

APOT Asia day three: Networking forum at Furama Resort



Foie gras tasting by Kunming Valley Tech under the brand Yun Landes Goose

After a couple days of persistent rain, the skies cleared and [APOT](#) delegates woke up to sunshine in Da Nang this morning. The day started with a few sessions on the second floor of [Furama Resort](#), including the *Gadgets and wellbeing items for air* presentation by Dr. Matthew Jafarzadeh of Cosmo Innovations. He presented the brilliant wearable [AirSure device](#).

The personal air purifier refreshes air for passengers. Running on battery and using HEPA filters, the product aims to help passengers "take control of the air they breathe," by keeping harmful airborne pollutants, allergens and pathogens away, ideal for the aircraft cabin, Jafarzadeh explained.



The sun emerged on day three of APOT Asia at the beautiful Furama Resort after days of consistent rain



Dr. Matthew Jafarzadeh of Cosmo Innovations gave a presentation on the AirSure device and took questions from the audience

Discussing the future for Southeast Asia

Next, APOT CEO Jeremy Clark gave an overview on the state of Southeast Asia, discussing where the region is now and where it is heading for the future. He said that while most countries were slow to emerge from the pandemic, many have since caught up and are, in some cases, ahead of European and US growth which has mostly plateaued.

Going forward, he says the market is expected to observe growth due to the increasing outbound travel by Gen Z and millennials, but the question is whether Southeast Asia is ready for expected influx of Chinese travellers to countries such as Vietnam.



Panelists from left to right: Mr. Nguyen Duc Quynh, Danang Tourism; Rakhita Jayawardena, President of King Power Traveler; Sue Williams, OBH Associate Publisher Sue Williams; and *PAX International* Managing Editor Jane Hobson

To address this and more, Clark invited four panelists to the stage, including Mr. Nguyen Duc Quynh. Quynh brought a unique perspective to the panel in his current roles as Director General of Indochina Beach Hotel JSC - Furama Resort; Vice Chairman of Board for the Danang Tourism Association; and CEO of [Menas Mall at Saigon Airport](#). Inflight retail expert Rakhita Jayawardena, President of King Power Traveler was called to the stage as well, along with two members of the press, *PAX International* Managing Editor Jane Hobson and Sue Williams of Onboard Hospitality.

"This is an opportunity for us to hear directly from the press as they are the ones getting information from airlines and suppliers first for the most part," Clark explained.



PAX International Managing Editor Jane Hobson (left) and Mr. Nguyen Duc Quynh, Vice Chairman of Board for the Danang Tourism Association

Addressing the topic of Chinese travellers, Quynh said the expected increase in tourists is welcomed. Speaking about duty free operators, Quynh and Jayawardena said there is no competition between inflight duty free sales and airport sales—the important thing is that travellers are looking for a good experience.

Jayawardena pointed out that opportunities for airport F&B sales are not to be overlooked. In fact, he said most passengers are willing to spend on food and drink at the airport because it enhances the travel journey. If operators can provide a world-class experience, travellers will spend more time and money in F&B outlets, he said.



Networking Forum underway in Da Nang, Vietnam

Meanwhile in North America, Clark pointed out that recovery has mostly plateaued. PAX's Hobson said this could be due to the fact that while North American carriers saw full recovery earlier, the ongoing recession in Canada and the United States is leaving most people short for cash.

Williams agreed, explaining that similarly in Europe, prices for things such as fuel and mortgages have also shot up, reducing people's willingness to spend on travel. This might be why traveller numbers for Europe have also plateaued after the season of "revenge travel" when borders reopened.

Furthermore, it seems COVID may have pushed many North American carriers—mostly LCCs but in some cases also legacy airlines—to adopt the "hidden fees" business model. Hobson said this "nickel and diming" could be contributing to what is making travel unappetizing for some, when final ticket prices end up substantially more than originally advertised.

As opposed to this American "glorified bus in the sky," as Clark put it, he asked panelists if Asian airlines are really doing enough to get tourists back in cabin. The unanimous response from panelists: Yes.

It all comes back to the experience created for passengers, Jayawardena reiterated with nods from the crowd and panelists. The main message: If airlines can offer premium catering, entertainment and comfort, travellers will spend on the experience for visits to Asia.

Quynh expanded on this in an exclusive interview with *PAX International* after the panel discussion.



APOT lunch at Furama Resort's Cafe Indochine



Chefs at Furama Resort's Cafe Indochine

He said, "In the next one to two years, we want total recovery. We want recovery in international tourism arrivals and we want success for onboard suppliers."

As CEO of of Menas Mall, Quynh says that APOT's networking event offers a special opportunity for retail companies and duty free operators to meet with suppliers and caterers.

"The airlines have not fully recovered yet. Hosting this APOT in Da Nang for the second time is very good because we need the businesses that support airlines and travel, such as airline catering, IT systems, amenities for passengers, and more, to meet. This event is very good for that, for bringing people here. We need people to bring their knowledge and experience together," Quynh said. "We have exciting things to talk about in Da Nang. [Recovery] will happen."

Pulled sugar demonstration by Chef Dimuthu Kumarasinghe

After a lunch at Furama Resort's Cafe Indochine, delegates were invited to a pulled sugar demonstrated by celebrated Chef Dimuthu Kumarasinghe. The technique involves using malleable hot sugar that has begun to cool and shaping into a design.

The demonstration gathered quite a crowd as Kumarasinghe sculpted a beautiful, colourful lobster statue made entirely of sugar. Cooks in training watched closely as the final creation came together.



Chef Dimuthu Kumarasinghe during the pulled sugar presentation



Final creation of Chef Dimuthu Kumarasinghe's pulled sugar presentation



Doan Van Tuan, Executive Chef for Furama Resort (left) translated Chef Dimuthu Kumarasinghe's pulled sugar demonstration to Vietnamese the young cooks who took notes



Chefs and cooks after the pulled sugar demonstration

Foie gras tasting by Kunming Valley Tech

The networking forum ended in the early afternoon with foie gras presentation and tasting by Kunming Valley Tech. Under the brand Yun Landes Goose, the company produces fresh, frozen and raw goose meat, goose oil and goose liver paste products in China, including its foie gras ice cream and foie gras, the latter which attendees were invited to taste. The company received its Halal & Hygiene Compliance certification by Malaysia Halal & HACCP Certification Services ([MHCT](#)) in September.



Mrs. Lan of Kunming Valley Tech and Doan Van Tuan, Executive Chef for Furama Resort, Furama Villas and Ariyana Convention Center, during Yun Landes Goose foie gras presentation and tasting



Foie gras ice cream cartons from Kunming Valley Tech on display