



48th AGA in Vietnam Information Package

Pre and Post AGA - Cambodia, Thailand, Northern & Central Vietnam

47TH AGA AT PORTO - A REPORT

WACA WORLD NEWS

JULY 2015

SUMMER EDITION

Dodo's Nest 2015

ACT TOUR to JAPAN

A look back at HKIC's Discovery China Tour 2008

President's Message on WACA's Future Direction

WACA FUN GAMES 2016



Retro WACA

1

A Date with Vietnam Ho Chi Main City

The 48th AGA and Interline
Celebrations

3

WACA's Charitable and Sustainability Initiatives

5

WACA Lucky Draws Meet the Winners

7

Dodo's Nest 2015 WACA Council Meeting

9

Retro WACA

Pictures from the first WACA
Meeting in Cannes, 1966

2

48th AGA Pre and Post Tours

Cambodia, Thailand, Central
Coast Vietnam & Northern
Vietnam

4

Airline Club of Thailand's Japan Tour

March-April 15

6

Memories of Oporto,

The 47th WACA AGA
Oct 2014

8

Discovery China 2008

A Tour of Northern China
and Mongolia

10

Interline Clube of Portugal's Fun Games 2016

Valmoura-Algarve

President's Message



The forthcoming AGA to be held in Ho Chi Ming City is a question of weeks now and the WACA council will be pleased to welcome you all. As per my last information we are aiming at a grand event. I would like to seize this occasion to extend a personal invitation to all those who have not yet registered, to do so at your earliest and we would like to see as many WACA friends as we could to renew the friendship and after all your support to move the Association ahead to face the challenges in front of us.

As it was discussed at the level of the Council, our aim is to position ourselves as an international non profit organization within the travel and tourism fields and came up with the main goal so that each Travel is an Opportunity to make a difference.

This will be our driving force to transit WACA of what it was and where we would like to bring it to after 50 years of existence. We are soliciting first all our WACA members - individual member clubs, members at large, corporate members, members of honour and all well wishers to join us as one team with one dream.

I am in personal contact with the founder President of WACA, Dieter Friedrich, who had a minor stroke some weeks ago and now is recovering slowly at a hospital in Monaco. He was so pleased to hear that we are looking forward to celebrate the golden jubilee of WACA next year. Robert Tabak a former Swissair representative from Brussels who is also one of the founder members is much willing to bring his contributions as well.

The WACA Council looks forward to the support of one and all to achieve this laudable vision and goals in the spirit of togetherness and unity after all and prepare the future for more decades to come.

Maga Ramasamy

Letter from the Editor



Dear Interliners,

It has been a full 9 months since our last Interline Celebration and Annual General Assembly in Porto, Portugal. The event was well attended and it was a well organized and successful event. I take this opportunity to thank the Organizing Committee of the Interline Clube of Portugal for an excellent job. As Porto's memory fades, we are looking forward to our next big event, the 48th Interline Celebration and Annual General Assembly in Vietnam, which will take place in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon, in 3 months time. To ensure the AGA will be memorable, interesting tours to Cambodia, Central/Northern Vietnam, and Thailand have been offered, in addition to the main event at Ho Chi Minh City.

In this issue, we will revisit Porto, look forward to Vietnam, and catch up with what is happening in the Association. The mandate of the WACA Council ends at the 48th AGA in Vietnam and some important decisions will have to be made to ensure WACA has a viable way forward to the future. Your continued support in this Association is very important as we look forward to your participation in Vietnam and encourage your feedback to make us a better organization.

Yours in Interlining,

Julian Chau
Chief Marketing & Events Officer





Vietnam

Vietnam is a nation seared in many's minds as the scene of the War that took place in the later half of the 20th Century. Today Vietnam is again at peace and is an exotic and emerging travel destination with many possibilities. Blessed with attractive scenery, varied terrain and climates, from tropical beaches to cool highlands, from historical monuments to bustling cities, Vietnam has everything.

After long periods of colonisation by outsiders, Vietnamese culture is heavily influenced by the Chinese and French. It also acquired the influences of peoples it subjugated when it was strong, like the Champa and Khmer Kingdoms and their Hindu heritage. This amalgamation of various influences today gave the Vietnamese a unique culture and a fine cuisine that is gaining popularity around the world.

The world is taking notice with TripAdvisor and Lonely Planet giving high marks to Vietnam as a travel destination, as the nation opens its doors to the world.

Ho Chi Minh City, the commercial hub of Vietnam and formerly known as Saigon, is the venue for the 48th World Airlines Clubs Association Interline Celebration and Annual General Assembly. The dates are October 18-23, 2015.

Don't miss out and register now!

We are looking forward to seeing you in Vietnam this October!

Lotte Legend Hotel Saigon

The excellent and highly rated Lotte Legend Hotel will serve as the venue of the 48th AGA and Interline Celebration. Situated in Ho Chi Minh City's District One at the hyper center of the city, close to all the major attractions and next to the Mekong River, the hotel is an ideal venue for the Celebration. Equipped with the city's largest hotel pool, excellent gym facilities and 5 star amenities, the hotel is a true 5-Star property fit for a WACA event.



Facts of Vietnam

Official Name: Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Government: Marxist-Leninist Single Party State.

Head of State: Truong Tan Sang.

Capital: Hanoi.

Largest City: Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon).

Land Area: 332,698 km²

Population: 90.63 Million.

Language: Vietnamese.

Telephone code: +84

Electrical Power: 220 AC.

Power Socket Type: No standard plug but the 2 pin flat or round are normally found.

Currency: Dong. 1 USD is equivalent to @22,000 Dongs.

Airport Hubs: Ho Chi Minh (SGN), Hanoi (HAN), Danang (DAD).

Weather in October:

Vietnam sees a wide diversity in weather during the month of October. In the Ho Chi Minh City area and Central Vietnam, it is the shoulder season with rainfall tapering off towards the end of the month. Average Temperature is 27 degrees Celcius. In Northern-Vietnam, it is the start of the dry season with an average temperature of 26 degrees Celcius. In the hills of Sapa, it could be chilly during the night.

Visas: Not required for ASEAN countries, Scandinavian countries including Finland, Japan, Germany, UK, France, Italy, Spain, Russia.

Other countries need to get their visas at Vietnamese diplomatic missions or a visa on arrival provided they have a pre-approved letter from the Vietnamese authorities. Visa on arrival is not available at land entry points



See you in Vietnam



WACA in Saigon!

HO CHI MINH CITY (HCMC) is Vietnam at its most dizzying: a high-octane city of commerce and culture that has driven the whole country forward with its pulsating energy. A chaotic whirl, the city breathes life and vitality into all who settle here – visitors cannot help but be hauled along for the ride.

From the finest of hotels to the cheapest of guesthouses, the classiest of restaurants to the tastiest of street stalls, the choicest of boutiques to the scrum of the markets, HCMC is a city of contrasts. Wander through timeless alleys to incense-infused temples before catching up with the present in designer malls beneath sleek skyscrapers. The ghosts of the past live on in buildings that one generation ago witnessed a city in turmoil, but the real beauty of (erstwhile) Saigon's urban collage is the seamless blending of these two worlds into one thrilling, seething mass, while a host of new and exhilarating tours get you way off-the-beaten track. *Lonely Planet*

Vietnam is emerging from the shadows of the regional tourism powers and Saigon, Vietnam's largest city of 9 million people, is in the forefront of the action. The world is taking notice, with major travel mediums such as Lonely Planet, TripAdvisor and CondeNast giving raving reviews of the country's attractions. There is no better time to visit Vietnam than now, so don't miss this chance and join us in Saigon for the 48th AGA and Interline Celebration.

Let us walk you through the Program of the 48th AGA....

Day One 18 Oct - Arrivals & Opening Ceremony

All day meet and greet pick-up from Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat International Airport by private transport to Lotte Legend Hotel.

Opening Ceremony with cultural show, cocktail and International Buffet Dinner.

Notes:

Tan Son Nhat Airport (SGN) is located within 30 minutes drive to the Lotte Legend Hotel. Shuttle buses will be run between the airport and the hotel. Our representatives will wait for you at the arrivals Hall with the WACA sign.

The modern Airport is the biggest international hub in Vietnam and well served by many major airlines such as Cathay Pacific, Air France, ANA, Asiana, Etihad, Emirates, Japan Airlines, Thai Airways, Singapore Airlines, Korean Air, Qatar Airways, Air Asia, Jetstar, Jet Airways, EVA, Philippines Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, Turkish Airlines, United Airlines, Tigerair and of course Vietnam Airlines!



Saigon Airport's modern departure hall

When taking taxis from the airport or in the city, use only the 2 trusted taxi companies Vinasun and Mailinh. If you do get into a non-Mailinh or non-Vinasun taxi, and you notice the meter jump inexplicably, get out of the taxi immediately and take another one, otherwise it might jump again. The cost of a taxi ride from Saigon Airport to the hotel should be around 150,000 to 170,000 Dongs, which is about 7 to 8 USD.

Day Two 19 Oct - Saigon City Tour

After breakfast, we will start our Saigon city tour. Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) is a fast paced city with a unique mix of French colonial architecture, Chinese influences, a modern entrepreneurial spirit and numerous temples, echos of past wars. On this tour, you will take in the highlights starting with an exploration of Saigon's turbulent past with visits to the Reunification Palace, which was the former seat of the South Vietnamese President, and the War Remnants Museum with exhibits from the Vietnam War.

The tour continues to Ho Chi Minh's finest examples of French colonial architecture with a visit to the Notre Dame Cathedral and Post Office. Enjoy lunch at a local Vietnamese restaurant. Your Saigon tour continues with a visit to Giac Lam and Thien Hau Pagoda in the Cholon Chinese district. The tour concludes at the Ben Thanh, Ho Chi Minh City's biggest market, where you can practice your bargaining skills and sample the local wares and culture. Return to Hotel. Asian Set Dinner at Hotel. WACA hosted theme party with dancing in hotel featuring DJ Music.



The above picture shows the iconic North Vietnamese tank which crashed through the gates of the then Presidential Palace of South Vietnam. It marked the end of the South Vietnam political entity and realized the dream of Vietnamese reunification.

Today, the Palace is known as the Reunification Palace. The unpopular South Vietnamese President, Ngo Dinh Diem, did not live to see it when it was completed in 1966, as he was assassinated in a 1963 coup. It served as the Presidential Palace of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu till 1975.

Today the Palace is one of Saigon's top attractions and a museum.

Day Three 20 Oct - Option Tour 1 Cu Chi

This AGA has offered a unique opportunity for participants to choose one of 2 optional tours for today. Participants who choose the first option tour to the Cu Chi Tunnels, the below program plan applies.

This morning at 8:15 am sharp we will drive to the Cu Chi Tunnels. At its height, the tunnel system stretched over 250km from Saigon to the Cambodian border and was three levels deep. The network included innumerable trap doors, specially constructed living areas, storage facilities, weapons factories, field hospitals, command centers and kitchens. Today the remaining tunnels have become a major tourist attraction giving the visitor a unique experience and a feel of what underground life was during the Vietnam War. Lunch at a local Vietnamese Restaurant. Return to the hotel in the early afternoon.

International Buffet dinner at Hotel.

The tunnels of Củ Chi are an immense network of connecting underground tunnels located in the Củ Chi district of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam, and are part of a much larger network of tunnels that underlie much of the country. The Củ Chi tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War, and were the Viet Cong's base of operations for the Tết Offensive in 1968. Visit to the tunnels is a must for anyone visiting Vietnam and it is by far the most popular day tour from Ho Chi Minh City.

During the tour of the tunnels, there is spare time during the tour to fire off live rounds of American M-16 and Soviet AK-47 rifles.



Day Three Option 2 Tour

Next page



Day Three 20 Oct - Option Tour 2 Mekong Delta

We drive to My Tho in the morning at 8:15am sharp. On arrival, embark on a private boat to see the rural life in the Mekong. We will cruise along small creeks to the Mekong River estuary to Con Phung (Phoenix Island). We will then continue on our boat along natural creeks and visit a quiet village in Ben Tre Province.

Visit orchards, a bee keeping farm, taste natural honey and honey wine, enjoy tropical fruits, traditional music, check out a distillery, explore the local coconut candy production process. We will return to the hotel by 5 pm. Lunch in a local restaurant is included. International Buffet dinner at Hotel.



The deep fried elephant's ear fish, a delicious delicacy from the Mekong River Delta

The Mekong Delta is located to the west of Ho Chi Minh City and is where the mighty Mekong river completes its 2,700 mile journey from the Tibetan plateau and empties its riches into the South China Sea.

This is an area of lush, tropical and fertile lands. It is often referred to as the 'rice bowl' of Vietnam due to its huge production of rice crop. Vegetables, exotic fruits (coconuts, mangoes, rambutan) and fishing also feature prominently here. Life in the delta revolves around the river, and as such this is the only real way to view and understand it. See its many waterways, communities and cottage industries that are so vital to the way of living here including the thriving local floating markets. The area is rich in lush green vegetation and the pace of life is relaxing, the setting natural and serene. This makes for a great break away from the hustle of the city and an insight into local life.



Day Four 21 Oct - AGA & Gala Night

All Day Annual General Assembly meeting for delegates only. Lunch included for those on Delegate's Package only (with voucher).

Pre-dinner cocktails, Gala Night with western plated dinner and live music. Awards and Presentations.



Day Five 22 Oct - Free Day and Regional Night

Today is a free day for you to relax in the hotel or take an optional tour at your own expense. You can register with Discovery East Tour, for tours to the Cu Chi Tunnels or Mekong Delta, if you missed either one of them on Day 3.

Both lunch and dinner is not included today. You can take advantage of Saigon's fine dining scene by dining in its highly regarded French restaurants to local street food, considered the best in Vietnam.



All Regions Night with DJ Music will be held tonight at the Hotel. The All Regions Night is the ultimate party extravaganza for interliners to party away the night. A prize will be given to the Club with the best outfits and table.

Day Six 23 Oct - End of Package

All day transfer from Hotel to Ho Chi Minh's Tan Son Nhat International Airport after breakfast.

Site Visit to the Lotte Legend Hotel

The WACA President (Maga Ramasamy) and WACA Administration Manager (Keith Miller) conducted their site visit to the Lotte Legend Saigon Hotel on the weekend of 28-29 March, 2015. They are pleased to announce that the hotel venue is a true 5 Stars hotel with excellent facilities and a great base for our Interline Celebration/AGA this October. With the generosity of the hotel the accommodation, transport and meals were provided to the team on a free of charge basis, thus incurring minimal costs to WACA.

The inspection team went through all the details with the Lotte Hotel/our Vietnamese agent, Discovery East, to ensure a smooth and successful Annual General Assembly and to identify areas of concern which needed to be addressed prior to the start of the event. The Hotel is very well equipped with good restaurants, conference facilities, the best hotel pool in Saigon, a well equipped gym and it is located right by the Saigon river. The Hotel is located in District 1 and all the key city sights such as the Notre Dame Cathedral and Post Office are within a 10 minutes walk. Right behind the hotel are shopping, bars, restaurants and a shopping mall. An ATM is located 50 meters from the hotel and a supermarket within 200 meters, with prices for alcoholic beverages reasonable.

The team was also impressed by the greenery in the city and its modern airport. A city tour was conducted with lunch in a local restaurant, to ensure the buses, itinerary and restaurant standards meet our requirements. Keith Miller, the Administration Manager, also paid a visit to the SOS Village charity and was impressed by the work done by this organization. No doubt, our WACA community will be at its most generous best this coming October to support this charity.

The hotel is rated very favorably by TripAdvisor.



Vietnam Airlines will also offer rebated tickets from London to Saigon on a one off basis just for our event. Please contact info@waca.org for more details. Please note that WACA will only assist with the tickets only when full payment for the AGA package is received.



Maga and Keith having a meeting with our Vietnamese agents



Keith with the children of the SOS Village Charity



48TH AGA POST AND PRE TOURS

Cambodia Thailand Danang Hanoi SAPA
Halong Bay Hoi An

Any great AGA must have its great accompaniment of interesting pre and post tours and WACA ensured that this would be the case again. From the stunning temples of Angkor Wat to the pulsating city of Bangkok, from the quaint Vietnamese town of Hoi An to the Hills of Sapa, swim on China Beach in Danang and to take a cruise in spectacular Halong Bay, wander the atmospheric streets of old Hanoi to experiencing the old imperial capital at Hue, there is something for everyone. Register now to join these wonderful trips while there are still spots available! Refer to waca.org for details.



Angkor Wat, the world's largest religious complex



Apsara Dancers at Angkor



The rural paddy fields around Battambang,
Cambodia's rice basket.

Cambodia

The Golden Land - 10-18 Oct'15

This customized tour of 9 days take you through the country in a relaxed pace visiting the spectacular temples of Siem Reap including Angkor Wat and Bayon temples; the life-line of Cambodia, Tonle Sap Lake; the provincial town of Battambang, where you can experience the real Cambodia with its authentic rural backdrop; Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, where you can visit the former killing grounds of the Khmer Rouge and the city's transformation into a city of arts and culture.

Hotels are carefully selected for this tour to ensure value for money and comfort. In Siem Reap, you can enjoy the amenities of the deluxe Lotus Blanc, which has the largest pool in Siem Reap. The group will be split into 3 groups for the duration of the tour to enable a better service delivery. At Battambang, the WACA group will be accommodated in 3 highly regarded Boutique hotels and all three groups will reunite again at the Himawari Hotel in Phnom Penh, which is well located and close to the major sights.

In order to support its objectives of supporting responsible tourism and sustainability, WACA have chosen to eat at restaurants that support these initiatives in Cambodia.

Siem Reap has just been voted number 1 by TripAdvisor as the place to go for 2015. There are just a few spots available. Hurry!

You can apply for your Cambodian online visa at:
<https://www.evisa.gov.kh/>

Some nice video presentations of Cambodia:
<https://vimeo.com/12065049>
<https://vimeo.com/68950691>

CENTRAL VIETNAM BEACH BREAK & WORLD HERITAGE

23-27 OCT'15



CENTRAL VIETNAM, Vietnam's Most Exciting Destination

When it comes to holiday destinations in Southeast Asia, there is simply no place like Central Coast Vietnam. You'll find stunning white-sand beaches, international beachfront resorts & hotels, outstanding spa facilities, world-class golf courses, and a rich traditional cuisine. Take four of Vietnam's most compelling destinations — Danang, Hoi An, Hue and Lang Co — and what do you get? One magnificent experience: Central Coast Vietnam. Along this singular stretch of coastline, you'll find unrivaled hospitality, an array of exquisite foods and a plethora of activities to keep you entertained. Surrounded by three UNESCO World Heritage cultural sites, the Central Coast is truly Vietnam's most exciting destination and Danang has been cited by Tripadvisor as the world's top rising destination for 2015.

The WACA package is based in the Vinpearl Luxury Resort in Danang, situated on one of the most beautiful beaches in the world, Non Nuoc Beach, part of the 22 miles of beach from Lang Co to Hoi An and ranked amongst the 6 most beautiful beaches by Forbes Magazine. The Beach is part of "China Beach" in Danang made famous by an American Television series in the 80s of the same name and it was the most popular rest & recreation spot for American GIs during the Vietnam War. The luxurious Vinpearl has the second highest rating on Tripadvisor for Danang hotels. The hotel is an ideal base to visit the UNESCO world heritage sites of Hue, Hoi An and My Son.

The tour program allows participants ample time to relax and enjoy the resort while making side visits to the towns of Hue and Hoi An, the earlier an imperial capital and a famous battleground during the Tet offensive in the Vietnam War, the latter fast becoming one of the most popular travel destinations in South East Asia with its heavily Chinese inspired architecture and culture. Whereby in the past, most Vietnam tours skirt the region in favor of Saigon in the South and the region in the North around Hanoi, the Central Coast in fact has more to offer in terms of seeing the real Vietnam and its heritage.

The nearest airport is Danang International, once the world's busiest airport during the Vietnam War and now served by a new and modern terminal, it has international connections to regional destinations such as Hong Kong, Seoul and Singapore via Dragonair, Asiana, Korean Airlines and Silk Air respectively. An extension tour to Northern Vietnam has also been organized for those who are interested in continuing their Vietnam experience, including an overnight on a luxury junk in Halong Bay. The Central Vietnam Post Tour is a perfect supplement to the 48th AGA program in Saigon with total relaxation in a luxurious setting with fine food and interesting activities.





Northern Highlights

Soul of Vietnam
23-29 Oct '15

NORTHERN VIETNAM

NORTHERN VIETNAM's top ticket is the wildly popular Halong Bay, one of the world's natural wonders and Vietnam's most spectacular natural spectacle. Imagine 2000 or more islands rising from the emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin and you have a vision of breathtaking beauty. Halong translates as 'where the dragon descends into the sea', and legend claims the islands of Halong Bay were created by a great dragon from the mountains.

Further west the landscape segues into towering evergreen peaks and fertile river valleys, with stunning terraced fields. This is the heartland of hill-tribe culture with markets enlivened by the scarlet headdresses of the Dzao, the indigo fabrics of the Black H'mong and the Flower H'mong's brocaded aprons. Sapa is the in the heart of this landscape and is a great base for hiking and for the stunning vistas of Fansipan, Vietnam's highest peak, near the border with China. Welcome to the roof of Vietnam, where the mountains of the Tonkin Alps (Hoang Lien Mountains) soar skyward, their long shadows concealing some of the country's best-kept secrets. The landscape is a rich palette that provides some of the most spectacular scenery in Vietnam. Forbidding and unforgiving terrain for lowlanders, the mountains have long been a haven for an eclectic mix of hill tribes.

Then there is the capital of Vietnam, Hanoi, showcasing sweeping boulevards, tree-fringed lakes and ancient pagodas, Hanoi is Asia's most atmospheric capital. As motorbikes and pedestrians ebb and flow through the Old Quarter's centuries-old commercial chaos, hawkers in conical hats still ply their wares while other locals breakfast on noodles or sip drip-coffee. At dawn on the shores of Hoan Kiem Lake, synchronised t'ai chi sessions take place beside goateed grandfathers contemplating their next chess moves.

Join WACA on this tour of the highlights of Northern Vietnam, the historical heart of the country.



Spectacular terraced fields of Sapa, home of Vietnam's Northern hill tribes



Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum in Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh is the father of modern Vietnam who fought the French and Americans to gain independence and unify his country



A Vietnamese woman wearing the iconic conical hat that is the symbol of Vietnam

Bangkok Stopover

Pre-AGA Tour 13-18 Oct'15

For those taking advantage of Bangkok as a hub to get to the AGA in Saigon, the Airline Club of Thailand has organized an attractive package for interliners to sample the delights of Bangkok, the capital of Thailand. The tour will take participants to see the major highlights of Bangkok including the Grand Palace; Wat Phra Kaeo, the Temple of Emerald Buddha which houses Thailand most revered image made of fine jade; and Wat Poh Temple, which houses the gigantic gold plated Reclining Buddha. No tour to Bangkok can be concluded without a visit to the city's many shops. The last two nights of the package will be spent at **Koh Samet** at the beach for relaxation.

Details of the package can be found at

<http://www.waca.org/Documents/Bangkok%20Stop-over%202015.pdf>

Interested parties should not hesitate to contact the ACT for a spot on the package at:

airline@samart.co.th



WACA President, Maga Ramasamy, participated at the World Travel Market held in London last October. While there, he had an opportunity to meet the Deputy Minister - Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Mr. Ho An Tuan. After some fruitful discussions, the Minister promised to provide full support to WACA for the next Annual General Assembly to be held in October 2015 in Vietnam. Maga also met the representative of Vietnam Airlines who is willing to assist participants joining the package next year by offering rebated tickets on the London-Ho Chi Minh City sectors.

Maga also seized the occasion to present WACA to various world tourism organizations and some Airline Companies with a view to support the good cause of WACA.



**We protect
children from
sex tourism.**

WACA supports the initiatives of The Code. The Code is an industry-driven responsible tourism initiative with a mission to provide awareness, tools and support to the tourism industry in order to prevent the sexual exploitation of children.

<http://www.thecode.org/about/>

Details of the packages can be downloaded from WACA's webpage here:

<http://www.waca.org/events/Pages/default.aspx>

Charitable Endeavours



A donation box for the Code was set up at Mauritius' International Airport by the World Airlines Clubs Association. The box is situated in the departure lounge of Mauritius' International Airport with support from Air Mauritius, Airport Terminal Operations Limited Mauritius (ATOL) and UNICEF etc.

The Code is an industry-driven responsible tourism initiative with a mission to provide awareness, tools and support to the tourism industry in order to prevent the sexual exploitation of children. WACA strives to support the organization in its endeavors by encouraging the Code's initiatives in our packages.



During this year's Dodo's Nest in Mauritius, the WACA Council Members and the Coordinator for the AIM Region, Yousef Yousef, visited the Peace Grove monument which was commissioned by the Paille En Queue Social Club of Air Mauritius for the City of Port Louis.

Keith Miller, WACA Administration Manager, visiting the SOS Children's Village in Ho Chi Minh City. WACA have committed to support a charity initiative in the Vietnamese City by supporting the local orphanages.



Sustainability

Responsible
Tourism



Airline Club Thailand's Japan Tour

27 March – 2 April 2015



Japan – a far away, mysterious country, abounding in old temples, shrines and cultural treasures. Besides the huge modern cities lie historic towns surrounded by a variety of landscapes sporting volcanos and plains full of cherry trees blossoming in spring. All of this and more awaited us on our adventurous journey to a country that no one of us had ever visited before. We gladly seized the opportunity to get acquainted with uncharted waters – or in our case land, when the Airline Club of Thailand offered to organise a trip to Japan.

There was Tokyo, one of the biggest cities in the world. The trend-setter ranks as the undisputed centre of the country. Its grandeur can best be appreciated from above: the view over the 9 million people metropolis from the 45th floor of the Government Building or from the Tokyo Tower is breath-taking.

There was Kyoto, Japan's former capital and cultural heart of the country. Although a megacity, it has been able to preserve its ancient atmosphere.

There was Nara, cradle of Japanese culture, which gave its name to an entire era.

All these cities invited us to explore their highlights.

Among the highlights of the entire tour was of course Fuji-san, Mount Fuji, Japan's highest mountain and landmark. And then Shirakawa-go, a small traditional village showcasing roughly 100 farmhouses with steeply pitched roofs – one of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites. And finally, millions of blooming cherry blossoms on thousands of cherry trees.





YingLek and her wonderful team members not only showed us the diverse sights but also introduced us to Japanese culture. We had the opportunity to taste many traditional dishes, to sleep on futons on the floor, to wear kimonos and to bathe in the Japanese Onsen (hot springs).

YingLek, Orathai and Pongsri went out of their way taking care of us and making these seven days unforgettable for us. It was a perfectly organised and fantastic adventure, for which we would like to thank all people involved. We certainly do hope that this trip will be offered again – for us and for everybody who missed out this time.

Mia Zwahlen and Heidemarie Gilardoni
Interairline Club Zurich

Welcoming – Safe – Clean – Good feeling – Many people – Friendly people - Difficult language – Traffic – Quiet – Tall buildings – Shopping - Everything works.

These words can easily describe our first day in Tokyo. We arrived 2 days before the Japan tour started. We needed that. Daytime in Japan is night time in Europe. Just walking around with an open mind and only looking was a good therapy against the jetlag. The Thai group arrived 2 days later and picked us up in a new bus with enough space for everyone.

This bus would be our day home for the next 6 days. In total, 14 women and 3 men, including the driver participated in this tour (5 Swiss, 2 Norwegians, 9 from Thailand and the driver from Japan). The tour was very well organised from the start to the end by the Airline Club of Thailand. The Japanese speaking guide talked to the group in the Thai language, and the Thai guide translated this to English. No one missed anything they needed to know. The Japan tour gave us many different experiences as stated in the program. It cannot be described easily and Japan has to be discovered by yourself.

We thank the ACT very much to let us participate in this wonderful tour.

Hilde and Ragnar Hoeibakke
Norwegian Member at Large



Grand Bonanza Draws

Draw Results from December 2014 to June 2015:

Last draw of 2014 - Member-at-Large, Lorie Boehme, was the lucky winner of the Samsung 7 inch galaxy S tablet donated by the Hong Kong Interline Club.

The first draw of 2015 for a package for one person (based on double or twin occupancy) to the Dodo's Nest in June graciously donated by the Africa, Indian Ocean Islands and Middle East Region was made by IATA Account Assistant, Francesca Tatta. There were 535 tickets in the draw and the lucky winner was the Sydney Interline Club President, Malcolm McLean, with ticket number 1106.

The second draw of 2015 for a cash prize of USD 100.00 donated by WACA was made by IATA Assistant Administration Services, Louise Marcogliese. There were 733 tickets in the draw and the lucky winner was Member-at-Large Steven Vargo from Medina, Ohio, United States with ticket number 3253.

The third draw of 2015 for a package for one based on double occupancy donated by WACA to attend the 48th Annual General Assembly and the 2015 Interline Celebration scheduled to be held from 18-23 October donated by WACA was made by IATA Manager, Nora Amer. There were 828 tickets in the draw and the lucky winner was WACA Regional Coordinator Far East and Australasia Region, Margaret Lee, with ticket number 1192.

Next Draw

The remaining 827 tickets will now be included in the next draw to be held in August for a USD 100.00 cash prize donated by the Sydney Interline Club.

Reminder of Other Prizes Graciously Donated in 2015:

- Another USD 100.00 cash prize donated by WACA.
- A smart phone (with good specs) donated by WACA. The retail cost of this smart phone is in the region of USD 100.00-150.00

Contact your WACA representatives and WACA HQ for the Bonanza Tickets.



Lorie with her tablet, delivered within a week after she won it



Malcolm and Kerrie McLean of the Sydney Interline Club won the Grand Bonanza prize for a free package to this year's Dodo's Nest in Mauritius.

This is what Kerrie had to say:

"Thank you Waca HQ for our wonderful prize, we had a great time. We recommend everyone to put the Dodo's Nest in Mauritius on their 'To Do List'! Thanks Maga Ramasamy for your hospitality and organisation of the trip plus thanks to our new friends that shared our time there. The Mauritian members put on a fantastic Gala Dinner and Show plus spent their own time showing us their beautiful country. Much appreciated."

Memories of Oporto, Portugal

47th AGA October 2014

A total of around 170 people from around the world and the Interline Club of Portugal attended the 47th AGA and Interline Celebration in Porto, Portugal, last October. The event was held at the excellent Tiara Park Atlantic Hotel (since renamed Crowne Plaza Porto), which is located in Porto's business district. The opening ceremony showcased the cultural heritage of Porto with the city's mayor, Dr. Rui Moreira, as the key speaker in the Opening Ceremony. The participants were treated to classical music performed by a local orchestra followed by an all-girls choir from Northern Portugal, TUNESA – TUNA FEMININA da ESCOLA SUPERIOR AGRÁRIA de PONTE de LIMA.

The participants were taken on a city tour of Porto with wine tasting at a local Port cellar, a fabulous cruise on the Douro River where we passed through several canal locks as the boat ascended the river, and visits to Northern Portugal including the amazing Viana do Castelo Church which provided a spectacular vantage point over the Northern Portuguese coast, Braga and Gumaraes. Contd.



Dr. Rui Moreira, mayor of Porto, accepts a WACA Souvenir from the Interline Clube of Portugal



WACA President, Mr. Maga Ramasamy, addresses the the Assembly



The TUNAESA girls' choir from Ponte de Lima



Visit to a Port Cellar in Porto



At Guimaraes



The President of the Jordan Interline Club, Easa Al Nimri, dancing away in the Regional Night



Interairline Club of Zurich



The Hungarian and Hungarian Interline Clubs



The Airline Club of Thailand



The Titanic Feeling



The Interline Clube of Portugal team,
Douro River Cruise



Yousef Yousef with Marjorie Homenick,
past President of WACA



Don Wright and Al Toledo,
Members At Large, Gala Dinner



Muntaha Haddad from Jordan,
Dorothy Benoit from Seychilles, and an
interliner from the Bahamas



Cuca Roseta, a famous Fado Singer
performing on Gala Night

The food was very good (local seafood specialties and duck rice) with free but excellent wines provided in swimming pool quantities.

This AGA took place one year after the Assembly adopted the WACA Council arrangement in Budapest. The delegates and Council members reviewed the past year to look at our achievements and also ways to improve and move forward. The Annual General Assembly is also known as the Interline Celebration as it is not just all work but also more fun. Everyone had such a great time in the Regional Night and the Interline Celebration was concluded on a high note in the Gala Night with famous Portuguese Fado singer, Cuca Roseta, headlining the celebrations.

The WACA tombola was a tremendous success with an innovative approach to sell tickets which was proposed by Linda Lenters, Associate to the Chief of Marketing and Events Officer. The Interline Club of Portugal did a tremendous and excellent job of organizing and presenting an AGA that not only provided value in money, but also one that is balanced and enriching. The pre and post tours of Madeira, Azores and Lisbon were all successes. WACA congratulates the ICP for a job well done and exceeding all expectations! On a final note, the most important things we bring back from the AGAs are the value of friendship, of reacquainting ourselves with old friends and having a good time. We hope to see you soon in Vietnam! **End.**

60th Anniversary of the Interairline Club of Zurich

The WACA President, Maga Ramasamy, was invited to the Interairline Club Zurich's 60th anniversary celebrations in Switzerland on the 7th of September 2014. The Celebration took place on a River Rhine cruise attended by 56 Interairline Club Zurich Members. The members had a nice 4 course lunch and the weather was sunny. The Club was founded on April 21, 1954, when a small group of airline employees got together in Zurich to establish a club for reservation agents working at airline offices only.

The Zurich Club has been one of WACA's most active Club since its inception more than 60 years ago.



Dodo's Nest 2015

This June, a small group from Norway, Canada, the UK, Switzerland, Jordan, Hong Kong and Australia joined the Paille En Queue Air Mauritius Social Club and the African, Middle East and Indian Ocean Islands Club in the 2015 edition of the Dodo's Nest.

The Sugar Beach Resort in Flic En Flac, Mauritius, served as the backdrop to the event. Unlike previous years, the event organizers took the group on a hike to Lion Mountain and added a visit to the L'aventure de Sucre, which is a sugar museum that doubles as a museum of Mauritian history. The grand finale of the package was a dinner party hosted by the Paille En Queue Club at the Villas Caroline with about 200 of their members attending.

Malcolm McLean, who was the lucky winner of the Dodo's Nest prize in WACA Grand Bonanza draw, was a first timer to Mauritius. Along with his spouse Kerrie McLean, they valued the experience and recommended others to visit Mauritius in future Dodo's Nest packages. Malcolm was an amazing dancer and a popular personality on the dance floor. Not bad for the President of the Sydney Interline Club, eh?

During the Dodo's Nest, the WACA Administration Manager, the Chief Marketing & Events Officer and the AIM Region Coordinator were in attendance. They were able to hold a 2 day meeting to discuss the future of WACA and the preparations for the upcoming 48th AGA in Vietnam. This was the first official WACA Council meeting and the only one between the Porto and Saigon AGAs.

The Chief Finance Officer sent in her apologies. The meeting ended on an enthusiastic note with the Council members looking forward to delivering a memorable 48th AGA in Vietnam.



Discovery China 2008

A Tour of Northern China and Mongolia



Terelj National Park, Mongolia

In 2007, following the success of the Hong Kong Interline Club hosted Annual General Assembly event in Shanghai, I decided to organize a tour to another part of China in 2008 to showcase the country to our friends from WACA. Previously, the HKIC had organized tours to Yunnan Province, the Silk Road, Tibet, the Magical Mountains of Sichuan and of course the well attended Shanghai AGA. This time, the HKIC chose the Province of Shanxi, Inner Mongolia and Mongolia as the venue of the new tour.

We were a small group that started the tour in Beijing, with myself, 2 members of the Zurich Interline Club (Urs and Marc De Maddalena), 2 from the Montreal Club (Steve Charlton and Ruth Anderson) and 2 Members at Large from Toronto (Walt and Fran Mercer). After spending the night in Beijing, we took a morning flight to Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi Province. On the way to the airport, we passed by the completed venues of the Beijing Olympics which were ready to host the Games in less than 6 weeks time.

The flight from Beijing to Taiyuan was a short one. After a visit to Jinci Temple in Taiyuan, we were on our way to Pingyao, the best preserved old town with an intact city wall in China. Along the way, we visited the Qiao Family compound. The compound is a fine example of a wealthy Northern Chinese family abode and the award winning movie, Raise the Red Lantern, was shot here.

Pingyao is a town in central Shanxi province in China. It is located approximately 80 kilometres from the provincial capital, Taiyuan.



Pingyao, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

During the last Qing Dynasty, Pingyao was a financial centre of China. The ancient city, whose history dates back some 2,700 years and is renowned for its well-preserved city walls, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a major tourist attraction. It is still inhabited by some 50,000 residents. We stayed at a typical inn built in the local architectural style and when we settled down during dusk; one cannot but notice the atmospheric surroundings, like one has been transported back to ancient China. Pingyao will be our base for the next 2 nights as we explored its narrow alleys and learnt about its culture.

From Pingyao, we drove to Northern Shanxi past Taiyuan again to visit the spectacular Hanging temples in the Hengshan Mountains. The temples are literally “hanged” from the steep vertical cliff faces supported by wooden beams hammered into the rock and temples dedicated to Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism are dangled precariously from these beams. One thing that strikes you is how well these temples are preserved given its age of 1500 years but they have been renovated by successive dynasties and left undisturbed by the passing invaders.

Datong, a major coal producing city situated near to the border of Inner Mongolia, is our overnight stop after our visit to the Hanging Temples. The reason for our visit here were the Yungang Grottoes, which contain some spectacular giant sculptures of the Buddha in the sitting and standing positions. The Buddhas were carved out of the red sandstone rock 1500 years ago by the Hsienpei invaders from Mongolia (who were of Turkic origin and adopted Buddhism as their state religion) who made Datong their capital in a dynasty that lasted for about 150 years from 386 to 534 AD. Approaching the site the next morning, which is situated amidst massive coal fields, I could not have imagined a magnificent archaeological relic of such scale, mostly hidden until you approach it from a near distance. The Yungang Grottoes are under visited by foreign travellers, which is really a shame as it is a UNESCO world heritage site containing relics that can put several other well known sites to shame. All together, the site is composed of 252 grottoes with more than 51,000 Buddha statues and statuettes.

Leaving Shanxi Province behind, we journeyed north to Inner Mongolia, which is part of China, along a newly built expressway to the Huitengxile Grasslands. The only complaint had of the place was that the yurts were built of concrete but they came with en-suite bathrooms. Contd.



The city gate and wall of Pingyao. Pingyao is one of few towns in China with an authentic and intact city wall



The Hanging Temples, precariously perched on the steep cliff, is dedicated to Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism



This Buddha sculpture at the Yunganag Grottoes was sculpted out of the sandstone of the cliff and is 1500 years old



Mongolian equestrian performers at the Huitengxile Grasslands of Inner Mongolia, China



Soldiers marching on Subataar Square in Ulan Bataar, Mongolia, to commemorate the Nadaam Festival



Arriving early to grab the best seats in the Mongolian National Stadium to watch the opening ceremonies of the Nadaam Festival



The big sky and open grasslands of Mongolia. The prestigious horse racing event takes place in the grasslands outside the Mongolian capital



Just before we arrived, the area was devastated by locust swarms, so the grass cover was not what we have expected. Apart from these, the local Mongolian hosts put on a splendid show of horsemanship, wrestling and archery to entertain us, followed by a sumptuous meal of roast lamb and boiled mutton. The night on the Mongolian grasslands gave way to loud disco music and live performances which lasted well into the night. We left the grasslands the following afternoon for the drive to Hohhot, the capital of Inner Mongolia, where we visited a few temples before catching a flight to Beijing to transfer onto an overnight flight to Ulan Bataar, the capital of Mongolia (formerly known as Outer Mongolia).

When we arrived, it was in the early morning hours and our Mongolian guide was at the airport to greet us, driving us to the Kempinski Hotel through the pitch darkness of the Mongolian night. Thankfully, we were checked into the hotel upon arrival and were able to catch some sleep before our tour started in the late morning. Tsegi, our Mongolian guide, a striking young lady of partial Russian descent, was already at the hotel to pick us up. We arrived at possibly the best time to visit the country, with the Naadam festivities in full swing. The festival celebrates Mongolian independence, arts and the three manly sports (archery, riding and wrestling) all rolled into one. Our first visit was to Subataar Square, a massive space in the middle of Ulan Bataar, where the Mongolian Army put on a marching display and the both domestic and foreign dignitaries made an entrance. Our next stop was the Mongolian Natural History Museum with its excellent collection of dinosaur fossils and paleontological exhibits (Mongolia has one of the richest deposits of dinosaur fossils in the world). The day came to an after a visit to a couple of temple and we were treated to a Mongolian cultural show showcasing the unique Mongolian art of throat singing.

The Naadam festival was officially opened at the Mongolian National Sports Stadium and we were there early next day to grab the best seats. The Nadaam festival is like a huge pageant and sports event rolled into one. The opening ceremony started with a colourful procession of Mongolian athletes and citizens dressed in the finest traditional costumes, followed by a speech by the Mongolian President declaring the festival open. The wrestling and archery events took place in the stadium but we were already heading for the exits to take a drive to the open grasslands outside Ulan Bataar where the horse racing event was taking place. The horse racing trophy is the most prestigious event in the Naadam Festival and nomad boys travel from all over the vast expanse of Mongolia to participate. It was very to understand why the Mongolians love their way of life, with the endless horizon of green grasslands, turquoise blue skies and immeasurable freedom. To experience this way of life, we journeyed to the Terelj National Park the next day.

After less than 2 hours of driving from Ulan Bataar through grasslands, alpine hills and bubbling streams, we arrived at Terelj National Park amidst a serene scene of Mongolian nomads tending to their herds of animals. We checked into our authentic Mongolian yurts in one of the many yurt camps in the Park.. The Park has many unique rock formations including two famous formations named for things they resemble: Turtle Rock and the Old Man Reading a Book (Praying Lama Rock).

Before long, Tsegi had already arranged to have some horses delivered to our camp for a horse riding experience to a traditional Mongolian yurt where the hosts offered us fermented mare's milk and many of us got dressed in traditional Mongolian costumes for a photo shoot. Steve had opted to pursue his bird watching passion by joining a private bird watching tour in the Terelj. After dinner in the Yurt restaurant, we snuggled into our comfortable beds as the heater kept us warm for the cool night.

We spent one more night in Mongolia back in the Kempinski Hotel in Ulan Bataar and said our reluctant farewells to our beautiful Mongolian guide, Tsegi. Apart from Steve Charlton and Ruth Anderson from Montreal, who continued their journey by taking the Trans-Siberian train to Moscow via Lake Baikal, the rest of us flew back to Beijing arriving at an Airport greeted by volunteers preparation for the start of the Beijing Olympics in 2 weeks time. We were lucky to see Ulan Bataar and Mongolia before the rapid boom that overtook the country since 2008 and the city would be unrecognizable today. **End.** Contributed by Julian Chau, Hong Kong Interline Club



Tsegi, our unforgettable Mongolian Guide



The Turtle Rock at Terelj National Park



Horse Riding in Terelj National Park. Genghis Khan once rode here. Urs and Marc De Maddalena of the Zurich Club



We climbed the hill behind our camp to see this beautiful view Of the Terelj with the many yurt camps visible

Retro WACA



WACA was founded in Cannes, France, in 1966. Next year, 2016, will be the 50th anniversary of WACA and the Council is looking at possibilities of organizing an Inter-line Celebration in Cannes to commemorate this occasion 50 years ago. Robert Tabak, one of WACA's founders and ex-Swissair employee based in Brussels, Belgium, sent us these pictures of the meeting in France.

Pictures (Clockwise): The first WACA meeting in Cannes, France, 1966; Cocktails, first WACA meeting, 1966; The first Belgium Interline Club Meeting in 1965 in Brussels; Members of the Belgium Club to the first WACA meeting in Cannes posing at Nice-Cote D'Azur Airport next to a Sabena Caravelle.



WACA FUN GAMES 19TH - 23TH APRIL 2016 VILAMOURA ALGARVE, PORTUGAL



The Interline Club of Portugal is using their experience in organizing sports events to offer an attractive package of fun and games. The WACA Fun Games, to be held from 19-23rd of April 2016, will take place in the sunny and warm Algarve Region of Portugal. Based in the 4 Stars Hotel Dom Pedro Vilamoura; snooker, swimming, tennis, ping pong, chess, dancing, darts, bridge and volleyball games will be held. In addition to all the fun games, the organizers have also included a day trip to Ilha da Culatra Island.

The package includes 4 nights accommodations on twin share, 3 dinners with wine (including 1 Gala Dinner with live music), 1 lunch, games, airport transfer from Lisbon to Vilamoura, daytrip to Ilha Da Culatra Island. All for an attractive price of 370 Euros!!! The package can be downloaded from <http://www.waca.org/Documents/WACA%20Fun%20Games%202016.pdf> or contact the Interline Clube of Portugal at geral@interline.pt for more information.



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