

nificant interests in Malaysia and Thailand.

In technology, Telstra's directories business Sensis has acquired a controlling stake in the Chinese real estate website SouFun.

IBISWorld is advising agriculture-based exporters, including winegrowers, to target Asia's rapidly growing middle class. Despite capacity problems because of the drought in Australia, it says food exports will benefit from trade liberalisation in the region and greater consumption of western food staples.

South Australia-based Greatstone Wines is already developing wines to suit the spice-loving palates of drinkers in Xian, in central north-western China. Also eyeing off Xian is Victoria-based Novatech Controls, which sells oxygen analysers used in power plants to help cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Austrade's Laurie Smith says a new trade office in Xian has already helped Australian

businesses. To be successful in China, he says, companies need to be on the ground.

Christopher Wright, of Austrade in Shanghai adds that exporters cannot afford to cut corners. "Like any company that is thinking of moving into a market, whether it's China, Australia or Timbuktu, they have to go through that normal process of market planning." He also warns China investors: "Double your expectations in terms of costs and time, and halve your expectations in terms of sales."

**A**SIA CAN BE a tough export market. Just ask Greg Darwell, managing director of Mulwarra Export, which sells meat, seafood, game and specialty cheeses to hotels. Bird flu, SARS, the fallout from 9/11 and an Australian dollar that has bounced from US48¢ to US80¢ – he's seen it all. Two of his clients – the Marriott Hotel in Indonesia

and Grand Hyatt in Amman, Jordan – have been bombed in recent years.

Since its launch in 1997, however, NSW-based Mulwarra has proven resilient. Starting with sales to Indonesia, Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea, it has doubled its size in the past three years and boasts annual turnover of more than \$30m. Indonesia, Korea and Dubai are among its strongest markets and late last year Mulwarra was ranked by Cathay Pacific Catering Services in the top 10 worldwide suppliers.

Darwell says too many wannabe exporters to Asia make the mistake of trying to compete on price, not quality. "The modus operandi for a lot of Australian exporters is to say, 'I'll find out who's doing it and I'll go in there and undercut them', rather than going in and developing something new. If your only weapon is price, you've got no chance." ●

**TRAVEL** RACHAEL OAKES-ASH

## Deal free

You're in Asia on business, and you need some serious R&R. Step outside for the real deal.

### HONG KONG

Few visitors know that 40% of Hong Kong is park land, so get walking. There are trails through the hills taking in the vistas of Repulse Bay and Tai Tam country park, with its man-made water reservoirs and old war bunkers. The Dragon's Back Hike is the best. It takes three hours through jungle trails up to the Dragon's Back ridge, with its exquisite views. Trek in the morning and descend into the seaside village of Shek O with its waterside mansions for lunch.

Wine connoisseurs can head to the exclusive Crown Wine Cellars, an old British military war bunker. Run by a former Hong Kong consul general, Gregory De'eb, club members store their prized drops deep in the club's 2m-thick concrete walls, 20m below the ground. The cellars have a fine dining restaurant where club members can enjoy their own wines. Tuesday night is guest night for non-members. ([www.crownwinecellars.com](http://www.crownwinecellars.com)).



Cashed up but time poor? Heli Express ([www.helihongkong.com](http://www.helihongkong.com)) will chopper you to Macau for 90 minutes of pure indulgence at Spa Philosophy ([www.spaphilosophy.com](http://www.spaphilosophy.com)). A 30-minute round chopper trip and treatment from \$HK2760 (\$449).

Contemporary Chinese artists are in vogue with their multimedia take on the new China. Invest at ground level and peruse the city's galleries for China's answer to Damien Hirst. The Imagine Gallery opened in 2003 ([www.imagine-gallery.com](http://www.imagine-gallery.com)) and mixes European and Asian artists. The Red Gate Gallery ([www.redgategallery.com](http://www.redgategallery.com)), founded by Australian ex-pat Brian Wallace, promotes the work of China's leading modern artists.

### SINGAPORE

For spa and golf, take the boat ride from Singapore to Indonesia's Bintan Island. All the usual spa players are here including Angsana Spa Resort ([www.angsana.com](http://www.angsana.com)) and Banyan Tree ([www.banyantree.com](http://www.banyantree.com)). Golfers love Banyan's Greg Norman Laguna Bintan Golf Course, and also the Jack Nicklaus and Ian Baker Finch courses at the Bintan Lagoon Resort ([www.bintanlagoon.com](http://www.bintanlagoon.com)).

Singapore is surrounded by popular dive islands. Sipadan, near Borneo, is one of the world's top sites. See barracudas and hammerhead sharks, and coral walls that drop off into the ocean. Singapore-based Waikiki Dive Centre ([www.waikikidive.com](http://www.waikikidive.com)) arranges trips to the area.

Eco-tourism is big in Sarawak and the local jungle houses the proboscis monkey, silver-leafed monkey and the endangered orangutan, as well as the world's largest limestone caves. Borneo Adventures offers sustainable tour options ([www.borneoadventures.com](http://www.borneoadventures.com)).



### MUMBAI

HRR India (Himalayan River Runners) are adventure specialists with rafting, trekking and sport fishing in the Himalayan foothills and the Ganges river, some with overnight local village stays ([www.hrrindia.com](http://www.hrrindia.com)).

Heli-skiing the Himalayas ([www.himachal.com](http://www.himachal.com)) is for the more adventurous. The Manali region of the Indian Himalayas has consistent deep-packed powder from January to April. Skiers and boarders chopper between 2700m and 4300m but can go up to 5000m.

India is home to the Bengal tiger and a host of tour operators offer wildlife safaris including the opportunity to see and photograph tigers in the wild. Wild World India specialises in all wildlife ([www.wildworldindia.com](http://www.wildworldindia.com)) and Tiger Safaris concentrates purely on tigers ([www.tigersafari.net](http://www.tigersafari.net)). Be warned, the average tiger safari takes patience, most tours run from 10 to 14 days.

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