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# Hospitality trends at HICAP 2025



HICAP 2025 (Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific) in its 35th edition had hospitality experts focusing on hotel investment trends, new tech solutions, need of transparency and a major take on sustainability feels

**Chandragupta Amritkar**

## Hospitality growth in Asia Pacific

- In Singapore the luxury segment is doing great with hotel revenues on the rise and Marina Bay hotels surpassing \$1,100 per night (eg during Formula One).
- India was described as a market in motion, especially a growing domestic travel base and lots of opportunities in tier 2 and tier 3 towns.
- China also is benefiting from growing domestic travel while a gradual recovery of MICE and international visitors is foreseen.
- Vietnam was highlighted as the rising star with investors praising the country's growing infrastructure and cost efficiency and Vietnam's hotel supply will continue expanding rapidly through 2027.
- In Thailand resort destinations such as Phuket and Koh Samui are thriving.
- Japan continues to draw private equity firms and Japanese hotels continue offering attractive margins with demand in iconic destinations.
- While Maldives luxury resorts dominated investor interest some panelists felt that a new era of affordable luxury in Maldives is a future feasibility.



- With strong domestic demand and a stable economy, Australia continues to draw global brands, especially Brisbane where 2032 Olympics is scheduled.
- Malaysia and the Philippines were seen as having great potential.

## Some interesting views and pointers from speakers

- One of the major attractions was the trio of past HICAP Lifetime Achievement Awardees who reflected on the progress over 35 years and ahead – William E. Heinecke, founder & chairman, Minor International; Miguel Ko, chairman, CapitaLand Investment; and Anil Thadani, chairman, Symphony Asia Holdings who discussed at a panel moderated by Jeff Higley, president, BHN Group.
- “Experiential travel is not new. For some time, brand proliferation and standardisation caused the industry to move towards selling rooms rather than memories. This ‘new’ trend is really just a return to fundamental hospitality,” said Anil Thadani who co-founded Aman Resorts in 1987.
- Miguel Ko said “In this day and age, hotels can succeed by catering to one persona (at a time) as a small boutique hotel with 200 keys. There is no one size fits all anymore. The same traveller can have different personas and priorities when taking different trips – whether with friends, family, or for



business – and seek out products with a specific offering each time,” Hotels that want it all may soon fall out of favour while boutique hotels will thrive.

- The top hospitality trend to watch is branded residences “There’s a huge market for branded residences and they are spreading like wildfire,” said Thadani. Asia Pacific 2025 report projected a 180% growth in the number of branded residences in Asia-Pacific by 2031.
- Disruption by the likes of Airbnb and OTAs is not over. If these disruptions continue, even room service may become a thing of the past.
- Technology is there to help and improve, but especially in the hospitality line, the ability to touch and live in reality – that’s something very hard to get technology to replace.”
- Pan Pacific Hotels Group CEO Peng Sum Choe feels hotels are the flavor of the year and with a very good location in a city center will be expensive, but it’s a long-term asset.
- H World International has 12,000 hotels and about 1.1 million rooms, with most of them franchised. Jihong He, Chief Strategy Officer, H World Group & Executive Chair, H World International feels that it’s an essential paradigm for the company to have its franchises make a good return so it can keep up with massive growth. The franchise model must include the ability to renovate hotels at a lower cost.
- Alex Murray, vice president and regional head of Southeast Asia for Hilton said that for Hilton, it’s about working with their owners to ensure they have the right partner and deploy the right brands in the right applications at the right time.

## HICAP 2025 Sustainable Hotel Award Winners Announced

The annual HICAP Sustainable Hotel Awards are designed to recognize hotels in the Asia Pacific region creating innovative new

methods, strategies, and technologies to face today’s sustainable development challenge, while providing tangible examples of sustainable best practices that can be replicated and adapted across the region.

- In the category of Biodiversity Action & Education, the winner was Khaolak Merlin Resort in Phang Nga, Thailand.
- In the category of Climate Action the winner was COMO Metropolitan Singapore in Singapore. The hotel is redefining urban sustainability through measurable climate action.
- In the category of Positive Community Impact, the winner was Six Senses Con Dao in Vietnam.
- In the category of Sustainable Design, the winner was Uga Chena Huts in Sri Lanka.

## The HICAP Deal of the Year Award

- Patina Osaka in Osaka, Japan, was named Reggie Shiu Development of the Year Award. Finalists in the category also included Mandai Rainforest Resort by Banyan Tree in Singapore and Raffles Sentosa Singapore.



- 21 Carpenter Singapore and The Standard, Huruvalhi Maldives won Single Asset Transaction of the Year Award. Duxton Reserve Singapore in Singapore was also a finalist in the category.
- Standard International was named Merger & Acquisition of the Year. G6 Hospitality was also named a finalist in the category.
- Karan Mahesh, STR CoStar, was named Rising Star Award Asia Pacific award winner.

## Seibu Prince Hotels Worldwide

The acquisition of Ace Hotels by Seibu Prince Hotels Worldwide was a hot topic. Yoshiaki Kaneda, President & CEO of Seibu Prince Hotels Worldwide, focused not only on the company's \$90 million acquisition of Ace Hotels but also expansion plans outside Japan. With hotels in New York City, Brooklyn, Seattle, and Palm Springs, Ace will give a substantial reach to SPW in the U.S.

Speaking to Global Features Kaneda said, “With Ace (hotels) we will operate as a U.S.-based subsidiary of SPW while maintaining its strengths and original identity. It's our first lifestyle brand. Going ahead our strategic shift will be towards luxury and lifestyle outside of Japan.”

