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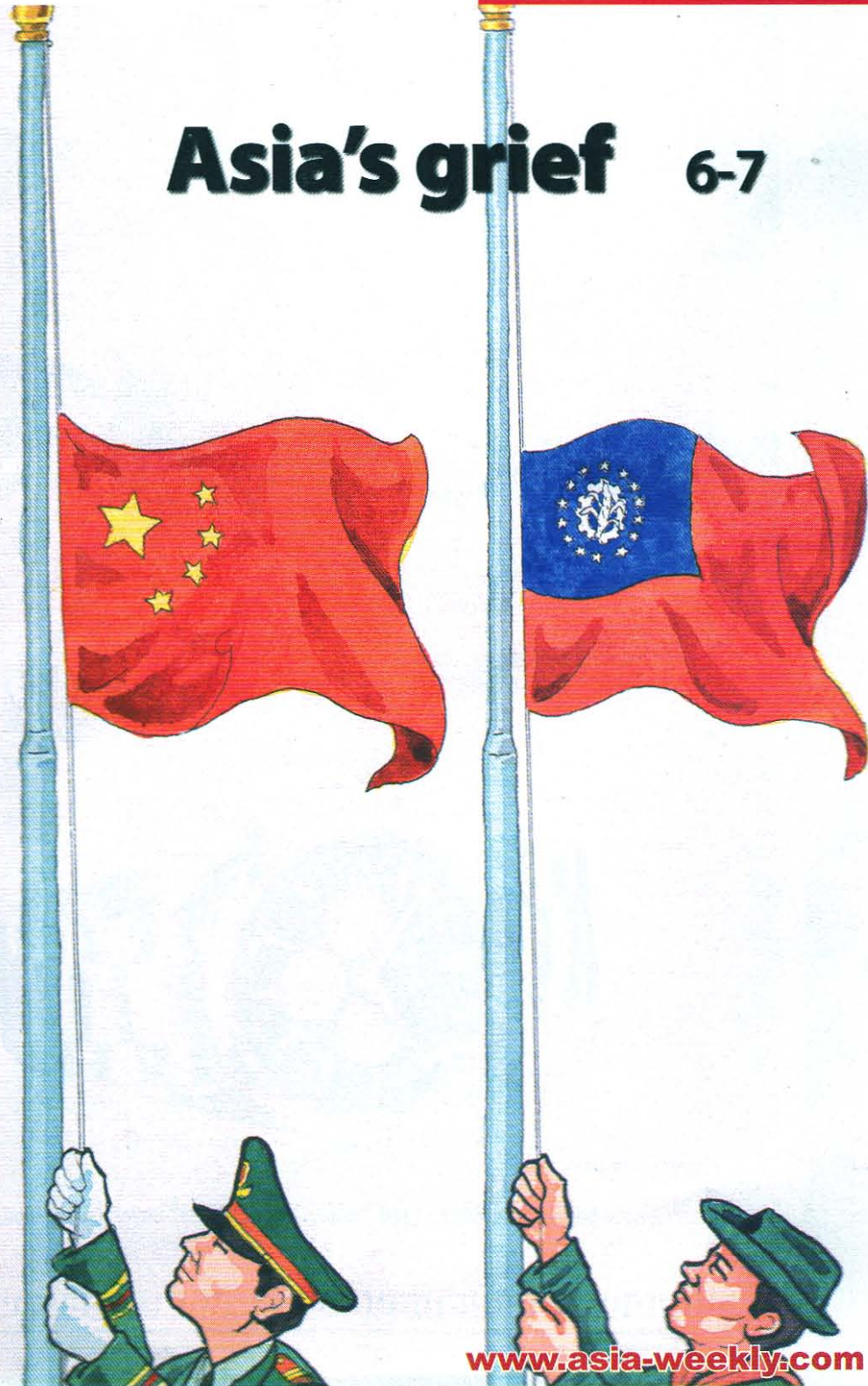
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**Safe Haven:**

• Right: Take in the local life as you would at home

## Your home away from home

By Emma Moore

**T**he thing about hotels is you can never really feel totally at ease. No matter how much you pay, you're still surrounded by a squadron of uniformed staff watching your every move. In fact, the more you pay, the more staff you will have smiling at you. Of course, they only want to make your stay more enjoyable but if you're a long term guest, it's hard not to wish they would all quit the bowing and let you get on with it.

That's where serviced apartments come in.

Serviced apartments are not a new idea, but it's only recently that they have really started to loosen hotels' stranglehold on travelers' accommodation options. Originally pitched at business executives on extended work trips, serviced apartments now offer an alternative way to stay for just about any demographic and budget.



## Serviced Apartments in Asia



### Blending the Best of Hotels and Apartments

With the latest in home appliances, stylish decor, luxurious furnishings, every imaginable service on hand and fabulous locations, serviced apartments are everything you'd like your own home to be. But their biggest advantages are space and affordability. A serviced residence is far more spacious than the average hotel room, and is typically around thirty to fifty percent cheaper than hotels offering a similar standard of accommodation. Laundry and cooking facilities cut add-on costs considerably and the freedom to eat what you want when you want is priceless, especially for young families. Staying in a serviced

#### Spacious:

• Left: Enjoy the comfort and privacy no hotel could give you



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By Frasers Hospitality



apartment gives you total freedom to work, entertain, cook, sleep and relax as you would in your own home.

Fraser's Hospitality is an international branded serviced residence management company, with a focus on top end clients. The majority of its residents are from global Fortune 500 and Forbes corporations. James Wu, executive assistant manager of Fraser Residence CBD East-Beijing, says, "We're definitely not a hotel. What we have that hotels don't is space for people traveling long term. You don't have to bring anything with you except your luggage."

Wu says serviced residences appeal to the increasing number of expats in China who don't want to have to deal with everyday problems in a language they don't understand. "Serviced Apartments are a solution for this niche market,



**Many (serviced apartment) provide inside information on everything from how to enrol your children at the neighbourhood play center to the hippest new bars in town.**

because they help people to relocate into a new environment. What they have in a serviced apartment is what they could very well have at home."

### Meeting Demand in an Upbeat Asia

Although the airline industry is experiencing some turbulence internationally, in Asia, passenger numbers are taking off in line with the booming regional economy. Related industries are also enjoying rapid growth and none more so than the accommodation sector. From Beijing to Jakarta, Asia's skylines are being transformed by shiny new apartment blocks and hotels. And it's not just the traditional commercial hubs which are booming. As smaller cities develop their industry and infrastructure, serviced apartments are popping up to accommodate increasing numbers of international business travelers and their families.

Many well-established property developers and management companies are investing heavily in developing serviced apartments. Leveraging their well-honed brand images to give them a leg up in the increasingly competitive sphere, these companies tend to come in at the top end of the serviced apartment sector.

The Ascott Group is the largest provider of serviced

it's not just for sleeping...

kush

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## Serviced Apartments in Asia

residences outside the United States. The group is expanding rapidly in Asia and in January signed its first deal to manage a serviced residence in Shenzhen, just across the Chinese mainland's border from Hong Kong

Ee Chee Hong, Ascott's China CEO, said the city has huge potential. "Shenzhen's strong, double-digit growth in foreign direct investment over the last three years makes it an attractive market for Ascott. The expatriate community is growing and the level of business activity in the city is also expected to further intensify with the launch of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor."

The 219-unit Ascott Shenzhen Maillen residence is due to open in the second half of 2009 and it will be the group's second property in Shenzhen. Somerset Garden City, Shenzhen will open its doors in the second half of 2008.

### Appealing to a Growing Niche Market

While serviced apartments offer many facilities usually associated with hotels, such as daily maid

services, they don't usually target short-stay tourists. James Wu of Frasers says he believes the serviced apartment sector is not moving towards attracting tourists. He says tourists have different expectations from long-stay residents and tend to want to be near popular attractions. "We don't want to compete with hotels – we provide something more like a middle ground between a hotel and a condominium."

Travellers who spend long periods away from home can easily feel isolated in a culture and community very different from their own. Serviced apartment operators recognize this and many provide inside information on everything from how to enrol your children at the neighbourhood play center to the hippest new bars in town.

It's this personal touch that keeps drawing travellers back to their home away from home, and is opening the door to a healthy future for serviced apartments. ■



## Step 1:

Order extra butter  
on Belgian waffles.

## Step 2:

Undo button,  
but not zipper, please.

## Executive Floor

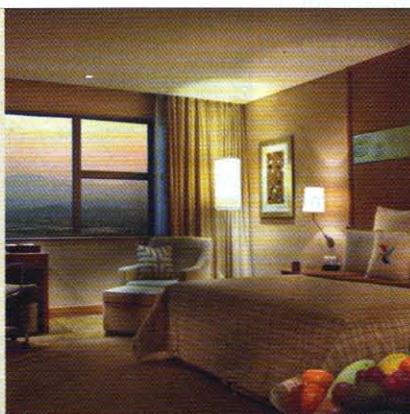
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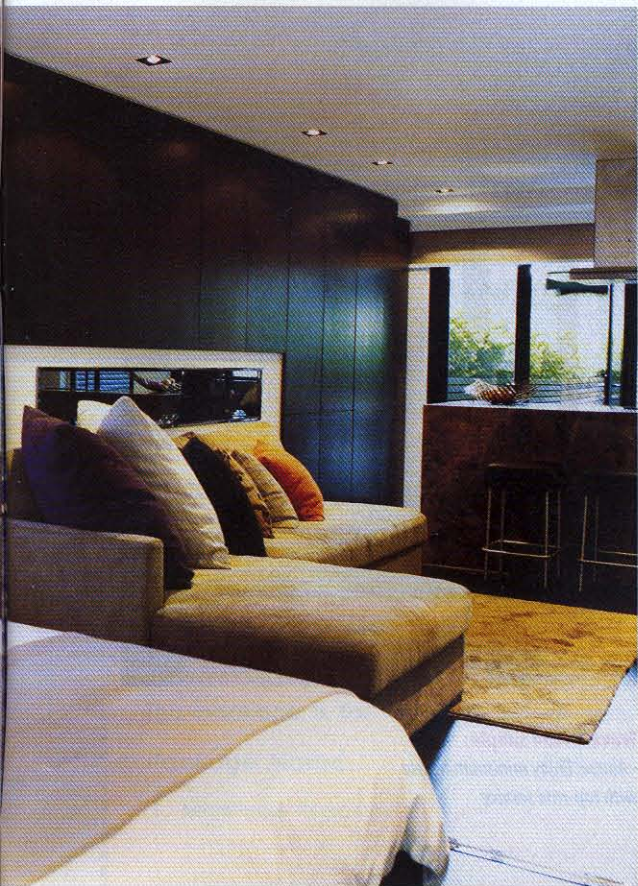
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**In style:**

• Above: Kush will bring you the best Hong Kong has to offer



**Alex Bent** and **Dinesh Nihalchand** are co-founders of Kush, the hippest newcomer to Hong Kong's serviced apartment scene. They spoke to Asia Weekly about what makes Kush unique. Interviews by Krzysztof Kardaszewicz

**What does Kush place most emphasis on?**

One special area is apartment design. We really wanted to create an atmosphere with a connection to Hong Kong, which people can enjoy. Then there is the focus on lifestyle with our Kush Envy Card, providing customers with access to some of the best spas, clubs and restaurants. We were both born in Hong Kong and know the area really well, so these places are all personal choices. They are the restaurants and clubs we ourselves enjoy and love going to.

**How has customer response been since Kush opened last year?**

For the last two months we've been full and the feedback has been very positive. We feel that the elevated brand and lifestyle experience we wanted to create really resonates with our customers. They see Kush as a fun and comfortable place to stay at.

**What's behind the name Kush?**

Kush is a Sanskrit word meaning the 'essence of happiness', although in the West it can also be easily associated with comfort. This gives the name a universal understanding and a broad appeal.

**How would you describe the current state of the serviced apartment market?**

Demand has really built up over the past five years and serviced apartments have a strong position in the hospitality business – they are much cheaper and offer twice the space of hotel rooms.

**What is the key to staying ahead of the competition?**

The key is to continue to innovate and offer increasingly better service. We're always looking for another fun restaurant, new activities and partners, such as Shangri La and their health spa which we just added. If something is not working, we respond immediately. It would be very easy to simply collect rent every month and sit back, but it takes real effort to innovate. We think that's what differentiates companies doing this long-term from those going for a quick profit.

**Will serviced apartments change the tourism industry?**

Serviced apartments cater to a very distinct market with long-term stays and they won't affect the tourism industry a lot. Five star hotels will always lead the way there. We're more like a residential area but we also offer premium services.