The Singapore experience

New attractions expected to fuel tourism in booming city state

To describe the Singapore experience is similar to tasting a good stew made of plenty ingredients. Having been influenced by different cultures throughout its history, the once small trading post inhabited by a handful of fishermen in 1819 has transformed into a buzzing urban melting pot that offers probably the best that Southeast Asia currently has to offer. From the smelly streets of little India to the glistering sight of the downtown skyline, it is not presumptuous to say that it is the city state that incorporates the essence of contemporary Asian lifestyle best.

Over the last few years, an increasing number of people from Asian neighbours and around the globe have become keen on getting their Singapore experience themselves. New statistics by the Singapore Tourism Board at the Tourism Industry Conference in March have revealed that the country attracted more than 13 million visitors last year. Expenditures by tourists also jumped to S$22.2 million (US$23 million), a 17 per cent increase from 2010.

Growth was also fuelled by the opening of new air routes from countries like Macau, Taiwan, Hong Kong or India. As one of the last big European carriers, Finnair has also jumped on the bandwagon and now offers direct flights from Helsinki.

According to the Board’s predictions, revenues generated by tourism are expected to rise again this year owing to the opening of new attractions like the River Safari or Marina Water Park which both are scheduled to be open to the public later this year.

When completed, the world’s largest oceanarium currently built on Sentosa Island, a popular Singapore getaway since the early 1970s, will become home for more than 700,000 different species of fish including dolphins, sharks and rays. Efforts to present a whale shark, one of the world’s largest species of fish, however were recently abandoned.

Built between the Singapore Zoo and the Night Safari exhibit, River Safari will be the first river-themed zoo in Asia and let visitors experience 10 different ecosystems from around the world including the Amazon, Yangtze, Nile or Mississippi rivers. Constructions for the new attraction (estimated costs S$180 million) began in early 2007 and are expected to finished soon to make way for hundreds of thousands visitors per year. It is the fourth zoo in Singapore after the Singapore Zoo, Jurong Bird Park and Night Safari, which are all currently managed by the Wildlife Reserves Singapore.

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2011 remained the Singapore Flyer Wheel and, up and foremost, the 191 metres high Sky Park on top of the Marina Bay Resort, from where visitors have been able to enjoy breath-taking views of the city and its surroundings since 2003. Visi-
tors are always advised to save their tickets early as the capacity of the platform, which also has the world’s longest elevated swim-
ming pool, is limited to only 3,900 people.

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