located in Kuala Lumpur's premier business precinct alongside the Petronas Twin Towers and the six-storey Suria KLCC Shopping Centre, the new convention centre is positioned to make the most of its unique and vibrant urban setting.

More than 10,000 hotel rooms are found within a 15-minute walk of the KLCC and the KL International Airport is just 28 minutes away by fast train.

The new centre will have the latest in wireless, telecoms and digital audio-visual facilities. Delegates will be able to take part in electronic voting and simultaneous interpreting booths will also be available.

The venue includes a plenary hall on two levels with tiered seating for 3000; a plenary theatre with seating for 500; four exhibition halls; a grand ballroom to accommodate 2,300 delegates theatre style or 2000 guests for a banquet; a conference hall for 1800 delegates; a banquet hall to seat up to 740; a further 20 meeting rooms and a range of service rooms including a media room, bridal suites, prayer rooms and parenting rooms.

With a total footprint of more than 28,000 square metres the new centre includes an exhibition hall of 10,000 square metres but Mr Brokenshire said he was already making plans to extend the exhibition space.

A feature of the KLCC will be an international aquarium with 3000 varieties of fish. The aquarium will include a moving walkway taking visitors through a tunnel of sea creatures.



# "GOTTA' BE THERE"



## MALAYSIA

Experience the wonders of Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur, Asia's new excitement capital or Langkawi with its superb 5-star beach resorts, lush tropical rainforests and duty-free shopping. Perhaps you'd rather Penang and explore its rich colonial



history and taste the many flavours of local cuisine. Or Sabah, with its crystal clear lagoons, jungles with Orangutans and elephants. Or visit Sarawak, with its world-renowned Mulu Caves, unique wildlife and fascinating Iban and Dayak ethnic cultures. Come and discover all of this right here in Malaysia.



# "GOTTA' SEE THAT"



# Taman Negara's secret places can steal your heart and soothe your soul

Photo courtesy of Tourism Malaysia/ [www.tourism.gov.my](http://www.tourism.gov.my)



By Melissa Jayne Hurd

Suspended 25 metres above the ground, my eyes were fixed on the full length of the bridge. At this point I had no doubt that this was the “world’s longest canopy walkway”. Despite the fact I had been assured the experience was perfectly safe, the initial charm I had found in the rustic nature of the bridge was beginning to wear off. I pushed thoughts of Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom from my mind and laughed instead at the effect Malaysia seemed to have on me, time and time again.



extending as far as the eye could see. Taman Negara is the last broad expanse of virgin lowland, hill and montane forest in Peninsula Malaysia — so whether you suffer from vertigo or not, the view itself is guaranteed to take your breath away.

With more than 14,000 species of plants, 200 mammals, 300 species of birds and over 80 species of bats — Taman Negara solely is a paradise for the wildlife enthusiast. With more than 84 tigers recorded in the park, it remains one of the best places in the world to catch a glimpse of the endangered mammal and many people travel to Taman Negara solely with

Only yesterday I’d arrived at KL International and here I was today, deep in the heart of Taman Negara — one of the oldest rainforests in the world — but instead of the scenery, I was focused

on the engineering behind what was holding me up! With every step, however, my confidence grew and before long I found myself distracted by the sight of virgin rainforest



that purpose in mind. However, the most striking feature of the park concerns its ecology — scientists estimate it has been evolving for some 130 million years, making it one of the “oldest” rainforests on earth. Indeed, when you’re cruising down one of the park’s many rivers, the density and complexity of the plant life that surrounds you is mesmerising. As the waterways narrow, you find yourself pushing vines out of your way and taking your sunglasses off, the bright of day unable to penetrate the thick of the foliage.

Those who pass up the rainforest in the name of relaxation and choose instead to lie on a beach in Lankawi or Penang, could not have experienced the joys of floating in one of Taman Negara’s fresh water rivers. After making the six hour journey from KL airport (three hours by car / three hours by boat on the Tembeling River), I was rather keen to have some time to myself in the comfort of my own room. My guide Sabri, however, insisted I join him for a swim down at the river. As I lay there, floating on my back, feeling the gentle current against my skin and watching the sky change from tones of blue and purple, to pink and orange, I felt the stress of work and the journey I’d undertaken to be there, completely dissolve. The chorus of cicadas grew stronger with the fading light, drowning out the conversation of the only two other people swimming in the river with us. To this day, it remains my fondest memory of



Gua Telinga (Ear Cave) is home to thousands of small insect-eating bats known as “roundleaf bats”.

Malaysia.

When it comes to accommodation, Mutiara Taman Negara makes an ideal place to base yourself, as it is located in a 15-acre jungle sanctuary within the National Park. Overlooking the Tembeling and Tahan rivers, this eco-style resort has 108 chalets, bungalows and guesthouses so you’re able to enjoy the wild of the rainforest from the comfort of a hotel. Mutiara runs a number of

recreational activities out of the resort including fishing, cave exploration and jungle treks. The treks vary in duration from a 30-minute low-impact walk, to the seven-day Gunung Tahan trek — Peninsula Malaysia’s highest peak at 2187m.

For those who have never seen a bat up close and personal, make sure you take the 1/2 day trip to Gua Telinga (Ear Cave). About 80 metres long, the cave has a rope all the way through it so it is impossible to get lost. The cave is home to literally thousands of small insect-eating bats known as “roundleaf bats” and the experience of being inside the cave, with them moving all around you, is certainly quite extraordinary. Another experience not to be missed is the ‘night walk’ to view Taman Negara’s incredible luminous fungi and fireflies. For those keen enough, the



Canopy walkway at Kuala Tahan and Kuala Koh.



- Mutiara Taman Negara Chalets -

resort has constructed wildlife observation hides where visitors can opt to spend the night.

There is no doubt however, that for the best overall perspective of the rainforest one has to visit the 25 metres high and over 540 metre long canopy walkway at Kuala Tahan and Kuala Koh. A short walk or boat-ride from the resort, the experience is one that is open to all ages, although adults must accompany children at all times. The faint-hearted will be rewarded with amazing views that enable you to get a feel for what this land was like before it was colonised and industrialised. The time scale of 130 million years however, is a little hard to get your head around.

On the web:

[www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my](http://www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my)

[www.mutiarahotels.com](http://www.mutiarahotels.com)





# SARAWAK

## offers unforgettable MICE adventures

By Jane Hammond

**FOR pre or post convention tour travel, meetings or incentives with an exotic flavour and a sense of adventure the Malaysian State of Sarawak on the island of Borneo is hard to beat.**

Damai Beach, a resort area 32 km from Kuching has a range of facilities and accommodation catering for the luxury as well as the budget ends of the market.

The Sarawak Cultural Village, near Damai Beach, is a seven-hectare living museum showcasing the longhouses mores and customs of the main tribal groups in Sarawak.

It makes an interesting day trip and groups can arrange to use the village for special events such as cultural dinners complete with potent local rice wine, traditional tribal dancing and blowpipe contests.

**The state's capital Kuching, population 500,000, offers all of the conveniences expected of a modern Asian city without the hustle and bustle or the crowds.**

The village plays host to major cultural events in Sarawak including the annual Rainforest World Music Festival, a celebration of music and culture that attracts international acts and world music fans from around the world.

In the north of the State the town of Miri is the gateway to some of the best of Sarawak's ancient rainforests and an intriguing network of underground caves.

The Royal Mulu Resort, a half-hour light plane ride from Miri, is an amazing hotel complex on the fringe of the World

Heritage Listed Mulu National Park.

The 188-room resort, set on the banks of the Melinau River is built on poles and offers luxurious accommodation in the heart of Borneo. Meetings and incentives are catered for and local tour operators are available to meet requests from groups wanting everything from extreme sporting adventures to leisurely jungle walks or river cruises in dug-out canoes.

One of the park's principle attractions are the up to 3 million bats of Deer Cave that fly out at dusk in groups of tens of thousands and spiral through the twilight air in an eerie spectacle.

MICE is a growing market segment in Sarawak and the state's pro-active tourism board is working hard to sell the benefits of the state particularly to the small to medium end of the conference and events business and the incentives market.

Just about any "out of the box" idea or plan can be catered for in Sarawak from the hosting of a private orchestral concert in the natural auditorium of an underground cave to a corporate meeting organised in an authentic longhouse deep in the jungle.

Sarawak is a well worth a visit and offers the traveller an unforgettable environmental and cultural experience. As a pre or post tour option or for incentive travel it provides Malaysia with a unique adventure edge in the increasingly competitive MICE market.

SARAWAK offers an exciting range of travel possibilities and experiences from caving and diving to jungle trekking and rock climbing or simply lying in the sun on a secluded tropical beach.

It is an untapped paradise and a safe and friendly destination where tourists are welcomed and valued, crime rates are low and like the rest of Malaysia the water is safe to drink straight from the tap.

Sarawak is an eco-tourists dream. It has some of the world's oldest rainforests, an abundance of wildlife and a fascinating cultural heritage.

Once inhabited by headhunting tribes, Malaysia's largest state is now a peaceful mix of cultures where blowpipes have not been used on human prey for at least the last 150 years.

The state's capital Kuching, population 500,000, offers all of the conveniences expected of a modern Asian city without the hustle and bustle or the crowds.

The city's quirky cat museum is well worth a visit for moggy lovers and others and the Semenggoh Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, which works to rehabilitate confiscated pet Orang-utans and reintroduce them to the wild, is a must see.