

Special Reports: Viva Vietnam

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During a press conference, Vietravel signed a Travel Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Singapore Tourism General (STB) and Korea Tourism General (KTO) to cooperate to bring the best travel services to tourists Singapore and South Korea

After two tumultuous years, the Asian travel market is once again heating up, and Vietnam has stepped up to the plate as a destination for tourists itchy to see the world and as an attractive option for vendors to showcase their wares. *PAX* spoke to representatives from two airlines who explained how they are setting higher standards for airline passengers and attracting them to their tropical homeland.

Vietravel

Nguyen Linh Phuong, [Vietravel's](#) General Manager of In-flight Service Division, Ground Operation Department, has noticed the growth of Asia's travel industry firsthand. She notes that Vietravel is the continent's leading tour operator and has been expanding their offerings to keep up with the demand. The company's airline arm flies 18 regional flights on six routes per day, with plans to add three more at press time. June 2022 will also see the airline launch routes to Korea, Bangkok, and Singapore.

"Since international travel rules have been eased, supply and demand in travel industry are recovering quickly," she says. "Domestic travel is contributing largely to the recovery, and international travel is picking up. I do think the travel industry is getting back to pre-pandemic levels."



The colors and fit of the Vietravel uniform express the warmth and youthfulness of the airline's brand

The Vietravel team works hard to ensure that the high standards the company sets are translated through their service and quality of product, both for their passengers and for their industry partners.

"Vietravel is renowned for exceptional customer service," Phuong explains. "Building upon the reputation of a professional tour provider reputation, Vietravel Airlines can take advantage of expertise in providing a good customer experience to travelers."

Making each trip unforgettable is their modus operandi, which they accomplish by making their inflight experience unique to the area. For instance, a live onboard flying guide introduces Vietravel customers to the culture of their destination before they set foot on land. Their crew uniforms, says Linh, fit well and are elegant, in colors that represent the vitality of Vietnam.

"The yellow and blue colors show the willingness of health, prosperity and contribution," she explains. "Food and beverages options are familiar with both locals and international travelers."

On the topic of refreshments, Vietravel passengers receive a snack and a bottle of water but can also choose from a selection of prebooked meals, along with the option to upgrade to a light combo meal.

Local travelers make up a substantial amount of the company's travel industry, and watching their habits has been enlightening for Phuong.

"They prefer travelling by themselves to joining group tours," she says. Vietravel had to adjust their business model accordingly, since tour itineraries are changed frequently to keep up with demand.

Still, tourist destinations and international customers are Vietravel's focus. In fact, passenger volume has been increasing year by year due to tourism activities. As Phuong explains, "Many travelers are customers of Vietravel tours, so it will not only bring revenue to Vietravel but we are also able to

provide the same consistent quality of service to them.”



Dave Kumar is the Flight Training Manager for Vietnam Travel Airlines. He has been a commercial pilot for 28 years

One person who has seen the growth of Vietnam's travel industry on the ground - or more accurately, from the sky - is Dave Kumar, Flight Training Manager for Vietravel. He has been a commercial pilot for over 28 years and was inspired at a young age by his father who was a pilot in the Royal Malaysian Airforce.



Vietravel wished the Vietnamese team an impressive performance at the Hanoi 2021 Southeast Asian Games, which due to the pandemic were held in May 2022

“He used to bring me along on weekends when he had training flights,” Kumar recalls. “It was during this period that I discovered what my profession should be.”

Since he began flying as a career nearly three decades ago, he has been a pilot for cargo operations as well as low-cost, full-service, and even island-hopping airlines. What sets Vietravel apart from other airlines, says Kumar, is its longstanding reputation in the country.

“In my opinion, Vietravel is different from other airlines I have worked for because it already has a big customer base,” he explains. “Our parent company, Vietravel Holdings, has been in operation for more than 25 years with offices in different countries. This is very important in the airline industry.”

After the tumultuous years of 2020 and 2021, Kumar says the Vietnam travel industry is growing by leaps and bound, and Vietravel is following suit. “The company is currently looking to revamp and enhance the travel experience of our passengers by offering a wide new range of products,” he notes.

VietJet Air

[VietJet Air](#) is another airline operating in Vietnam that takes a hard stance when it comes to quality. Do Le Tu Anh, the company's In-flight Manager, says that their intention is to make flying easier for everyone through their level service and its perceived value.

"Our country's travel industry is bouncing back, step by step," she says. "Other neighboring countries still aren't open, and Vietnam needs to focus on its business after COVID. Everything hasn't returned to normal just yet."



Do Le Tu Anh, VietJet Air's In-flight Manager

But that doesn't mean that VietJet has been resting on its laurels. The airline has been looking to the future and ensuring that it stands out amongst its competitors.

"VietJet is different through its pricing, inflight services and timing of flights," Anh explains. "VietJet is the new generation."

Though she cannot disclose the names of their amenity and food and beverage partners, the airline remains flexible by having a bank of vendors at the ready, depending on the items needed and the audience it will be offered to. The same goes for their catering - each VietJet base works with a different company. However, there are plans to launch a new hot menu this June, which can be previewed on the airline's website.

Anh has also noticed a marked difference between local and international travelers, especially in their spending habits. “Locals enjoy places with full service, and they are willing to pay whatever it takes for entertainment,” she notes. “International travelers tend to love places where they can be in nature, from exploring caves to climbing mountains.”

Every day VietJet is striving to put Vietnam on the map as an international tourism destination. And according to Anh, it’s not hard.

“Our country has many beautiful places,” she says. “I can proudly say that Vietnam has the best seaside and seafood in Asia.”

For those who haven’t had the pleasure of experiencing the country’s breathtaking scenery and cuisine, there are just a sampling of the companies who are ready, willing and able to introduce them to its finer points. Whether hopping around the region or expanding into neighboring countries, in the wake of the pandemic, Vietnam is sure to become a destination that will boom in the tourism market.

Happy K Solutions expands business in Vietnam



Keerthi "Happy" Hapugasdeniya, Founder of APOT.asia and Chairman at Happy K Solutions

Keerthi "Happy" Hapugasdeniya, Founder of [APOT.asia](https://www.apot.asia) and Chairman at [Happy K Solutions](https://www.happyksolutions.com), the service provider company for hospitality and tourism segments with a main focus in inflight services, tells *PAX International* the company is now expanding to Vietnam.

Happy K Solutions Vietnam will serve the Southeast Asia market. The business will fulfill industry needs, such as, design and supply of amenities, premium culinary products, packaging solutions and security labelling, including hologram labelling.

"Happy K Solutions is a one stop shop for the industry," says Hapugasdeniya, adding that Happy K Solutions has been servicing the industry for more than 20 years with tailor-made solutions.

Hapugasdeniya was born in Sri Lanka and started his hotel career in the island country. He then moved to Switzerland to further his studies and build his career. Through the years, Hapugasdeniya worked in many hospitality sectors including golf resorts, theme restaurants, large catering businesses, boutique hotels, restaurants, and food manufacturing factories.

Next, he moved to Australia to work at hotels before transitioning to the airline inflight services industry. He held management roles for inflight services with 5-Star airline Ansett Australia. After Ansett Australia, he founded Happy K Solutions to service airlines and catering needs in Australia, starting as a consultant to Virgin Blue Australia. Happy K Solutions has since designed and developed airline concepts and worked with airlines and caterers around the world.

Happy K Solutions also offers culinary training, marketing and certification services including HACCP and HALAL, cabin crew grooming and social graces activities, catering factory design and management, and consulting and managing catering businesses.

Hapugasdeniya has also been part of the design team for theme restaurants in Australia, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. He designed and ran "Sri Lanka week" festivals in Australia with food, culture and trade to promote Sri Lanka tourism, as well as in Vietnam with many renowned international "super chefs," he says.

He is the Founder of Asia Pacific Onboard Travel (APOT), designed for airline management executives to network and exchange industry updates first-hand. He has also achieved the Gold Medal at the Culinary Olympics and has many other accolades in his culinary career. Hapugasdeniya has a Guinness World Record for longest spring roll, largest tea party and smallest wedding cake.

Hapugasdeniya also works as an International culinary judge with various world chef associations, and as a judge with Mercury Awards and Onboard Hospitality awards. His cooking show 'Culinary Corner,' running for more than a decade now, airs every Sunday morning on Melbourne TV every Sunday morning.