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# Profitable dance with Asia

With most of South-east Asia's top tourism source markets performing well for Spain, the NTO has stepped up efforts to convince more Asians to head over for work and play. Rachel AJ Lee reports

Both foreign arrivals and tourist receipts are up for Spain in 2016. Arrivals rose 9.9 per cent from 2015 to reach past 75.3 million, while tourist expenditure saw an 8.3 per cent increment from 2015 figures to 77 billion euros (US\$91.7 billion).

Spain's top Asian source markets in 2016 were China, South Korea, Japan, India and Singapore. While it is no surprise that China is Spain's largest tourist source market, the destination witnessed a recent decline in Japanese arrivals due to various terrorism-related incidents in Europe.

A spokesperson from Spain Tourism Board – Southeast Asia, Australia & New Zealand told *TTG Show Daily* that the Japanese, especially the elderly, are "particularly concerned with security".

Within South-east Asian markets, Singapore topped the charts in 2016 with 67,099 arrivals into Spain (up 72.1 per cent year-on-year), followed by the Philippines with 56,159 (up 1.3 per cent), Indonesia with 48,752 (up 38.6 per cent), Malaysia with 36,016 (up of 40.8 per cent), and Thailand with 23,647 (up 23.4 per cent).

Bearing this figures in mind, the tourism board will be targeting the leisure and incentive travel segments in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

The spokesperson added: "The Philippines is dynamically catching up in the incentive travel market. Previously, the Philippines used to send special interest groups such as religious pilgrimages or gastronomic tours to Spain, but in the past two years the market has been sending high-value incentive groups."

However, Filipinos require Schengen visas to travel to Europe or Spain, which the spokesperson felt was an "issue".

Another issue for Spain in courting the



Capital city Madrid charms with elegant boulevards and impressive historical architecture and museums of European art

Asian market is the limited number of flights from Asia-Pacific. The *What's New in Catalonia 2017-2018* report from the Catalan Tourist Board found that Barcelona was one of the most "unserved destinations from the Asia-Pacific", and that there was definitely room to grow.

Currently, Singapore Airlines flies five times weekly from Singapore to Barcelona via Milan, and recently on April 28, 2017, Korean Air started flying thrice-weekly from Seoul to Barcelona.

These obstacles aside, Spain Tourism Board believes that the destination's strong selling points will draw Asians in.

As to what these strong selling points were, the spokesperson pointed to the weather and climate, where the sun can be felt even during winter time; and that the

country was a shopping haven, offering the best value for every euro spent.

In addition, the country has a wealth of history and culture, which the spokesperson said was akin to "walking inside a history book" as Spain has experienced many different periods of the world's civilisations, from the Gothics to the Romans.

As such, promotional campaigns and other marketing efforts to Asia are well underway, but details are still under wraps.

What the spokesperson could reveal was Spain Tourism Board's business event-focused efforts in South-east Asia. It recently did a series of presentations for business events specialist travel companies, together with the Barcelona Convention Bureau, in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

## Destination in numbers

### 6 days

The average length of stay among Asian travellers in Spain

### 350 euros

The average daily expenditure – equivalent to US\$419 – made by South-east Asian travellers in Spain

### 230,000

The number of South-east Asian visitors that flew into Barcelona in 2016

## Hot stuff

### Ferrari Land

PortAventura World has opened to the public its newest expansion, the 60,000m<sup>2</sup> Ferrari Land. This is the largest single expansion in the resort's history, so much so Ferrari Land comes with its own gate and requires a separate entrance ticket.

Ferrari Land boasts 11 attractions such as the Red Force that reaches up to a height of 112 metres and going from 0 to 180 km in five seconds, two free fall towers more than 55m-high, and two simulator attractions Flying Dreams and Racing Legends. There's also a reproduction of a Renaissance Italian town, complete with piazzas and a bell tower.

### Almanac Hotel Barcelona

Located steps away from Passeig de Gràcia, one of the major avenues in Barcelona, is Almanac Hotel Barcelona. Opening on November 1, the property features 61 rooms and 30 suites decked out in warm oak tones and gold accents, and baths made of Ibiza marble. Recreational facilities include a spa, rooftop pool and lounge,

fitness centre, and a sauna and steam room. For meeting planners, there are five function spaces. Curated experiences with a mixologist or master perfumer can also be arranged.

### Casa Vicens

The first house that Antonio Gaudí designed, Casa Vicens, is now open to the public after functioning as a private residence for more than 130 years.

Dating back to 1883-1888, it is the eighth building in Barcelona to be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Refurbishment began last year to convert the brightly-coloured building into a museum featuring some of Gaudí's best work.

Tours of the house will be complemented by a permanent exhibition which will revolve around the history of Casa Vicens; Casa Vicens as an essential expression of Gaudí's oeuvre; and the house within its social, cultural and artistic context. There will also be a series of temporary exhibitions and cultural and educational activities for all audiences.



From left: Casa Vicens; Ferrari Land



### Casa de les Punxes

Casa Terradas, better known as the Casa de les Punxes because of its six spiky towers, opened its doors to the public this summer.

Declared a Historical National Monument in 1975, and after more than a hundred years of being closed to the public, three parts of the attraction can now be visited.

The main floor is the area where the legend of Sant Jordi will be narrated – a recurrent theme in modernism – via an audio-visual representation. Meanwhile, the ground is home to a shop and a bar, while the terrace, will be home to a museum that explores the work of architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch, the history of Casa de les Punxes, as well as modernism.

