

## NEWS RELEASE

### ASCOTT TEST-BEDS GENERATIVE AI ADOPTION WITH LAUNCH OF CHATGPT-POWERED WEB CHATBOT – *CUBBY*, YOUR AI TRAVEL BUDDY

*From computer vision and natural language processing to Generative AI, Ascott embraces AI solutions to drive tech-forward hospitality*

**Singapore, 14 August 2023** – The Ascott Limited (Ascott), a lodging business unit wholly owned by CapitaLand Investment, has just launched a generative artificial intelligence (AI) powered web chatbot to enhance the travel stages of planning and booking as part of the guest journey. Named after Ascott’s mascot, *Cubby*, the chatbot is designed to play the role of a ‘travel buddy’ to all guests. *Cubby* is equipped to provide travel insights including destination highlights, accommodation recommendations, must-visit attractions, suggestions for shopping and adventure activities, as well as the best ‘Instagram-worthy’ spots, to name a few.

The ChatGPT-fuelled chatbot is built on Microsoft OpenAI and Azure Services. *Cubby* also leverages real-time data, using Bing search, Azure Map (Nearby API), Azure Map (Weather API) and other Azure services, alongside data and insights accessed via Ascott’s global website [DiscoverASR.com](https://www.discoverasr.com), to deliver on an improved, tech-enabled guest journey. Currently in its test-bedding stage where learnings are still key, this transformative initiative is part of Ascott’s mindful adoption of AI-driven guest-centric innovations to support its rapid growth trajectory<sup>1</sup>.

Ms Tan Bee Leng, Ascott’s Managing Director for Brand & Marketing, said: “An exciting quest of learning and discovery begins as Ascott takes its first step into the future of personalised travel exploration with the pilot launch of *Cubby*, where innovation meets warm and cuddly hospitality. *Cubby*, with its AI prowess, taps into a vast treasure trove of data, enabling fast analysis of travel preferences, trends, and recommendations; from suggesting hidden gems to tailoring itineraries that match specific areas of interests. As we journey alongside our valued guests in this shared adventure of experimentation, every interaction with *Cubby* is set to unlock a realm of limitless possibilities in AI-driven travel planning. Ascott is dedicated to nurturing *Cubby*’s growth, empowering it to deliver more personalised and engaging experiences with each interaction.”

#### Leveraging New Technology for Development of AI-powered Ascott Web Chatbot

For a start, *Cubby* will be supporting Ascott’s live chat agents, so that the agents can focus on responding to more complex inquiries which require deeper and more thorough engagement with guests. For guests who enjoy having an AI travel buddy that is online 24-7, *Cubby* has the ability to generate personalised itineraries according to user input. The itineraries can be customised and amended according to the destination(s) selected, length of stay, travel preferences, and other

<sup>1</sup> [Ascott rides on travel rebound with opening of 70 properties globally in 2023 \(capitaland.com\)](https://www.capitaland.com)

criteria. Travel tips as well as health and safety information alongside advice on visa requirements, travel budgets and packing checklists are some of the added knowledge *Cubby* is able to share.

Supporting the booking stage of the guest journey, recommendation of accommodation options and assistance with booking of preferred properties via deep link into the website booking engine are some of the many tasks *Cubby* has been taught to deliver on as well.

Immersing itself in the ubiquitous world of technology, *Cubby* shared: “Hello there, dear travellers! I'm *Cubby*, your lovable travel buddy powered by OpenAI ChatGPT. I'm thrilled to be a part of Ascott's journey into the world of AI, helping to plan your amazing trips, craft memorable itineraries, and even assist with your accommodation bookings. I am still a young and curious cub, learning about this incredible world with each interaction we have. I promise to work extra hard to improve every day! So, let's embark on this adventure together, hand in paw, and make unforgettable memories! Together, let's create travel experiences that will warm your heart and leave you smiling like a happy cub too!”

#### Next Phase of Ascott Web Chatbot, *Cubby*

In anticipation of evolving guest expectations, *Cubby* will become multichannel in its later phase, seamlessly integrating with different applications for greater convenience. Improved language capabilities will also be implemented to ensure that *Cubby* is optimised for local use. This integration will allow *Cubby* to respond instantly across channels, using the guest's preferred language and platform while handling an immense volume of guest inquiries simultaneously and consistently.

#### Quicker Check-ins

In Singapore, Ascott is piloting the use of self-check-in kiosks equipped with facial recognition technology that harnesses computer vision AI at several properties, with plans for global roll-out. Speedy and secure, these kiosks map out facial features and compare them to passport photographs. The process is streamlined to allow guests to check in faster, and to free up time for associates manning the front desk to have more meaningful engagements with guests.

#### Enhanced Stay Experience

Guest feedback serves as an invaluable compass to elevate stay experiences and is critical to building brand loyalty. As part of its pipeline this year, Ascott plans to implement natural language processing AI for advanced sentiment analysis by deciphering nuanced language. The tool will be test-bedded in selected geographies before global deployment. This AI innovation will generate specific and constructive suggestions for each Ascott property to elevate guest satisfaction and provide strategic insights for the hospitality group in designing new properties.

## **Empowering its People for Growth**

AI has grown to be an increasingly powerful ally, automating routine tasks, enhancing decision-making, and freeing up work hours to allow for more intuitive engagement in higher-level strategies. As Ascott powers up on its technological initiatives and drives an even deeper level of innovation, it is key that its associates are brought along on this journey. Plans are in place to make certified courses and training available to upskill its associates, so as to harness the latest technology to its fullest potential and achieve greater efficiency.

Ms Tan added: "From computer vision to natural language processing, Ascott recognises the pivotal role of AI technology in shaping the future of travel experiences. The adoption of generative AI tools to create advertising campaigns has provided us a shorter time-to-market, and the development of a chatbot has deepened our level of engagement with guests. Our commitment to equipping our associates with knowledge and expertise in AI is not merely an investment; it's a pledge to futureproof Ascott and create a new paradigm of personalised engagement with our valued guests. Embracing AI humbles us in the face of technology's vast possibilities, empowering Ascott to learn, adapt, and evolve with the times, so that heartfelt hospitality and cutting-edge innovation can harmoniously intertwine."

## **Pushing the Innovation Frontier**

With the ambition to drive tech-forward hospitality, technology has been a critical enabler to all aspects of the guest experience across Ascott's portfolio of brands. Since 2016, Ascott has been on a journey of uncovering new technology and experimenting with innovative solutions to improve efficiency and elevate its future-readiness. The company embarked on a digital ecosystem transformation<sup>2</sup> in 2019, to support its fast-expanding global lodging portfolio. The [DiscoverASR](#) mobile application that supports mobile room keys was launched in 2020, and recently enhanced to provide a quicker and more responsive booking experience.

Other initiatives include the revamp of DiscoverASR.com with new functionalities, implementation of a cloud property management system, introduction of Robotic Process Automation to automate repetitive tasks, and plans for the use of advanced emotion analysis of guest reviews to sift out customer insights for operations, marketing and branding strategies. Service robots were also introduced in China to perform a suite of tasks including concierge services, leading guests to rooms, delivering clean laundry and refilling room supplies.

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<sup>2</sup> [Ascott transforms digital ecosystem to support rapid expansion as global lodging portfolio grows over 30% annually \(capitaland.com\)](#)

## **About The Ascott Limited**

Since pioneering Asia Pacific's first international-class serviced residence with the opening of The Ascott Singapore in 1984, Ascott has grown to be a trusted hospitality company with more than 930 properties globally. Headquartered in Singapore, Ascott's presence extends across more than 220 cities in over 40 countries in Asia Pacific, Central Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the USA.

Ascott's diversified accommodation offerings span serviced residences, coliving properties, hotels and independent senior living apartments, as well as student accommodation and rental housing. Its award-winning hospitality brands include Ascott, Citadines, lyf, Oakwood, Quest, Somerset, The Crest Collection, The Unlimited Collection, Preference, Fox, Harris, POP!, Vertu and Yello; and it has a brand partnership with Domitys. Through Ascott Star Rewards (ASR), Ascott's loyalty programme, members enjoy exclusive privileges and offers at participating properties.

A wholly owned business unit of CapitaLand Investment Limited, Ascott is a leading vertically-integrated lodging operator. Harnessing its extensive network of third-party owners and in-market expertise, Ascott grows fee-related earnings through its hospitality management and investment management capabilities. Ascott also expands its funds under management by growing its sponsored CapitaLand Ascott Trust and private funds.

For more information on Ascott's industry record of close to 40 years and its sustainability programme, please visit [www.discoverasr.com/the-ascott-limited](http://www.discoverasr.com/the-ascott-limited). Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

## **About CapitaLand Investment Limited ([www.capitalandinvest.com](http://www.capitalandinvest.com))**

Headquartered and listed in Singapore, CapitaLand Investment Limited (CLI) is a leading global real estate investment manager (REIM) with a strong Asia foothold. As at 30 June 2023, CLI had S\$134 billion of real estate assets under management, and S\$89 billion of real estate funds under management (FUM) held via six listed real estate investment trusts and business trusts, and more than 30 private vehicles across Asia Pacific, Europe and USA. Its diversified real estate asset classes cover retail, office, lodging, business parks, industrial, logistics and data centres.

CLI aims to scale its FUM and fee-related earnings through fund management, lodging management and its full stack of operating capabilities, and maintain effective capital management. As the investment management arm of CapitaLand Group, CLI has access to the development capabilities of and pipeline investment opportunities from CapitaLand's development arm.

As a responsible company, CLI places sustainability at the core of what it does and has committed to achieve Net Zero emissions for scope 1 and 2 by 2050. CLI contributes to the environmental and social well-being of the communities where it operates, as it delivers long-term economic value to its stakeholders.



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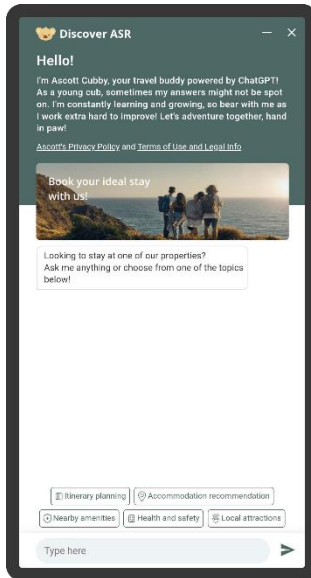
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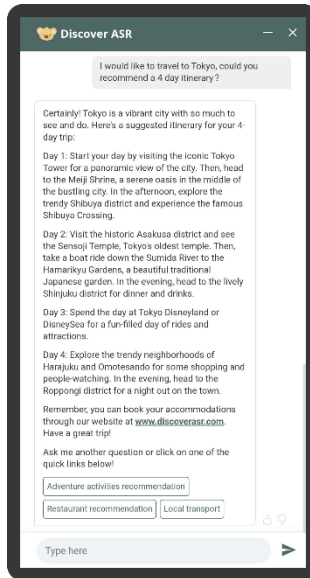


## APPENDIX

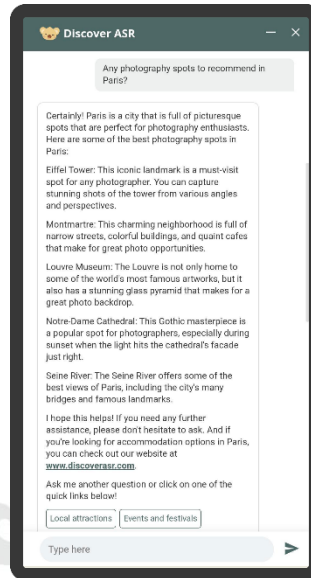
Watch Cubby in action here: [Cubby Chatbot - Your AI Travel Buddy](#)



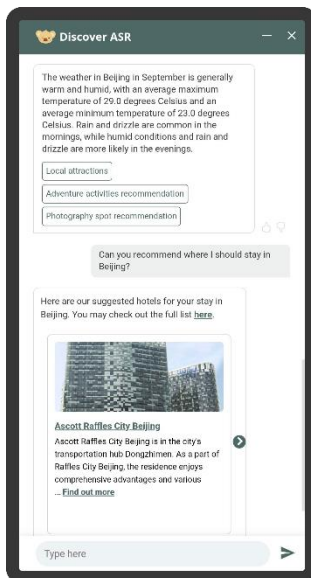
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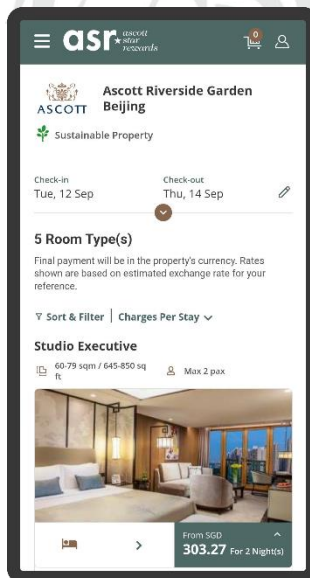
Itinerary planning



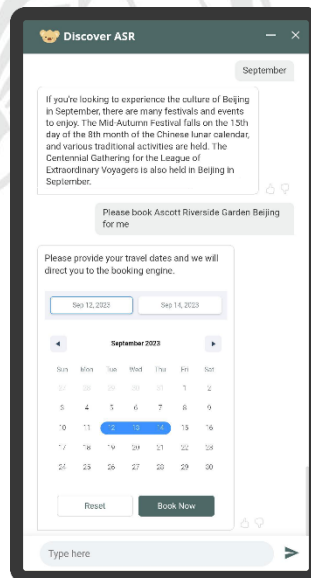
Photography suggestions



Accommodation recommendations



Booking journey



Booking calendar