

Guide Serviced residences



Peter Henley, CEO,
Onyx Hospitality
Group

Demand Across our regional portfolio of 37 properties, 17 are either serviced residences or residential-style properties. We do not anticipate a softening in demand. On the contrary, we are seeing a noticeable shift from more corporate-heavy demand to an increasingly growing leisure clientele choosing to stay with us. Benefits like additional space, residence-like feel and enhanced in-room facilities appeal to guests, particularly families and couples travelling on holidays. And because many of our properties also offer the added flexibility of full hotel services, the draw becomes even stronger.

Product Our residential-style properties tend to perform well, and we are confident there will be growth in the year ahead. This is the reason why eight properties out of our 21-strong pipeline are either serviced residences or hotels with residential facilities. From our pipeline, China holds the strongest potential, both in primary and secondary cities. We also see strong investor interest in Malaysia and India.

Expansion Over the next three years, we have eight residential-style properties scheduled to open across the region. These include Amari Residences Pattaya, Shama Daqing Heilongjiang, Shama Pazhou Guangzhou this year; Amari

Residences GIFT City in Ahmedabad and Shama Caojiadu Shanghai in 2017; and Shama Medini in Johor Bahru, Shama Tianfu Chengdu and Shama Yangling Beijing in 2018.



John M Flood,
president & CEO,
Archipelago International

Demand This will definitely soften in the long-stay serviced apartments market due to the economic slowdown, and in particular, the slowdown in the oil and gas business.

However this slowdown was predicted by most people in the industry several years ago, so new projects been designed and fitted out with more of the short-stay market in mind. This market views serviced apartments as a great alternative to a standard hotel room. In most cases guests can get a room or unit the same size as a large hotel suite but for the price of a hotel room. With several bedrooms sometimes included in units, many families or groups of friends prefer to share an apartment rather than several hotel rooms so they have a larger common space that they can gather in.

We expect a five to 10 per cent growth in business this year mostly due to the demand from short stays. The Middle East market continues to grow especially during the hot season when many want to get away to somewhere cooler and less humid.

Product Smaller one-bedroom units with a living room (a typical hotel suite) will continue to be most in demand due to the extra space it gives guests.

Expansion On average in Indonesia we open about one new hotel every two weeks. About 10 per cent of these hotels are geared towards the serviced apartment market especially in areas where expats need them for long stays, such as Jakarta or Balikpapan, or places in demand by families such as Bali.

Many condotels are larger units as this helps the real estate sales to individual investors. Therefore many of these then become more serviced apartment type developments. Due to the high bank interest rates in Indonesia, condotels are a much cheaper way of financing a development and moving real estate – something that's obviously attractive to the bigger developers in the region.

We will continue to open about one hotel every two weeks for the next three years and after that we will see a slowdown as the market in many areas becomes saturated and we reach a level of hotels similar to Malaysia or the Philippines. – *Mimi Hudoyo*



Kem Siew, vice
president sales &
marketing, Swiss-
Garden International

Demand 2015 was a challenging year. We experienced a 20

per cent year-on-year decline in demand compared with 2014. We expect demand in 2016 to be similar with 2015, with bookings coming mainly from Asia.

The strongest markets will be corporate clientele from Asia and leisure, family clientele from Singapore, Indonesia, the Middle East and India. Weak demand can be expected from the oil and gas sectors as well as corporate clientele from medium and longhaul destinations.

Product Two-bedroom serviced apartments for leisure clients and one-bedroom or studio apartments for corporate clients will be in most in demand. Leisure tourists will prefer serviced apartments located within the city centre and close to shopping malls. Corporate clients will look for serviced apartments which are close to their workplace.

Expansion Swiss-Garden International Hotels, Resorts & Inns managed three new serviced apartments which opened in 2015. Swiss-Garden Resort Residences Kuantan (179 units) and Swiss-Garden Hotel & Residences Malacca (790 units) both opened in January 2015. D'Majestic by Swiss-Garden, Kuala Lumpur opened on July 1 with 188 units.

We opened the 205-key Swiss Inn Johor Bahru on January 16. We are looking at opening a serviced residence in Cameron Highlands and another at Genting Highlands within the next five years. – *S Puvaneswary*

TRIED & TESTED

klapsons The River Residences Bangkok

Dramatic views and warm service take centre stage at this riverfront residence, finds [Xinyi Liang-Pholsena](#)

LOCATION klapsons sits on prime riverfront property, rising from the banks of the Chao Phraya River just next to the Taksin Bridge and calling such hospitality icons as The Peninsula, Shangri-La and Mandarin Oriental its neighbours. A stone's throw away is the upcoming Icon Siam, a mega mixed development project set to roll into town come 2017.

ROOMS The 69 residences are located between the 23rd and 31st floors of The River Condominium's North Tower. My one-bedroom Premier Deluxe, which measures an expansive 65m², offers ceiling-to-floor bay windows and a balcony which open into panoramic vistas of the bustling river. The views were even more arresting at night, and I could make out glided Thai temples against a skyscraper-dotted skyline. All rooms afford river views, but certain residences – like the 232m² klapsons Suite (pictured) which I

had a peek at – take the views up a notch.

Italian designer William Sawaya kitted out the open-plan residence with neon-coloured furnishings (think food tray and TV console), which add a contemporary, whimsical edge to the interiors. The full-fledged kitchen comes with an oven, sink, chopping board, cutlery and plates, etc, while a washing machine concealed in the build-in cabinet round up the amenities.

FACILITIES klapsons has five swimming pools designed around lush greenery, offering pockets of privacy for guests and condominium residents alike. Views at the river-facing outdoor infinity pool in the late afternoon are particularly arresting, whereas an indoor lap pool on the 23rd floor ensures dips on rainy days. There is also a gym, children's playground, free Wi-Fi and parking spaces available.

Scheduled service on a private ferry link guests to the Saphan Taksin BTS station on the opposite bank, where access to town or Asiatique The Riverfront mall further downstream is just minutes away.



F&B klapsons does not operate any F&B outlet, although a café on the fifth floor in The River condominium provides coffee and light bites. The community mall next door on Charoen Nakhon Road has several dining options too.

What it lacks in the food department however, klapsons makes up with its discounted dining partnerships with Millennium Hilton and The Peninsula for guests.

SERVICE Eager and warm attention that was doled out to my family and my eight-month-old baby in equal measures. As

my stay coincided with my birthday, the thoughtful concierge, Thanawit, even led the staff to surprise me with a cake.

VERDICT A welcoming serviced residence that deserves all the claps.

No. of rooms 69
Rates From 88,000 baht (US\$2,427) for a minimum one-month/30-day stay
Contact details
Tel: (66) 2-803-8100
Email: reservations_theriverbkk@klapsons.com
Website: www.bangkok.klapsons.com

Destination China

Better known as a historical destination, Xi'an has woken up to the potential of luxury travel thanks to a fresh crop of posh hotels in the city, finds **Karen Yue**

A STORIED CITY GOES LUXE

Destination in numbers

10.3 million

The total number of international and domestic visitors to Xi'an in 2014, up 27 per cent from 2013

121

The number of star-rated hotels in the city as of end-March 2013 – including nine five-star, 27 four-star, 76 three-star and nine two-star – providing a total of 23,199 guestrooms

2,700

The number of international branded hotel rooms under construction from 2013 to 2016



More direct and full-service international air links are needed to make Xi'an a more attractive destination for high-end travellers

The growing presence of international luxury hotels has added a glamorous tone to Xi'an in China's Shaanxi Province, which for decades has been drawing history buffs since the 1974 discovery of the terracotta army that forms part of the mausoleum of China's first emperor.

Li Shuyan, MICE and general manager of Xi'an-based China Travel Service Head Office Northwest, has seen the changing face of Xi'an in the last 15 years. "Back then, foreign tourists who came to see the terracotta army stayed in the city centre where most hotels were. They had to wake up very early to make the long journey to Lintong where the terracotta pits are. Their main concerns were a clean bed and food that would not give them diarrhoea," he recalled.

"But ever since international hotel chains like Shangri-La, AccorHotels and Starwood entered the market with their five-star products, the demographic of travellers has changed. Xi'an not only received more foreign tourists, it also welcomed wealthier ones."

Today, numerous prominent hotels dot the city's map, some in the commercial centre and others close to key tourist landmarks.

Agreeing that Xi'an is "increasingly on the radar of the luxury traveller", Hajar Ali, founder of luxury travel company Urbane Nomads, said: "There is a correlation between the opening of luxury hotels and a destination becoming popular with the well-heeled. Xi'an has its history going for it but with the opening of new luxury

hotels, it has become an easier choice for high-end travellers."

Hajar observed that longhaul travellers tended to go for longer stays and relax at luxury hotels and resorts in Xi'an at the end of a lengthy trip to "pace the itinerary", while shorthaul visitors from Hong Kong and Singapore favoured Xi'an as a stopover en route to Tibet.

Tourism players noted that the city's luxury market is dominated by corporate travellers and special interest leisure groups.

Steven Wang, director of sales and marketing at The Westin Xian revealed that 85 per cent of the hotel's guests are corporate and the rest leisure.

"Business travellers and meeting delegates have bigger budgets," said Wang, adding that individual travellers and small-size groups on tailored programmes that focus on history, food or nature made up the majority of his leisure clientele.

Li opined that Xi'an's booming industries, fuelled by Chinese president Xi Jinping's commitment to developing cities on the Silk Road trading belt for international commerce, is luring wealthy businessmen to the destination. These travellers would extend their trips for pleasure, requesting for special activities such as a session with a local archaeology professor who can explain the history behind historical finds.

Diethelm Travel (China) is hence rolling out "extraordinary programmes" to differentiate itself from the market, said the company's general manager, Julia Shi, general manager of Diethelm Travel (China).

The DMC can take visitors into ar-

reas that are off-limits to regular tourists, such as the reconstruction site within the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor, where archaeologists fix broken terracotta statues, as well as special vaults in the Shaanxi History Museum and Xi'an Museum. They also can offer unique activities such as archaeological digging experience at The Yangling Mausoleum of the Han Dynasty or a visit to Fei Yuan Private Museum, which carries a large collection of porcelain and rubbings of stone tablets done by famous Chinese calligraphers.

However, Jean Philippe Jacopin, general manager of Shangri-La Hotel, Xian cautioned against over-reliance on Xi'an's heritage to lure travellers. He said: "These tourists usually stay for only a few days and they rarely return. Xi'an needs to cooperate with other (attractions) to improve product diversity which will then entice travellers to book longer stays (and return)."

Jacopin suggested that more eco tours, spa experiences and golf games should be promoted to enhance travellers' experience, and urged trade players to join forces in destination marketing.

The good news is that fresh products are emerging in and around Xi'an. One of Singapore's leading outbound agencies, Dynasty Travel, has observed stronger interest in Xi'an over the last five years due to new attractions such as the Tang Dynasty Music and Dance Show at the Shaanxi Song and Dance Theatre, and natural wonders like Hukou Waterfall and Mount Hua.

The sleepy district of Lintong, about 50

minutes by car from Xi'an, is also stirring with recent tourism developments including the year-old Angsana Xi'an Lintong and its adjoining Angsana Hot Spring Xi'an Lintong, art museums, a park and an outlet mall for big fashion labels.

Jerry Mong, Angsana Xi'an Lintong's general manager, believes that his property is key to advancing Xi'an's luxury appeal.

He said: "We are changing travellers' mindsets by reminding them that Lintong used to be a favourite retreat of Tang Emperor Xuanzong and his consort Yang Gui Fei. They used to luxuriate in Lintong's hot springs, and we are offering travellers the chance to do the same at our hotel."

Angsana Xi'an Lintong has been attracting ladies of leisure from other Chinese cities and Taiwan, who would come as a group of friends for spa retreats.

Meanwhile, tourism players have agreed that air access improvement is top priority for Xi'an.

"Xi'an has fewer direct international flights compared with first-tier cities, which makes it less convenient for international travellers to visit," said Wang.

While Dynasty Travel has seen a two-fold increase in bookings to Xi'an from 2014 to 2015, thanks to new flights by Tigerair (Singapore-Xi'an, launched in May 2014) and Xiamen Air (Singapore-Hangzhou-Xi'an, launched in March 2015), its spokesperson Alicia Seah noted that they were for package tours.

"New LCC links have little impact on luxury demand. High-end travellers prefer flying by full-service carriers even if it requires a transit in another city," she said.