

TTW Asia

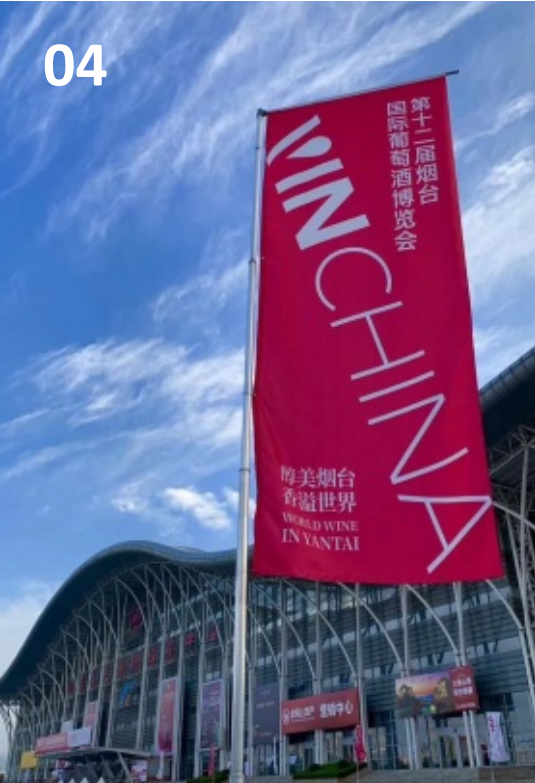
Volume:9, Issue: April 2020

COVID 19 CRISIS

Scrambling
Asian Tourism
Economy



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Dear Readers,

As the world battles the COVID-19 pandemic, the global tourism industry suffers from the harsh impact of the crisis. Similar to other tourist destinations across the world, the Asian tourism sector has also witnessed a gradual downfall ever since the coronavirus outbreak.

In this issue, we highlight the impact of the COVID-19 virus in Asia's tourism economy. Read our 'Cover Story' to know the current economic scenario of the Asian tourism sector and the rapid decline of Asian tourism characterised by international travel bans and tour cancellations. Besides tourism, Asia is known for its unique hospitality experiences. Asia is one of the first regions in the world to embrace Artificial Intelligence in its hotel industry. Our 'Special Feature' brings a list of AI Hotels in Asia consisting of smart rooms, virtual reality experience and robot staffs. Read on to know what the exceptional hotels offer and plan a visit once the trying times are over.

Take a look at the 'Meetings Point' to learn how China's popular port city Yantai offers some of the best meetings, events and convention facilities alongside some wonderful hidden tourism destinations. Yantai is also currently free from the coronavirus disease.

In this issue, we also focus on the city of Dili in East Timor. The city provides an abundance of historical places, dark tourism sites and natural bounties. Read 'Destination Diary' to know more about the place and plan an Asian vacation away from mainstream destinations.

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Yantai is China's one of the most popular port cities located in the Shandong Province. This beautiful city attracts event planners to host any kind of business events or meetings. Yantai ranks high in offering unique seaside scenery and historical sites on China's eastern coast. Yantai is now safe from coronavirus pandemic. The last patient infected with the novel coronavirus pneumonia was declared cured and discharged from the Yantai City Hospital on March 11. Now Yantai has no record of coronavirus spreading.

This serene business hub of Shandong Region gazes across the sea toward Japan and South Korea. The coastline measures about 1,300 km, dotted with islands, bays and beaches. Let's have a look on the business and meeting scenario of the city.

YANTAI

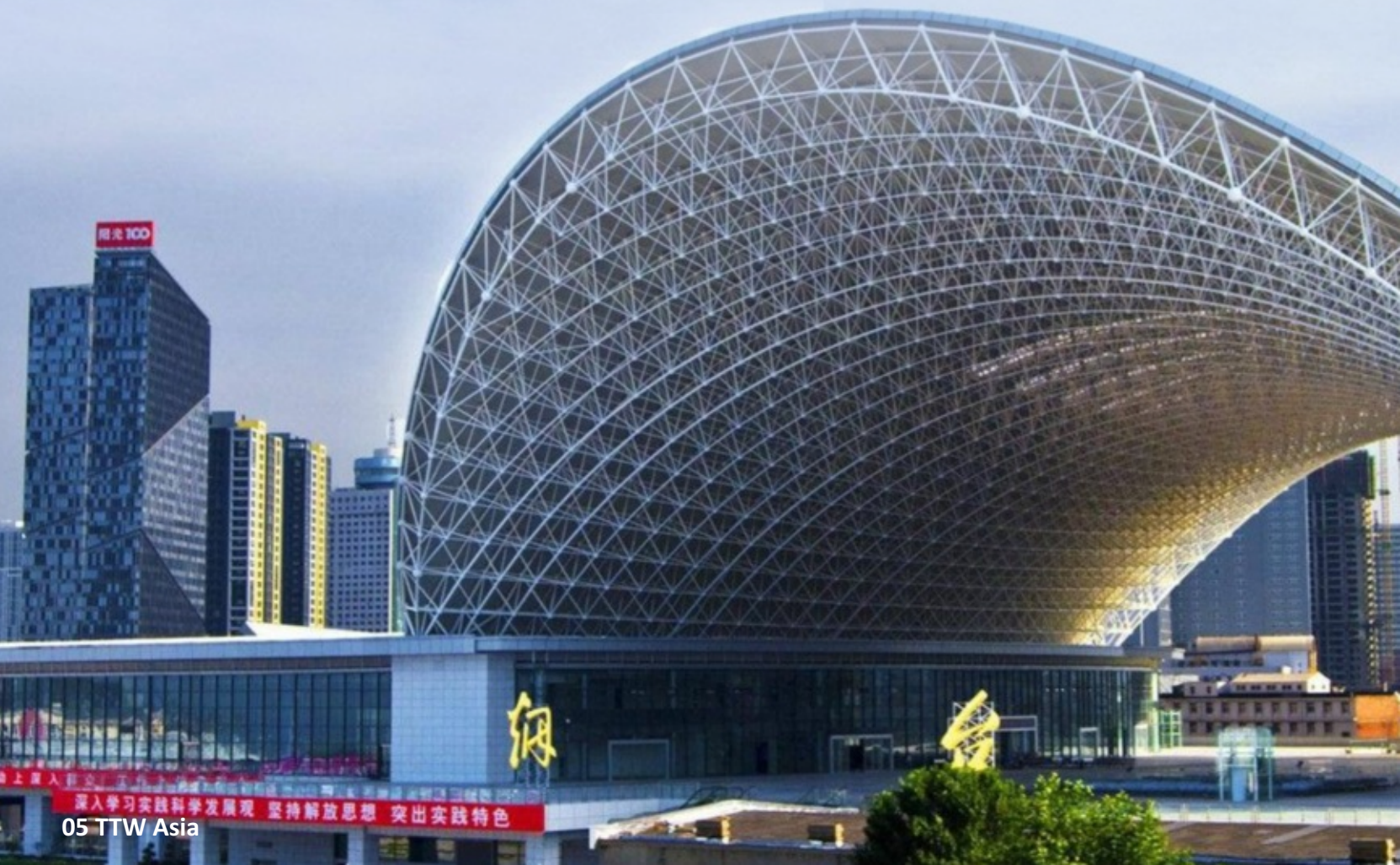
***MEETINGS IN THE CHARMING
COASTAL CITY OF CHINA***

Business in the city: Tracking Far East

Yantai currently holds second position in mega-industrial sector in China. As it is located on the coastal line, this city draws good amount of logistics business. Now this city covers manufacturing industry, modern service sector, marine economy and health sectors. Yantai boasts complete industrial categories and is home to 47 listed companies including Mitsubishi, LG, General Motor (GM) and Total.

It also has some renowned local companies such as the world-leading wine company Changyu and Longda Food Company. Yantai is also developing natural gas resources and electricity which benefits the Shandong Province and other countries which are on the border.

However, the region's largest industry is agriculture and agricultural products. It is famous for a particular variety of apple and Laiyang pear and is home to the country's largest and oldest grape winery, Changyu. Yantai is most important fruit planting, food processing and manufacturing unit exporting bases.



Top rated Convention Centres and hotels

Yantai International Expo Center

Yantai International Expo Center was developed and built by the Nanshan Group. It is a large-scale modern exhibition, conference and dining venue in the city. This convention and exhibition hub of Yantai blends with the surrounding environment with grace and grandeur. Yantai International Expo Center has an area of 158,000 sq.m., including 138,000 sq.m. above the ground and an underground building area of 20,000 sq.m.

Crowne Plaza Hotel Yantai Sea View

It is one of the most notable hotel and convention centres in the city. Located close to Penglai International Airport and Qingdao Airport, this convention centre attracts event planners for its highly advanced audio-visual equipment. Built in 2009 and located next to Yantai International Expo Centre, this hotel and convention centre has 7 meeting rooms (with portable walls) covering 24820 sq.ft. It has a capacity to accommodate more than 1780 delegates.

Sheraton Yantai Golden Beach Resort

Sheraton Yantai Golden Beach Resort is a luxurious hotel and convention centre located in the heart of the city with a beautiful ocean view. Just 25 minutes from Penglai International Airport, this event venue and hotel serves to all with its state-of-the-art offerings and warm hospitality.





Hidden gems in the city

Yantai boasts many prime bathing spots along the sea, including both renowned summer resorts and natural landscapes .Its many sightseeing attractions feature the Penglai Pavilion, “fairyland on earth”, and Yantai Hill, symbol of the city.

Penglai was called Dengzhou in ancient times. Located on a promontory into the sea, the town appears to emerge from the waves amid foam and mist. As mirages are often seen in the area, Penglai has earned the name "Wonderland".

Yantai Hill : Another prestigious landscape is Yantai Hill, bordering the sea to the north and the land to the south. It is known for its beautiful environment and splendid view. The Hill was originally named for its smoke tower in the early Ming Dynasty, erected to guard against foreign intruders. Today, the "Yantai Stone" and a navigation light tower stand firmly on the hill, overlooking the precipice.

Must Try : Here the local cooks take advantage of area's abundant sea food, vegetables and fruits, creatively crafting tasty dishes. Yantai is also the cradle of wine production, housing the largest wine production base in Asia. Zhangyu Red Wine is a widely known brand in China and abroad, produced here.

Getting There: Yantai is well connected with all major international airports in China. Yantai Penglai International Airport also provides daily scheduled flights to all major airports in China as well as Seoul, Osaka and Hong Kong.



Ever since the advent of the digital era, every important business sector across the globe has equipped their operations with technological advancements. The hospitality industry is one such sector that warmed up to smart technologies and digital phenomenon. The newly established Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality soon made its way into the hotel industry.

Asia is one of the first regions across the globe to embrace Artificial Intelligence in its hotel industry. Japan is the first country in the world to launch a hotel regulated by robots. Asia's exceptional technological capability soon established properties that defined smart hospitality. Guests and consumers are also quick to adapt themselves to an advanced digital way of living. Read on to learn about some of Asia's finest AI hotels that takes guests and visitors one step ahead in the future!

Asia's Best AI Hotels

A unique experience of futuristic smart living



Henn Na Hotel (Tokyo, Japan)

Recognised as the first robot-staffed hotel in the world, Henn Na Hotel provides one of the best Artificial Intelligence experiences in the hospitality industry. Guests staying at the Henn Na Hotel can enjoy a comfortable stay alongside astonishing and exciting surprises. Robotic dinosaurs and Japanese robots greet guests at the entrance and are programmed to speak the language of your choice. One can also register themselves with the face recognition system post check-in. This facial recognition system allows guests to go around the place without the hassle of carrying room keys. The front desk of the hotel has multi-lingual robot receptionists always ready to assist the guests. In addition, there is a robotic arm to carry your luggage as well as an in-room robot help.

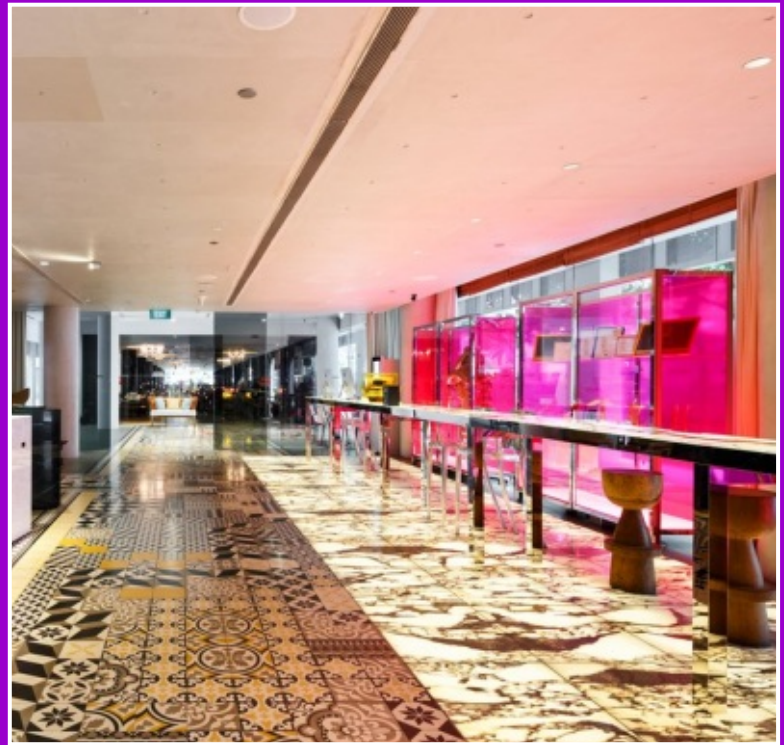
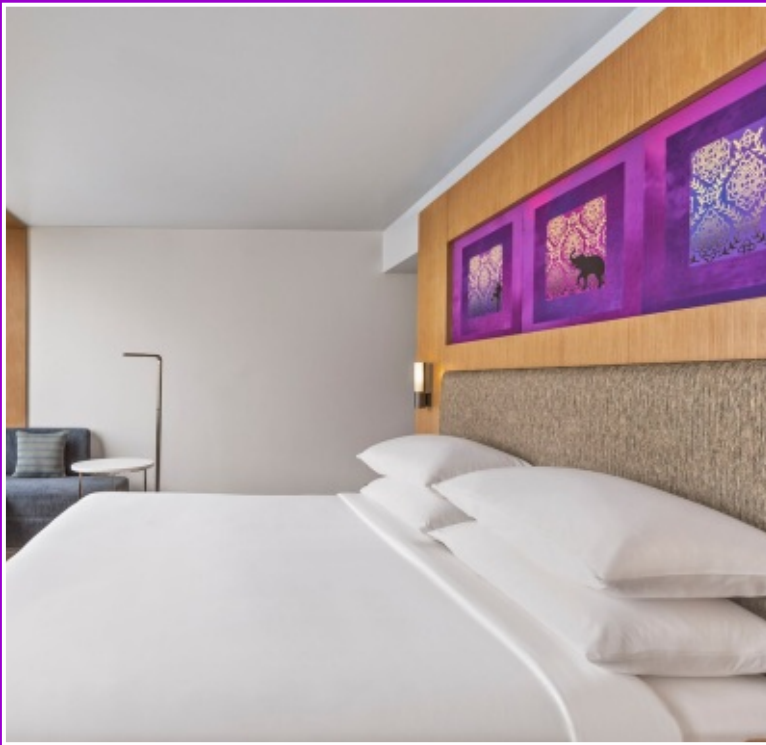


Alibaba FlyZoo Hotel (Hangzhou, China)

Created by the Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, Flyzoo has been considered as a future hotel. It is equipped with numerous smart technologies and utilises Artificial Intelligence at its finest. Post a face recognition check-in, guests are assisted by a boot robot made in Alibaba's A.I laboratories. These robots help in all kinds of room services and food deliveries. Every room is equipped with the main smart assistance, Tmall Genie. The AI management system can bring every required service at your fingertips. The hotel also offers a digital gym with fun technological activities. The Flyzoo hotel provides an ideal seamless hospitality equipped with smart technology.

Aloft Bangkok Sukhumvit 11, (Bangkok, Thailand)

Located in the heart of the city, the Aloft Hotel Bangkok is one of the finest representatives of smart hotels. The hotel offers an accommodation of 296 rooms and suites. Among them, nearly 49 rooms are Touch Rooms and equipped with FINGI, a special room-key that works as a personal smart phone. The FINGI device is capable of controlling lights and air conditioners. The key can also be used to navigate in and around the hotel and make necessary bookings. It can also help guests to stay in touch with their loved ones. The hotel also has its own all-day dining space, Crave where guests can select their favourite wine and a Thai dish of their choice just by swiping the menu catalogued in the restaurant's iPad.



M Social (Robertson Quay, Singapore)

The M Social Hotel in Singapore is ideally crafted for millennial travellers. With a sleek exterior and stylish interior, the hotel represents modern charm and luxury. The property is also another addition to Asia's hotels with robot employees. The hotel has two on-hand robots, AURA and AUSCA. AURA is a delivery robot, always ready to help guests and provide room service. It stays at the front of the house and provides friendly autonomous services to guests. On the other hand, AUSCA is a chef robot who specialises in making breakfast for the guests. It is especially known for its egg dishes.

InterContinental Beijing Sanlitun (Beijing, China)

Leading hospitality giant, InterContinental Hotel Group collaborated with the tech company, Baidu to incorporate some incredible smart technology in its properties across China. InterContinental Beijing Sanlitun is one of the first properties of the group in China to provide smart hospitality through their AI rooms. The suites in the hotel are equipped with smart voice control technology. It offers its guests a more human-computer interactive experience. The voice technology is enabled to act according to the needs of the guests just by having an understanding of the situation. One does not have to put forth a command or even press a button for the voice technology to work. It can also easily shift between work and leisure modes to provide a seamless customised room service.



United Nations named Finland as world's happiest country for the third time

For the third consecutive year, Finland has been named the world's happiest country. The annual United Nations World Happiness Report released its 2020 edition where Finland declared as the world's happiest country. As per the report the reasons for happiness is good social support networks, social trust, honest governments, safe environments and healthy lives. Four countries could claim the top spot since the first report in 2012- Denmark in 2012, 2013 and 2016, Switzerland in 2015, Norway in 2017 and Finland in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

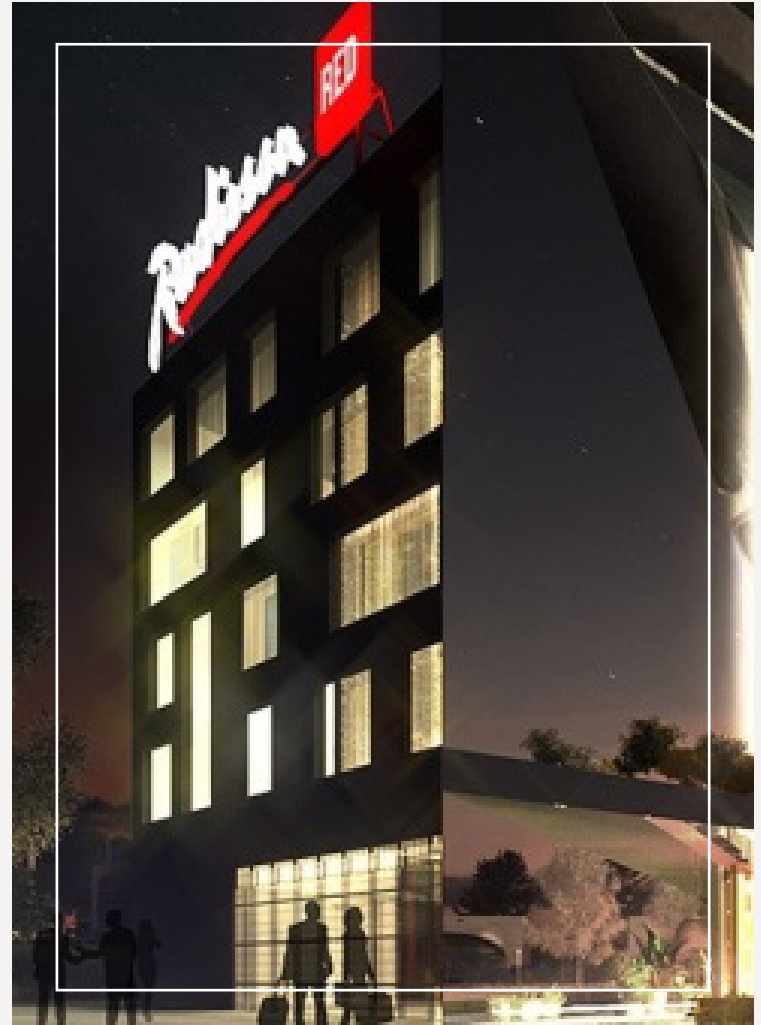


Longleat Safari Park opens with strict hygiene standards

Longleat has announced its drive-through safari park will be open for visitors from 20th March 2020. While Longleat House, walk through animal areas and other attractions are temporarily closed as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the world-famous Safari Park will continue to operate under strict hygiene standards.

6000 flights saved annually due to current high-speed rail travel

Grant Shapps, the Transport Secretary said that HS1 is a true success story and they are fully committed to expanding international high-speed rail links between the U.K. and the rest of Europe as part of their work to be a truly Global Britain. The huge potential of high-speed rail is demonstrated in the new partnership to help the U.K. reach its net zero carbon emission target by 2050. Once the Eurostar's routes to Amsterdam and Rotterdam reach their full potential and all other international destination are added to the network passenger which could make up to 4.9 million more international train trips in a year.



Radisson Hotel Group opens its new hotel in Germany

Radisson Hotel Group has signed its first Radisson Red Hotel in Germany. In a central city location, the new Radisson Red Cologne will be located which is just a stone's throw from UNESCO World Heritage recognized Cologne Cathedral. A new building for the lifestyle brand of the Radisson Hotel Group with an existing listed hotel property is being redesigned and supplemented.

Asia Pacific region's tourism has hit to its bottom as coronavirus outbreak spiked in the last few months. Most of the holiday hotspots in China, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Siam Reap and India are hit by millions in loss due to the cancellation of plans by international tourists and the total curbing of inbound travel.

COVID 19 CRISIS

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Current Scenario

As COVID-19 takes the centre stage, most of the international tourists are stranded on cruise ships or at hotels or in airports, which is leading to aggressive attempts of containment. From empty or abandoned hotels to vacant airports or cruise terminals, the impact on travel and tourism businesses has been potentially enormous, resulting in million job losses and massive shrink in hotel and airline markets. Asian countries are seeing a loss of GDP through lost tourism receipts alone and a loss of around \$105-115 billion is dreaded.

Now it is far too early to speculate how far this outbreak will go. Though we know, China is coming out from this disastrous situation, but other countries are now struggling to stop the spread by implementing lockdowns. But barely three months into this global pandemic, ramification is already far-reaching that not only touches the Asian markets, but also African and European markets too.

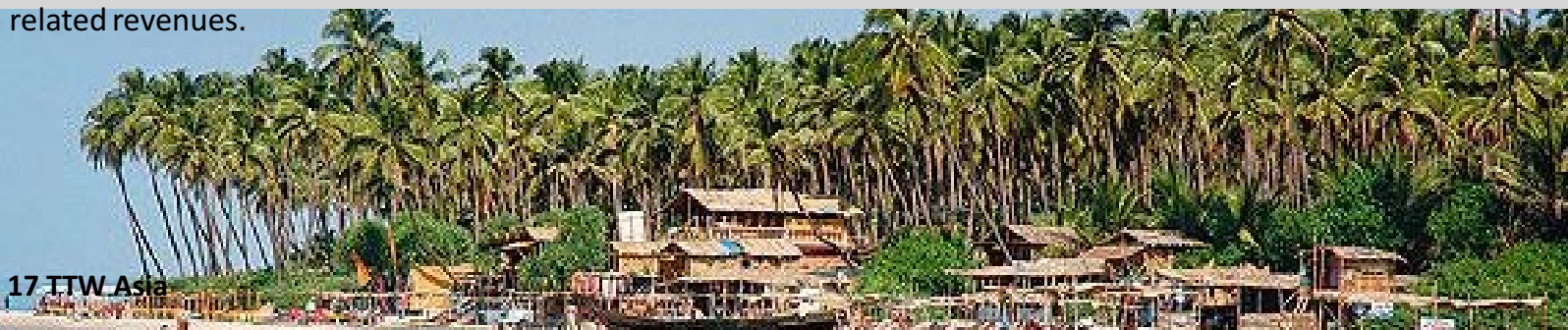
Economy Worsens

In recent years, China, Maldives, Macau and Vietnam had invested heavily in luxurious resorts and glamorous casinos to capture the swelling ranks of Chinese tourists. Now airlines, hotels and tour operators are suffering from huge cancellations in terms of both inbound and outbound travel. There is a huge drop in future bookings in accommodation, airlines, cruises, serviced apartments and convention centres (for meetings and exhibitions), primarily from China and India. Some countries like Japan, Korea, Middle East and Maldives are totally relying on Chinese tourists. While the others like Vietnam, Brunei, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore earlier had huge concentration of Chinese tourists, they are now witnessing huge slump and are expected to lose at least \$3 billion in tourism-related revenues. The economy of these South East Asian nations is also highly exposed to any supply chain risks in electronics and autos industries. In China, some of the manufacturing industries are gradually restoring its production, but supply chains to different parts of the world have been significantly disrupted as many companies have key manufacturing facilities there. Meanwhile, the demand in many countries has been hit as consumers cut back on going out to shops and restaurants. Lockdown till the month of May is one of the major factor for this economic downward. Hotels, airlines and MICE business have been severely affected as consumers cancel holidays and companies or event organisers postpone or cancel their events, exhibitions and other non-essential incentive trips. It leads to a huge dip in the stocks of airlines, tourism organisations, cruises and hotels.

Rapid Decline in Tourism

In recent years, China, Maldives, Macau and Vietnam had invested heavily in luxurious resorts and glamorous casinos to capture the swelling ranks of Chinese tourists. Now airlines, hotels and tour operators are suffering from huge cancellations in terms of both inbound and outbound travel. There is a huge drop in future bookings in accommodation, airlines, cruises, serviced apartments and convention centres (for meetings and exhibitions), primarily from China and India.

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Dili

East Timor

Where History and Natural Gifts Collide

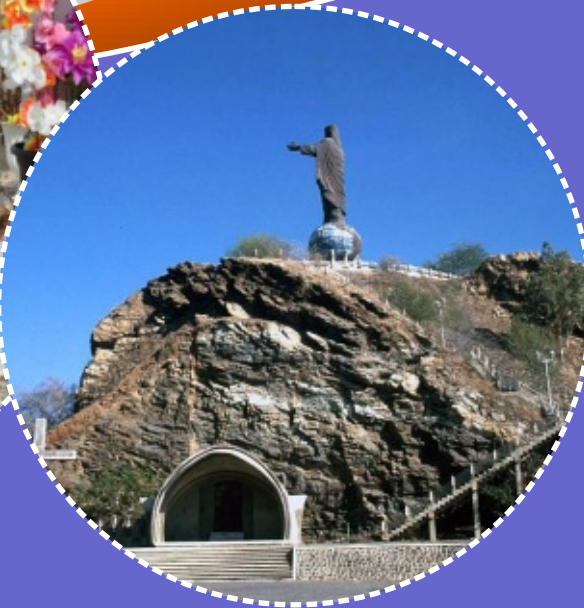
The capital and largest city of East Timor, Dili is also known as the city of peace. With years of freedom struggle and resistance, the city is the hub of historical places and landmarks. In addition, it has an abundance of natural bounties. It is the ideal destination for travellers with a quench for exhilarating history as well as love for nature. However, this little city is one of the lesser-known tourist destinations in Asia. It is a perfect venue to plan a vacation away from the mainstream tourism spots. Dili provides the ultimate opportunity to learn about the region's rich history, mingle with the locals and enjoy the beautiful natural landscapes.

Cristo Rei: Considered to be one of the major tourist attractions in Dili, Cristo Rei is one of the largest Jesus statues in the world. Placed atop a globe, the statue was completed around the year 1996. The Indonesian government gifted it to the people of Timor in the same year. Located above a hill nearly 7 km east of the town, you need to climb 597 steps to get close to the statue.

Dolok Oan Beach: The Dolok Oan Beach lies right on the other side of the Cristo Rei statue. Halfway up the steps, there is an intersection leading to the Cristo Rei beach on one end and the statue on the other. It is best to go to the beach after you visit the statue. The beach is covered with white sand and provides an extravagant view of the crystal clear ocean and the green mountain. One can enjoy a calm swim in the sea or leisurely stroll across the beach.

Santa Cruz Cemetery: One of Dili's popular dark tourism sites, the Santa Cruz cemetery shows an account of the city's struggle to independence. The brutal Dili massacre took place on this spot back in 1991, ending the lives of nearly 250 East Timorese pro-independence people. The cemetery is full of pastel coloured tombstones with elaborate and intricate detailing. A stroll around the cemetery is enough to make one feel the horrors of the dreadful incident.

what to see



Chega! Exhibition: Just a walking distance away from the cemetery is the Chega! Exhibition, one of the greatest museums in Dili. Dedicated to the East Timorese people, the museum narrates the tales of the East Timorese people and their struggle during the Portuguese, Japanese and Indonesian occupancy of Timor. Documented through a series of photographs and panels, the exhibition shows the violent days of nightmare and abuse of human rights in the region from 1974 to 1999. What makes this place one of the best historical venues in Dili is that the exhibition is set in the building and actual prison-cells of the Portuguese-era jail. Take a look at the 'dark cells' and enthralling photos in the library to experience dark tourism at its finest.

Dili Cathedral: Close to the Chega! Exhibition is the Dili Cathedral. Built by the Indonesian government in the year 1984, this is the largest Catholic cathedral in Timor and the second largest in South East Asia. The cathedral stands as a symbol of Timorese faith, spirituality and pride. The interior is beautiful with well-painted stained glass windows and grand ceiling.

East Timor Resistance Museum and Archives: : A paradise for travellers who love history, this museum is a must-visit destination if one is in Dili. The museum provides the most detailed and vivid illustration of Dili's struggle for independence in the last 24 years. The museum has a large collection of photos, videos and timeline of the resistance history. It also features the weapons and tools used by the East Timorese people to communicate during the fight for independence. The archives in the museum allow visitors to watch the horrific footage of the Santa Cruz Massacre as recorded by the British journalist Max Stahl.



What to do?

Shop in *Tais* Market

Make sure to pay a visit to the local *Tais* Market to see an abundance of *Tais* (woven cloth) materials. The daily market displays a huge collection of traditional handmade products from the local communities of Dili. Shop any kind of tais material or souvenir you want but make sure to bargain hard!

Visit the Basar Ai-Fuan Fruit Market

If you want to enjoy an extravagant collection of fresh fruits and vegetables, drop by this local fruit market to eat some fresh fruits and engage with the friendly locals.

Where to eat?

Letefoho Café

Enjoy a cup of freshly brewed coffee at the Letefoho Cafe. Timor-Leste is often recognised for its coffee beans. The cafe serves one of the finest coffees in the city made from the locally produced coffee. They also have a great collection of pastries to choose from and devour in!

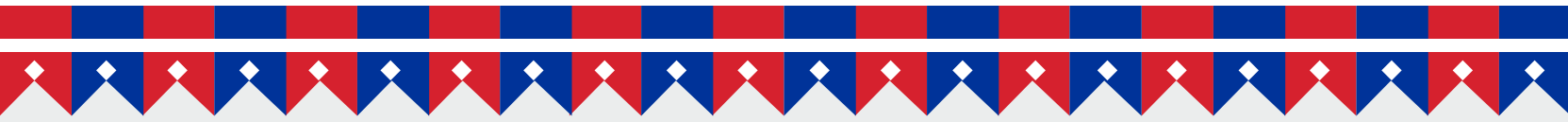
Agora Food Studio

Grab lunch at the Agora Food Studio known for its sustainable and organic cuisine in Dili. The food studio only opens for lunch and provides good, healthy and clean food.

How to reach?

The Presidente Nicolau Lobato International Airport is located in Dili with Bali as the most popular entry point. There are also few direct flights from Singapore and Australia. Dili is also well linked by road from the Indonesian border which lies 115 km west. Roadways are also accessible from Baucau and Maubisse. One can also use the daily bus service from West Timor that takes about 12 hours to reach.





Asia festivals

Aoling Festival

This festival is celebrated by the Konyak tribe which marks the arrival of spring. The local people and administration organize many rituals, which are conducted for requesting God for a better harvest. This festival falls on the New Year of the tribal people.

Date: 1 - 10 April, 2020

Place: Nagaland, India



Inuyama Matsuri

It is an annual parade of floats carrying centuries old, elaborately-made mechanical dolls in Inuyama which is 30 minutes outside Nagoya. They perform to the sound of traditional music played on flutes and drums.

Date: 5 6 April, 2020

Place: Inuyama, Aichi Prefecture,
Japan



Songkran

(The Water Festival)

Songkran is a national holiday that marks the Thai New Year. It takes place on 13th April every year although festivities stretch for at least a week. The local people clean their houses, pour water over Lord Buddha statues, and drench each other to symbolise cleaning away sins of the past year. They also pay tribute to elderly members of the family and their ancestry.

Date: 13 -15 April, 2020

Place: Thailand and Malaysia



Weifang International Kite Festival

Weifang International Kites Festival is an annual event draws thousands of visitors each year. The kites from the 40 different countries were each escorted across the stage in front of the crowd, and each escort carried a large sign showing the kite flier's home country.

Date: 20 -25 April, 2020

Place : Weifang, China

Travel AND Tour™ WORLD



Paris



Egypt



Brazil



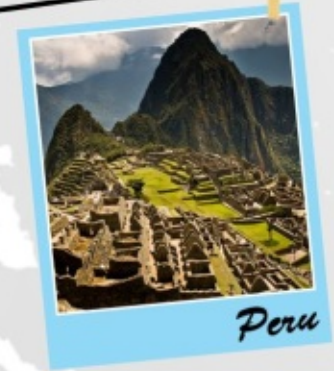
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Africa



India



Peru



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