

Is Malaysia the rough diamond of Asia? Next week in the ITB spotlight it is set to sparkle

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No one can deny that Asia has become the most important driving force when it comes to outbound tourism. To put this in numbers, outbound trips from Asia increased by 8% in 2018, according to World Travel Monitor – at a time when the world's economy is barely in the low-digits .

A key contributor of this rapid growth has clearly been China, with an increase of outbound trips by 13% last year.

But the success story of Asia in the world of tourism is not only about Asians visiting other countries, but also about Westerners visiting Asia. Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia and Laos are already top destinations for travellers everywhere.

Therefore it should not be a surprise that this year at ITB Berlin – which will take place from Wednesday 6 to Sunday 10 March – Malaysia will be the Official Partner Country.

Lots of travel experts will support me in saying that Malaysia is still a rough diamond in terms of tourism potential. But how closely should travel industry professionals keep an eye on it?

Very closely is the answer, the polishing is underway. According to data from our very own Hotelbeds booking platform, Malaysia is already the sixth biggest Asian source market. This year it is registering impressive growth rates, a trend that is expected to keep-up during the coming months.

Moreover, Malaysia aims to position itself as a top winter holiday destination and further develop the luxury market. Considering the favorable exchange rate it seems to be easy for the country to position itself a value-for-money destination.

As part of this drive, the government has focused on improving scheduled air services and chartered flights by partnering with various airlines, as well as building impressive tourist attractions. All in all, the country has fixed an ambitious target to attract 30 million tourists by 2020. Already no one doubts they'll accomplish this.

Since Tourico Holidays and GTA became part of Hotelbeds we have become even stronger in the Asian markets, not least because this was a real strength for GTA. We know the market inside out and Malaysia is no exception, where we have access to travel buyers such as airline websites, tour operators, high-street travel agents or points redemption schemes.

As Malaysia becomes more important as a source market, we are able to offer our network of over 170,000 hotels around the world access to this hard-to-reach segment in order to attract non-competing books that complement their distribution mix (without needing to employ local sales teams). Next week we will be at ITB Berlin in Hall 9, Stand 110 with many of the Hotelbeds senior leaders from all over the globe. Drop by for further details about our renewed value proposition for hoteliers and our enhanced product portfolio not only in Asia but also worldwide.

Compared to some markets Malaysia might seem a rough diamond, but we know that it's a real gem and look forward to watching it sparkle at ITB. See you all next week!

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