

IMM Asia 2024: A Unique Platform for Travel Media and Travel PRs

Come October and Travel Media and Travel PR fraternity from Asian/ Oceania will converge to make their presence felt at TravMedia's IMM Asia and this year was no different feels **Chandragupta Amritkar**.



The first time that I came across TravMedia's annual IMM (International Media Marketplace) Asia was while I was covering HICAP (Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific) in Singapore where I have been invited to be on the Planning Committee Board of HICAP for eight consecutive years. Just adjacent was IMM event being held and a journalist's curiosity caught up with me and I interacted with the dynamic Julie Ott, Chief Marketing Officer. Post that I went to cover ITB Asia too where I came to know mostly IMM is held just before ITB Asia.

This year finally had the pleasure of attending the event, which was just after HICAP and before ITB Asia. This is truly a unique event. Whereas most events (having covered over 35+ events across six continents some for 17 consecutive years) look at buyer seller meets or high end conferences for knowledge sharing, gaining expertise, IMM is a networking event connecting travel, tourism boards, hospitality fraternity and top media in the region. TravMedia's IMM is currently held in seven countries worldwide - IMM Asia, IMM North America, IMM UK, IMM Australia, IMM Germany, IMM France and IMM Brazil.

At this year's IMM Asia had the pleasure of interacting with the top notch IMM team - Julie Ott, Chief Marketing Officer, Lauren Moelk, Chief Communications Officer, Gaynor Reid, Communications Director and the big man Nick Wayland, CEO & Founder.

Now in its twelfth year, IMM is the leading global networking event connecting media from Southeast Asia, Greater China, Japan, South Korea, India and Australia with leading international tourism brands and industry leaders. With targeted prescheduled meetings and over seven hours of open networking, delegates have ample opportunities to foster relationships and build meaningful collaborations.

The event started off with the TravMedia Summit Asia that is presented as part of TravMedia's IMM Asia bringing together some of the brightest minds in tourism to explore industry insights, share best practices. Hosted for the first time on Sentosa, the conference featured experts on responsible tourism, the latest social media and travel trends and the impact of generative AI on the industry.



"The TravMedia Summit provides a platform for learning from industry leaders, gaining expert commentary on critical travel topics and discussing innovative approaches to tourism. We aim to inspire, equip and connect industry professionals to navigate the ever-evolving travel landscape," said Nick Wayland.

This year's event, hosted by Sentosa Development Corporation, brought together 140 international editors, travel writers, broadcasters and KOLs from 14 countries for more than 2,400 pre-scheduled one-on-one meetings with 160 PR representatives from 100 international travel brands. Media can have a maximum of 24 appointment slots on the across range of exhibitors is usually enormous including hotels, resorts, wellness, tourism boards, individual venues etc.

"The growth of IMM Asia each year mirrors the growth and resilience of the travel industry," says Nick Wayland, CEO and Founder of TravMedia. "In 2024, we've seen a huge recovery, with travel becoming more vital than ever to people's lives. It's clear that the appetite for travel remains strong, despite global political challenges. IMM Asia is not just about meetings - it's about bringing those stories to life to ignite wanderlust and the desire to travel."

The evening before the event started this year's host city, Sentosa Development Corporation, created a range of immersive pre-familiarisation experiences for the international media invitees to enjoy, including the new Sentosa Sensoryscape, Scentopia (which I had the opportunity to experience), iFly Singapore, HyperDrive, Skyline Luge Singapore, SkyHelix Sentosa, Madame Tussauds Singapore and a yacht experience from Sentosa Cove, to showcase





all that Sentosa has to offer. IMM concluded with a cocktail event hosted at Amara Sanctuary Sentosa.

The day before IMM, The TravMedia Summit Asia brought together 300 travel media and industry leaders for thought-provoking discussions on the latest trends shaping the tourism sector.

Responsible Tourism – Travel as a Force for Good

Moderated by Kevin Phun, Director of The Centre for Responsible Tourism Singapore, the panel covered how the travel industry can be a driver for positive change. Speakers included Dr Nisha Abu Bakar, Co-Founder of World Women Tourism; Paul Christie, CEO of Walk Japan; John Roberts, Group Director of Sustainability and Conservation at Minor Hotels; and Lasse Vangstein, Chief Communications and Sustainability Officer Havila Voyages, who shared insights on sustainability, conservation and the social impact of travel.

Unlocking the Modern Social Media Landscape

In this session, Melissa Laurie, Managing Director of Oysterly, expertly moderated a panel of social media experts, including Edwina Hart, Social Editor of Escape; Reene Ho-Phang, Founder and Managing Director of BrandStory Asia; Content Creator Tina Pik of Hangry by Nature; and Danny Osman from TikTok. The panel explored the dynamic changes in social media and how brands can leverage these platforms to better connect with their audiences.

Keynote: Harnessing our Superpowers in the Era of Generative AI

Strategist Graham Lovelace delivered a powerful keynote address on the revolutionary impact of generative AI on the travel industry. Attendees discovered how AI can enhance efficiency, personalise guest experiences and transform travel marketing while gaining insight into how to future-proof their roles in the age of AI.

Fireside Chat: Travel + Leisure Co. on the Rise of Fractional Ownership

Barry Robinson, President and MD of International Operations for Travel + Leisure Co., the world's largest membership and leisure travel company and owner of the famous media title by the same name, spoke about how vacation ownership is revolutionising the travel habits of a new generation of travellers in Asia.

The other interesting sessions included Travel Trends panel that delved into the latest travel trends shaping the industry, Editor's Panel where Nick Wayland moderated a discussion with some

of the region's best travel editors covering the evolving role of journalism in travel and how storytelling continues to drive destination marketing, Writing Masterclass had journalist Rob McFarland offering tips on how to craft compelling narratives that engage and inspire readers.

The day concluded with networking drinks hosted by Resorts World Sentosa. They introduced their latest attraction, Harry Potter Visions of Magic, and provided an opportunity for attendees to connect, share ideas, and develop lasting industry relationships.

IMM

On the second day at IMM, I had the pleasure of meeting and interacting with 20 exhibitors, including one last minute addition at the venue - Capella Sydney. The 20 exhibitors were - Club Med, Sands Resorts Macao, W Singapore Sentosa Cove, Centara Hotels & Resorts, The Ascott Limited, Paradox Singapore Merchant Court, Sentosa Development Corporation, Star RV, The Westin Resort Nusa Dua, Bali, Raffles Singapore, InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort, Far East Hospitality | Sentosa Hotels, Merlin Entertainments. JA Manafaru, Hotel Indigo Bali Seminyak Beach, Seibu Prince Hotels & Resorts, visitBerlin and La Miniera Pool Villas Pattaya.

This year, TravMedia also announced the inaugural TravMedia Awards Asia 2025, recognising and rewarding some of the best travel writers, travel PRs and travel companies. In celebration, four winners were announced: TravMedia Lifetime Achievement Awards to Siew Hua Lee, Travel Editor of The Straits Times and Reene Ho-Phang, Founder of BrandStory Asia; TravMedia Campaign of the Year to Accor; and TravMedia Travel Writer of the Year to Claire Turrell.

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- IMM Cocktail Sponsor, Amara Hotels & Resorts
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The parent organisation TravMedia provides global travel newsfeeds and connects more than 25,000 travel media and more than 20,000 travel brand PRs worldwide via an online newsroom, press release distribution, events, Journalist Alerts and daily industry updates.