

## Thailand Tourism

# NEGATIVE [Downgrade]

### Year Ahead 2023: D/G to NEGATIVE due to valuation

#### Pent-up demand likely happens in 1H23; top pick is MINT

We downgrade the sector to NEGATIVE after share prices surged in anticipation of 4Q22 high season lifting occupancy and room rates. Looking ahead, we see challenges in FY23E, including: 1) pent-up demand that could fade in 1H23, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand, and 2) continued high costs which already depressed EBITDA margins in 3Q22. MINT is our only BUY and Top Pick thanks to the good performance of its Europe hotels (60% of hotel revenues) that helped it earn an impressive THB2b profit in 3Q22. Unlike Thai hoteliers that rely mostly on foreign tourists (80-90%), MINT's customers in Europe are mostly domestic (50-60%) and, in our view, more resilient.

#### Pent-up demand likely to fade in 1H23

The Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT) governor expects pent-up demand to fade by 1H23. This is in line with medical tourism hospital operator BH's guidance (see report). In 2Q22 and 3Q22, most hoteliers saw their room rates above pre-Covid levels, indicating pent-up demand in the sector which, in our view, could fade by the end of 1H23, possibly along with declining occupancy. We think this would be a negative catalyst for the sector, especially in light of high share prices, and only small profits expected in FY23E.

#### Restaurant business could be more resilient

For both CENTEL and MINT's restaurants, we expect same-store-sales growth (SSSG) to normalise in FY23E, post Covid. Because MINT's restaurants in China (6% restaurant sales contribution) have been affected by the lockdowns in FY22, MINT's SSSG is tracking at 8% in FY22E, versus CENTEL's 20%. Following its low base in FY22, we expect MINT's SSSG in FY23E to be higher at 3%, compared to CENTEL's 2%.

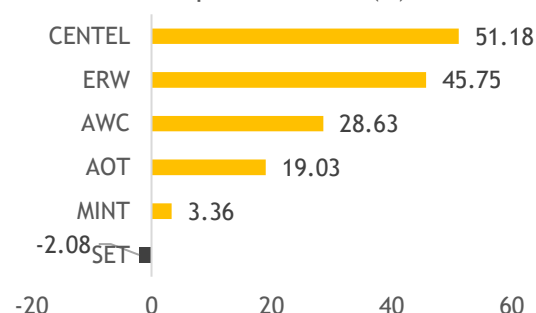
#### DCF-based. Key upside risk is China re-opening

We use DCF to value stocks under coverage. We see the tourism sector as generally overpriced in anticipation of an excellent recovery despite being only half-way towards its pre-Covid FY19 level. The key upside risk is China re-opening which could add to tourist arrivals in FY23E and help buoy the sector temporarily.

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YTD performance (%)



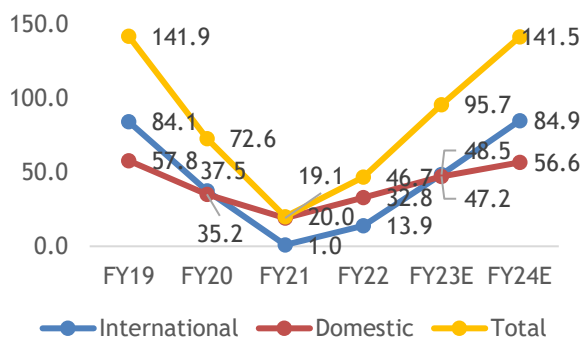
Maybank Securities (Thailand) Plc (MST) and Central Plaza Hotel Plc (CENTEL) have a common director, Ms Sopawadee Lertmanaschai. However, the securities analytical comment is based on the individual assumptions of Maybank Securities' research department.

Stock	Bloomberg code	Mkt cap (USD'm)	Rating	Price (LC)	TP (LC)	Upside (%)	P/E (x)		P/B (x)		Div yld (%)	
							22E	23E	22E	23E	22E	23E
AOT	AOT TB	30,474	Hold	74.25	80.00	8	nm	92.4	10.0	9.2	0.0	0.5
Asset World Corp	AWC TB	5,746	Sell	6.25	4.00	(36)	nm	nm	2.6	2.5	0.0	0.0
Minor Int'l	MINT TB	4,615	Buy	31.00	35.00	13	99.5	33.9	2.3	2.2	0.3	1.0
Central Plaza	CENTEL TB	1,862	Sell	48.00	40.00	(17)	183.1	53.1	3.5	3.3	0.0	0.8
Erawan Group	ERW TB	586	Hold	4.50	4.00	(11)	nm	117.5	3.8	3.7	0.0	0.3

# 1. Greater visibility on 2023 recovery

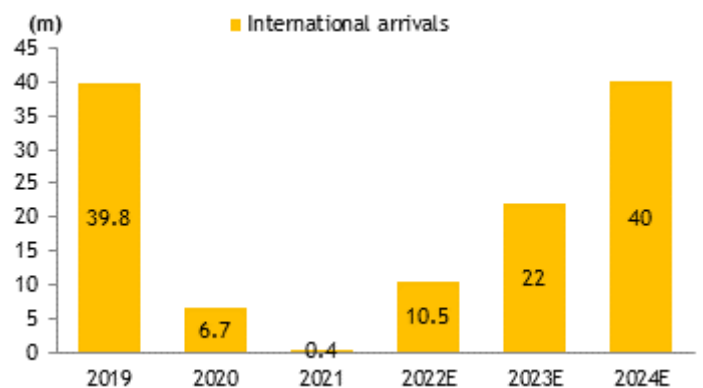
We expect international tourist arrivals to total 22m in 2023 and increase to 40m in 2024, the same level as pre-Covid 2019. We use the Airport Authority of Thailand’s (AOT) forecasts to determine the recovery outlook for both 2023 and 2024. Despite strong recovery in international tourist arrivals since Covid curbs were lifted mid-year, we see the sector as fully valued. MINT is our only BUY (CP THB30.75, TP THB35), as we contend that it has the best earnings visibility and the most reasonable valuation 19.2x FY24E P/E while other names are trading at 31-130x FY24E despite a relative lack of earnings visibility.

**Fig 1: AOT’s passenger forecasts**



Source: AOT

**Fig 2: We align our international arrivals forecast with AOT. We expect a succinct recovery in international arrivals in 2023E**



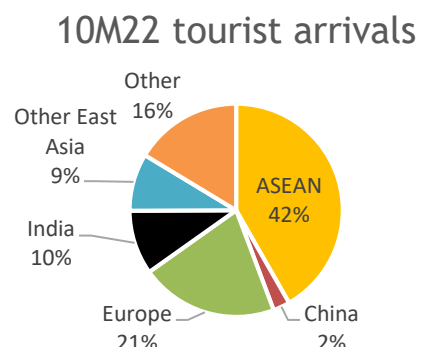
Source: AOT, MST

**Fig 3: Tourist arrivals reached 1.5m in October**



Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports

**Fig 4: ASEAN was the biggest source of tourist arrivals. China accounted for only 2% in 10M22, compared to 28% in 2019**



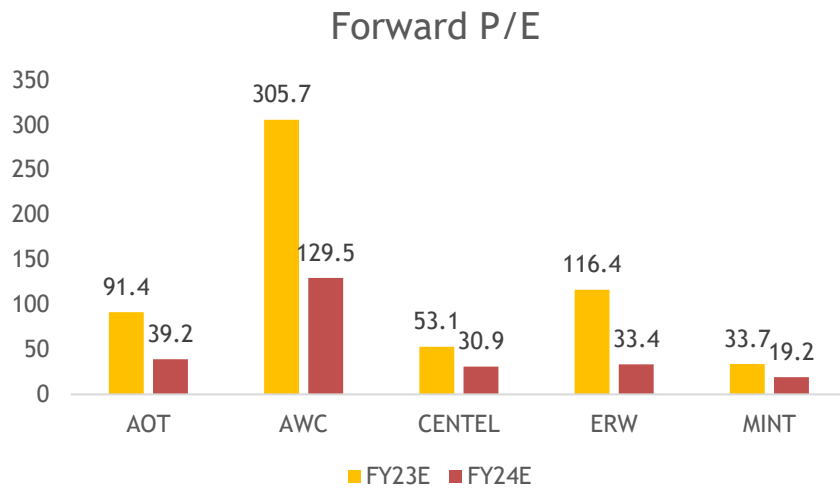
Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports

We have not factored China’s re-opening into our forecasts as there is much uncertainty about this and if there is a reopening in 2023, there could be upside to our FY23E forecasts but not in FY24E as we have already projected a full recovery in FY24E.

Our 22m tourist arrival projection for FY23 is about 55% of the pre-Covid 2019 level and we note that in 4Q22, arrivals likely reach 45% of the pre-Covid level (about THB1.5m/mth in 4Q22) and hence, the 55% level in FY23E should be achievable, despite the absence of Chinese tourist arrivals.

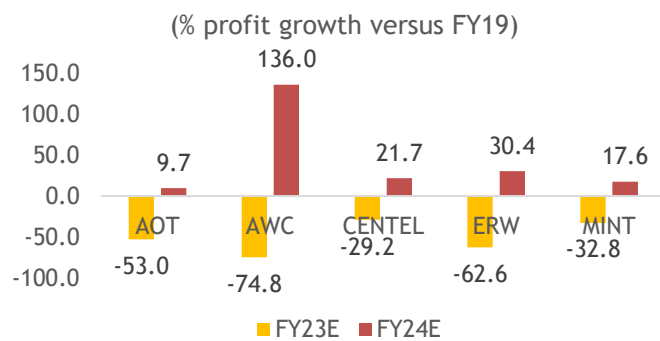
In line with the TAT governor’s projections reported in the Bangkok Post, we believe that the pent-up demand could likely fade by the end of 1H23. We, thus, remain cautiously optimistic about the recovery. Given the uncertain recovery and high valuations, we are NEGATIVE on the sector.

**Fig 5: We expect full recovery in FY24E. MINT's valuation is least demanding at 19.2x FY24E P/E**



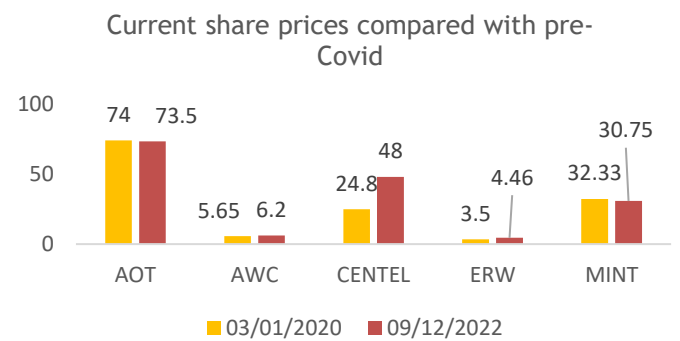
Source: MST

**Fig 6: Thai tourism names unlikely to see return to FY19 profitability until FY24E...**



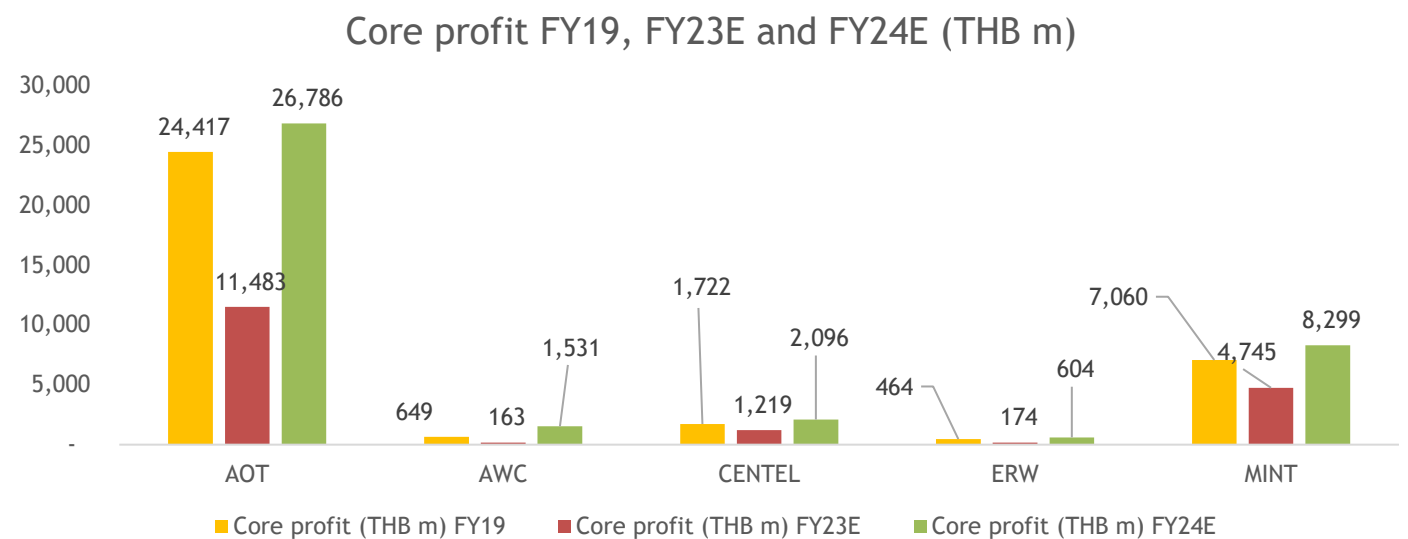
Source: MST

**Fig 7:.. but share prices have exceeded pre-Covid levels, except for AOT and MINT**



Source: SET

**Fig 8: We expect all Thai tourism names' profits to recover to pre-Covid levels in FY24E**



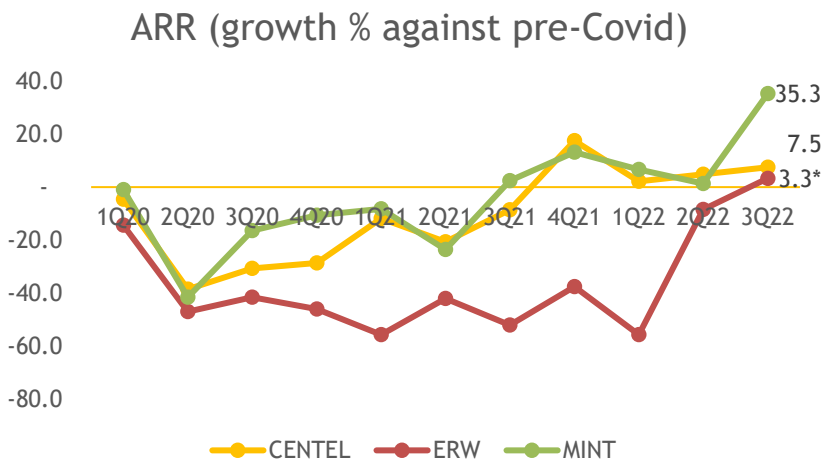
Source: Company data, MST

## 2. Pent-up demand may fade by end of 1H23

We feel there has been substantial pent-up demand since 2H22 (following the easing of entry rules in July 2022) but the evidence for this has not been substantial. We believe that it could likely fade by 1H23, due to: 1) the TAT governor’s comment that the FY22 recovery in tourist arrivals has been fueled by pent-up demand that may fade by 1H23, 2) Bumrungrad (BH, CP THB205, SELL, TP THB187) Corporate Chief Strategy Officer, Mr. Neil Sorrentino said at the most recent analyst meeting that the recovery in medical tourism may fade by end-1H23, and 3) high air ticket prices (of around 15% higher than pre-Covid levels) and higher average room rates (ARR) could be indicators of pent-up demand.

As for the ARR, we particularly witness the price increases in the high-end segment as they tend to cater to international arrivals that have increased substantially recently.

**Fig 9: CENTEL, ERW and MINT’s average room rates (ARR) above pre-Covid in 3Q22, indicating high pent-up demand**



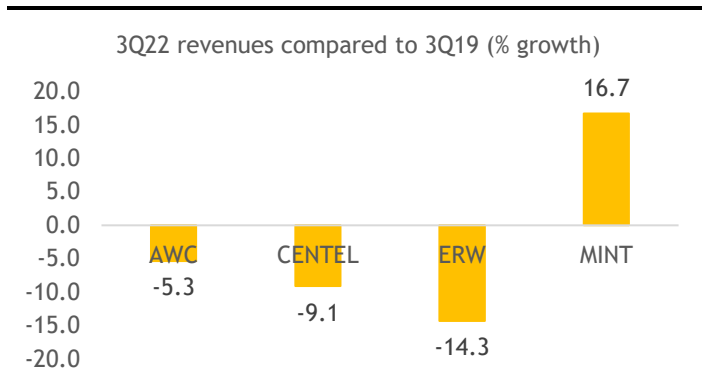
\* For ERW, excluding Hop Inn  
Source: Company data

Exceptionally high room rates in 2Q22 and 3Q22 may be indicators of pent-up demand. In 3Q22, compared to pre-Covid 3Q19, MINT’s ARR was the strongest at 35% higher than pre-Covid - followed by CENTEL at 7.5% higher and then ERW 3.3%.

Because of the exceptionally good ARR, AWC, CENTEL and ERW recorded solid revenue growth both QoQ and YoY in 3Q22 at only 5.3-14.3% below Covid levels. For MINT, revenues in 3Q22 exceeded pre-Covid 3Q19 by 16.7%. Despite the good revenue growth, AWC and ERW were loss-making in 3Q22. CENTEL was profitable but only due to the restaurant business (THB177m profit), whereas the hotel business made a loss of THB150m. Only MINT made a good profit of THB2b in 3Q22.

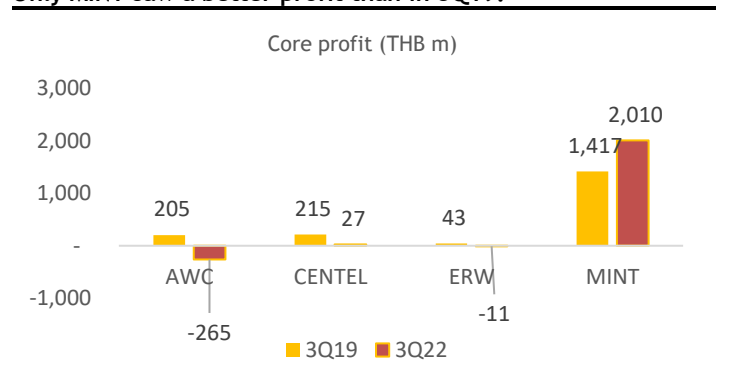
Poor profitability in 3Q22, despite good revenue growth, was a result of higher costs that led to stagnant EBITDA margins, especially in the hotel business. We anticipate that inflation in Thailand may ease in FY23E, and forecast all Thai tourism names to turn profitable in FY23E. But rising costs is a risk that could see them underperform in FY23E.

Fig 10: While 3Q22 revenues were similar to 3Q19...



Source: Companies

Fig 11: .. profitability underwhelmed due to cost pressure. Only MINT saw a better profit than in 3Q19.



Source: Companies

### 3. Expect moderate RevPar growth in FY23E, driven by occupancy

We estimate that hoteliers' FY23 RevPar could increase by 39% on average (Fig 14). Unlike FY22E when average room rates (ARR) surged by 34% (Fig 13), we believe that ARR will recover by a more modest 12% in FY23E, due to the high base discussed earlier. In sum, we believe that RevPar growth in FY23E will be driven by improvement in occupancy (Fig 12) and not so much by higher ARR as happened in FY22E.

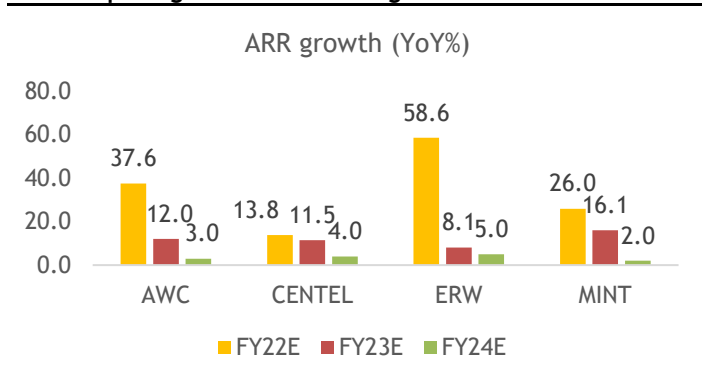
In terms of occupancy, we expect all hoteliers to see full recovery in FY24E. In FY23E, we expect CENTEL to have the best occupancy, due to healthy occupancy in Maldives (8% of total revenues) that with occupancies of around 80-90% has always outperformed Thai hotels at 70-80%. We also expect ERW to have decent occupancy of 72% in FY23E, followed by AWC at 63%, due to the recovery in its Thai hotels. For MINT, we expect occupancy of 64%, the lowest among Thai hoteliers under our coverage. This is because, its hotels in Europe have lower occupancies than Thai hotels. In pre-Covid FY19, MINT registered occupancy of 69%.

Fig 12: Occupancy surged in FY22E, following reopening in November 21

Occupancy (%)	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22E	FY23E	FY24E
AWC	76	23	19	50	63	76
CENTEL	77	28	25	53	75	78
ERW	77	34	23	55	72	76
MINT	69	28	36	62	64	69

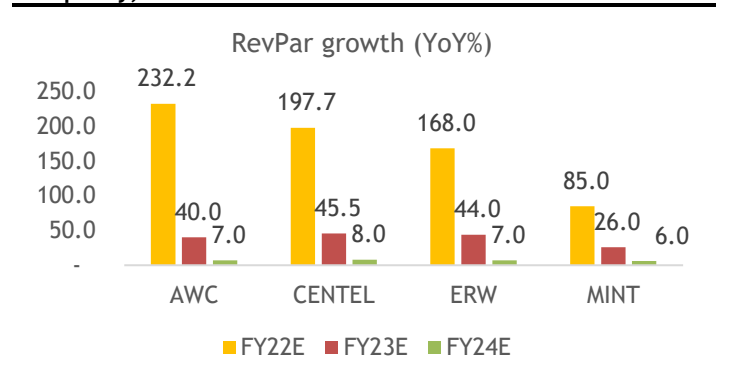
Source: Companies, MST

Fig 13: Average Room Rate (ARR) growth seen highest in FY22E, after reopening before normalising in FY23E and FY24E



Source: MST

Fig 14: RevPar growth in FY23E and FY24E should be driven by occupancy, rather than ARR such as in FY22E



Source: MST

## 4. Domestic travel growth likely to trail international in FY23E

We expect domestic demand to recover in FY23E but not as much as in FY22E, as domestic travels resumed faster than international travel. Additionally, the government may spend less to stimulate domestic travel in FY23E. We think this makes sense as Covid eases. We expect the government to spend only THB7.2b on its ‘We Travel Together’ scheme in FY23, far less than about THB17.7b in FY22 (Fig 15).

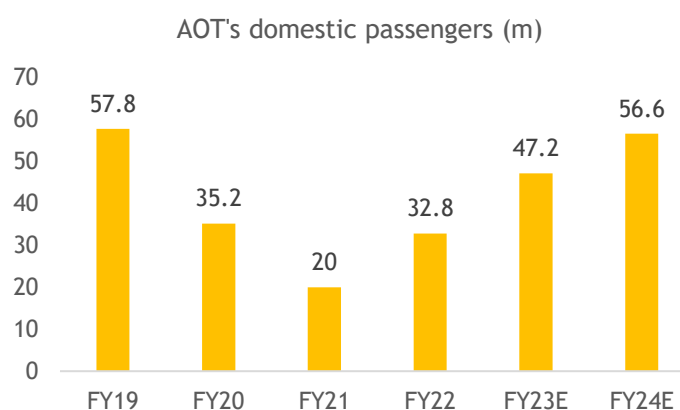
Under this scheme, we believe ERW will be the biggest beneficiary given its focus on hotels in Thailand with about 90% of revenue contribution from different segments. Additionally, ERW has a budget segment, Hop Inn, which caters to domestic travelers that could continue to benefit from the scheme.

**Fig 15: Thai government’s ‘We Travel Together’ campaign helped subsidise and increase domestic travel**

	Period	Government’s subsidies (THB m)	Number of users	Details
Phase 1	1 July 2020- 31 August 2020	11,200	1.2m	40% subsidies for hotel rooms, up to THB3,000 a night 40% subsidies for food, up to THB600 a day 40% subsidies for air tickets up to THB1,000
Phase 2	1 September 2020- 30 April 2021	5,000	1m	40% subsidies for hotel rooms, up to THB3,000 a night 40% subsidies for food, up to THB900 a day 40% subsidies for air tickets up to THB2,000
Phase 3	15 Oct 2021 - 31 Jan 2022	9,025	1.1m	40% subsidies for hotel rooms, up to THB3,000 a night 40% subsidies for food, up to THB600 a day 40% subsidies for air tickets up to THB3,000
Phase 4	8 July - 31 Oct 2022	13,200	1.5 m	40% subsidies for hotel rooms, up to THB3,000 a night 40% subsidies for food, up to THB600 a day 40% subsidies for air tickets up to THB3,000
Phase 5	1H23	7,200	2m	40% subsidies for hotel rooms, up to THB3,000 a night 40% subsidies for food, up to THB600 a day

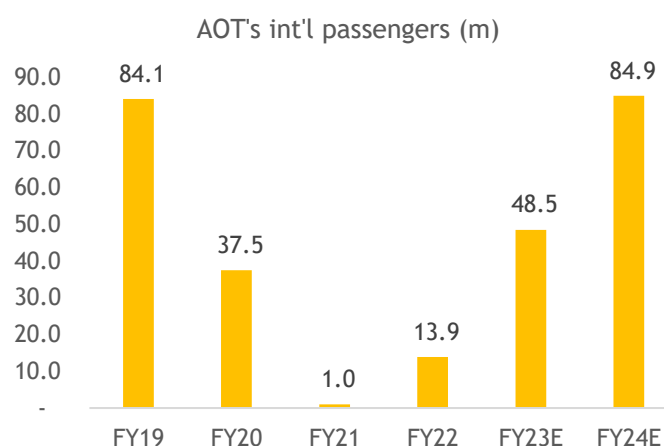
Source: MST

**Fig 16: Domestic travel has recovered ahead of international travel and hence, the growth should be less stark in FY23E**



Source: AOT

**Fig 17: International passenger recovery lags that of domestic and should be the growth driver of tourism in FY23E**



Source: AOT

## 5. AOT ends discounts to suppliers in FY23E

In line with AOT's guidance, we expect AOT's international passengers to grow 249% YoY to 48.5m in FY23E whereas domestic passengers should only rebound 44% to 47.2m due to the high base in FY22. We note that domestic travels has recovered before international travel and hence, there is less room for growth in FY23E. According to AOT's projections, both should recover to pre-Covid levels in FY24E.

The good recovery in international passengers should be particularly beneficial to AOT for two reasons. First, AOT earns THB700 per international passenger in terms of passenger service charge (PSC) compared to THB100 per domestic traveler. Second, AOT earns duty free from international passengers but not domestic travellers. From April 2023 onwards, AOT will receive THB233.40 per international passenger from King Power at Suvarnabhumi airport.

**Fig 18: King Power's duty-free concession will be based on the 'sharing per head' revenue model, with the highest revenue per passenger at BKK airport**

	Sharing per head (THB)
Duty free (BKK)	233.4
Duty free (HKT, CNX, HDY)	127.3
Commercial activities (BKK)	71.99

Source: AOT

Additionally, AOT will end the 50% discount to suppliers at its airports such as the 50% discounts to airlines for landing and parking fees as well as 50% discounts to tenants at its airport.

For these reasons, we believe that AOT can turn profitable in FY23E at THB11.5b, from a loss of THB11.2b in FY22E.

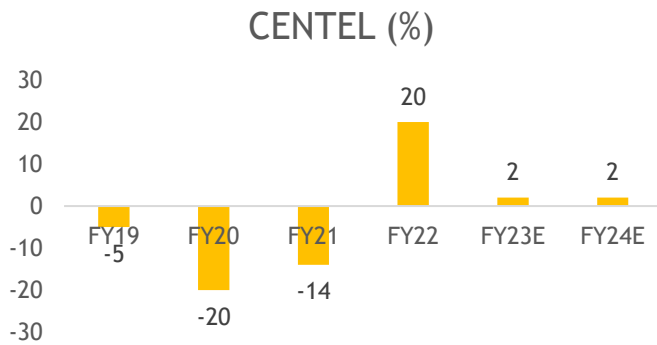
## 6. Restaurant SSSG could normalize in FY23E

Both CENTEL's and MINT's restaurants sales have surged in FY22, due to easing Covid in Thailand as well as in Australia where MINT also has restaurant outlets.

In FY22E, MINT's same-store-sales growth (SSSG) could be 8% less than CENTEL's 20% owing to its operations in China (6% of restaurant sales contribution) which have been affected by the lockdowns.

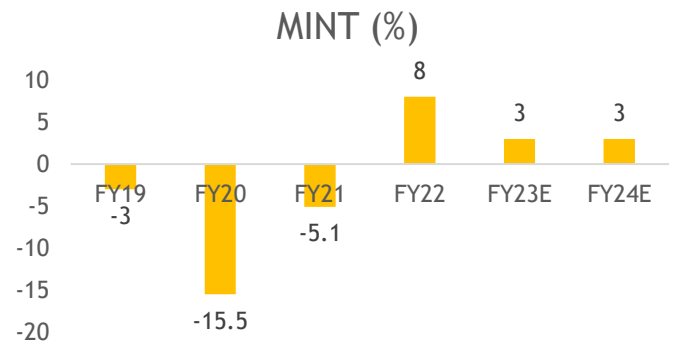
In FY23E, we expect MINT to register 3% SSSG higher than CENTEL's 2% due to the lower base in FY22E. We also expect MINT's restaurants in China to be relatively less impacted by lockdowns in FY23E.

**Fig 19: CENTEL's SSSG outperformed MINT's in FY22E due to its sole focus on Thailand...**



Source: CENTEL, MST

**Fig 20:.. whereas about 6% of MINT's restaurants are in China and affected by the lockdowns in FY22E.**



Source: MINT, MST

## 7. Financial analysis

After three years of deep losses, we expect Thai tourism names to turn profitable in FY23E as occupancy and room rates recover.

Despite this, we believe Thai tourism operators will not see their profits reach pre-Covid FY19 levels until FY24E. In our view, CENTEL could have the best earnings visibility (71% of pre-Covid FY19), followed by MINT (67%), AOT (47%), ERW (38%) and AWC (25%).

Given the recovery to profitability for all, we believe high leverage, especially in the case of ERW and MINT could be less of a concern. We expect all of the operators meet their debt covenants in FY23E.

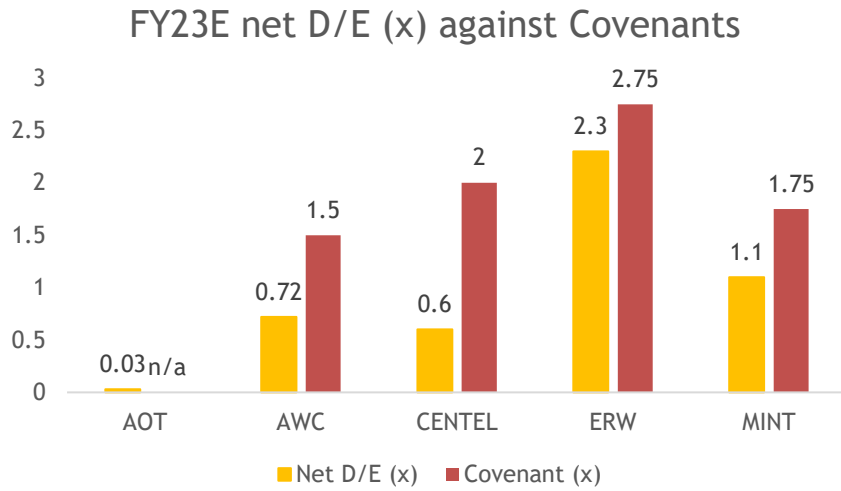
**Fig 21: All tourism names should post a profit in FY23E due to the further recovery in global tourism**

	FY23E core profit (THB m)	FY22E core profit (THB m)	Details
AOT	11,483	(11,169)	A turnaround in profit driven by international passengers as well as the end of 50% discount to suppliers at end of March 23.
AWC	163	(819)	Driven by recovery in international arrivals.
CENTEL	1,219	354	Driven by recovery in international arrivals. Restaurant business could see moderate growth given the high base in FY22E
ERW	174	(710)	Driven by recovery in international arrivals.
MINT	1,619	(9,552)	Driven by the continuous hotel recovery in Europe. Restaurant business could see moderate growth given the high base in FY22E.

Source: MST



**Fig 22: We expect all Thai tourism companies to meet net D/E covenants in FY23E**



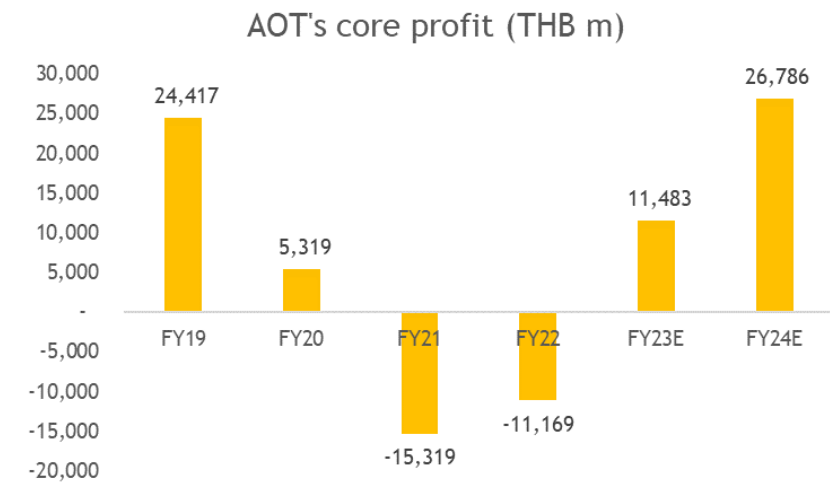
Source: Companies, MST

**Fig 23: Europe’s gas prices (as reflected through TTF) have declined sharply since peaking in August 2022, which could be beneficial to MINT’s profit**



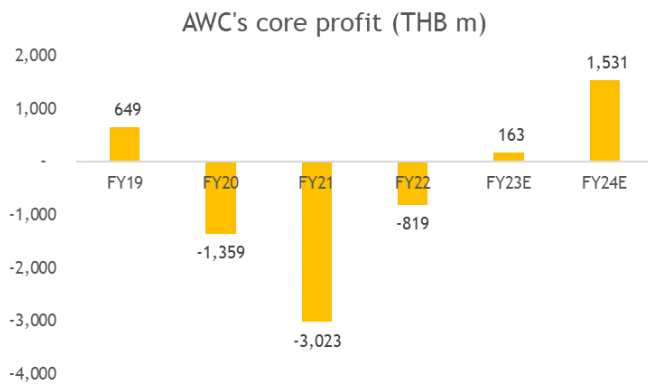
Source: Bloomberg

**Fig 24: AOT’s core profit trend**



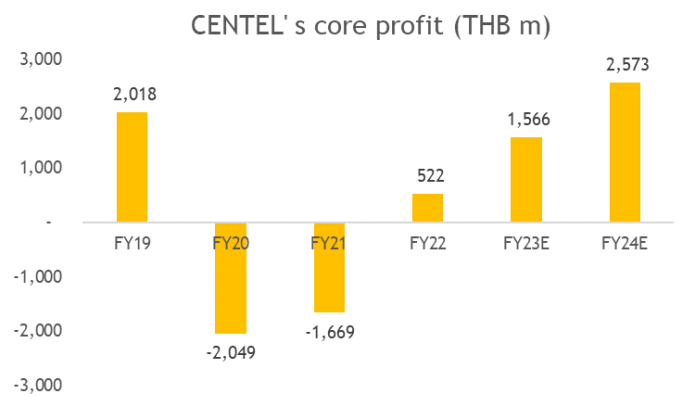
Source: AOT, MST

**Fig 25: AWC’s core profit trend**



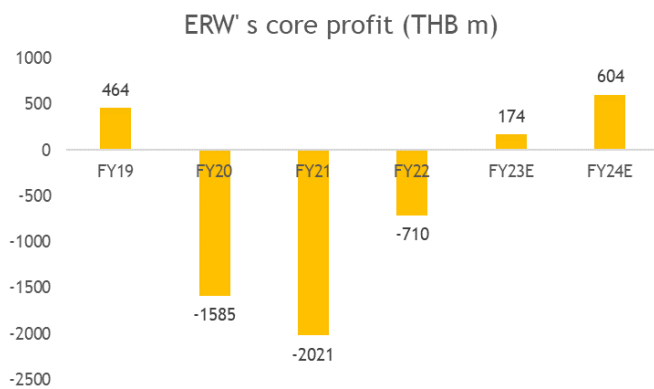
Source: AWC, MST

**Fig 26: CENTEL’s core profit trend**



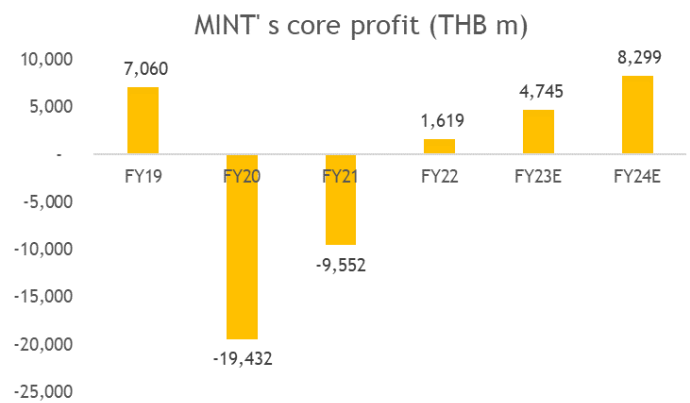
Source: CENTEL, MST

**Fig 27: ERW’s core profit trend**



Source: ERW, MST

**Fig 28: MINT’s core profit trend**



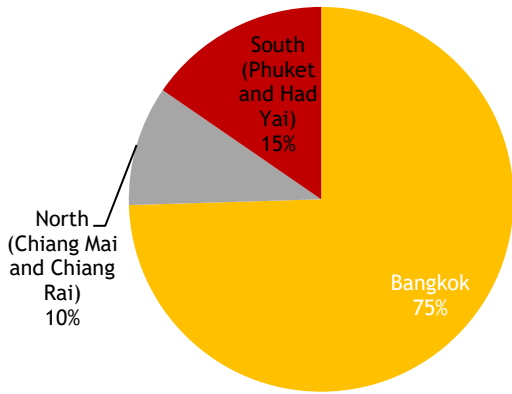
Source: MINT, MST

In terms of revenue structure, AOT and ERW earn nearly all of the revenues from Thailand and hence, should be the most to benefit if Thailand’s recovery is better-than-expected in FY23E, for example, if China reopens in early FY23E.

MINT has 49% of revenues from the hotels in Europe and could be exposed to the recession risk in Europe. However, we still believe that they have the best earnings visibility with the high profitability shown in 3Q22. Additionally, 50-60% of MINT’s visitors in Europe are domestic travelers that could be more resilient than Thailand hotels who cater mostly (80-90%) to international travelers.

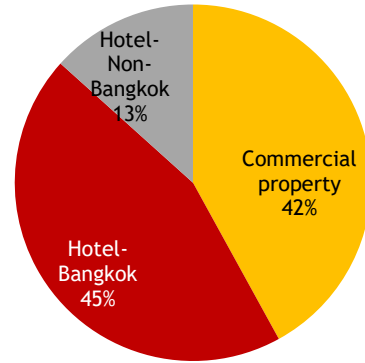
CENTEL has about 60% from the restaurant business that could be more resilient than the hotel business. As for AWC, the commercial property accounts for 42% of the revenues and could see steady recovery in FY23E.

**Fig 29: All of AOT's revenues are in Thailand**



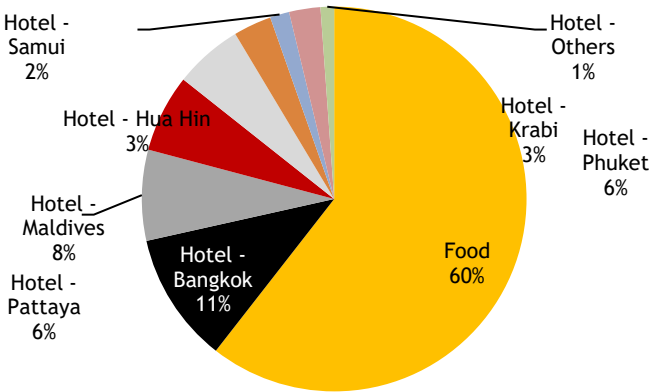
Source: AOT, Maybank IBG Research's estimates (by number of passengers)

**Fig 30: For AWC, about 58% of normalised revenues are from the hotel segment and it could be hurt by fewer international arrivals**



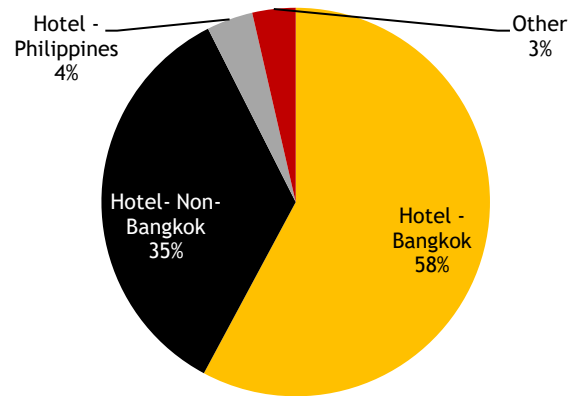
Source: AWC

**Fig 31: CENTEL's revenues could be the most resilient as 60% of normalised income is from the food business**



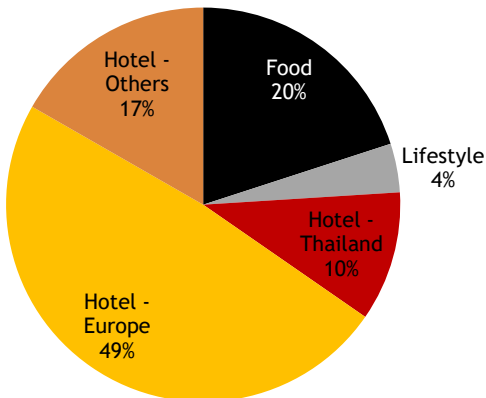
Source: CENTEL

**Fig 32: Nearly all of ERW's revenues are in the hotel business, most of which are in Thailand**



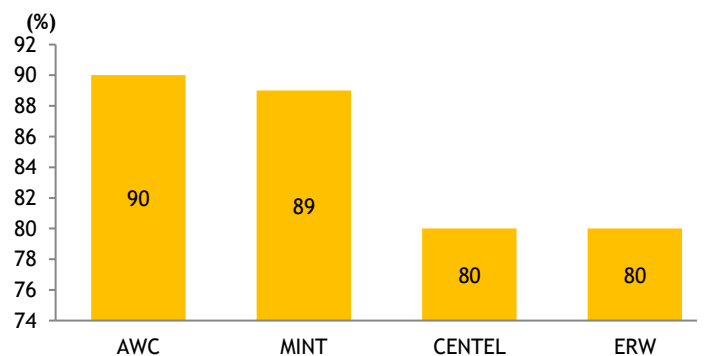
Source: ERW

**Fig 33: MINT's hotel business accounts for nearly half of total normalised revenues and could be the most impacted**



Source: MINT

**Fig 34: Hotels in Thailand rely significantly on international travelers, accounting for 80-90% of revenues**



Source: Company data (For MINT, this is Thailand)

## 8. Valuation and key risks

We use DCF (FY23E base year) to value all the Thai tourism names. We expect all Thai tourism names to return to profitability, but still be below their pre-Covid FY19 levels. We project all companies to return to pre-Covid FY19 profitability in FY24E. Yet, based on FY24E valuations, we feel ERW, AWC and CENTEL are overpriced, trading at 30.9-129.5x FY24E, when there is so much uncertainty about the recovery. AOT is trading at 39.2x FY24E P/E on par with its long-term average and thus, our HOLD recommendation. Only MINT has an undemanding valuation of 19.2x FY24E P/E, the cheapest among Thai tourism names under coverage. Coupled with the highest earnings visibility (reflected through the high core profit of THB2b in 3Q22, the best among Thai tourism names), it is our Top Pick in the Thai tourism sector. We also feel high gas prices (Fig 23) which are a key risk to its hotel operations in Europe, may be on a declining trend and this could be a positive catalyst to its share price.

The key risks are: 1) potential global recession which could hurt the Thai tourism recovery, and 2) especially for MINT, the high fuel costs in Europe which could be hurt its profitability.

Fig 35: Peer summary - 9 December 2022

BB Ticker	Name	Market Cap	Price	PE (x)		P/BV (x)		EPS Gr (%)		Div Yield (%)		ROE (%)		Share Price Performance			
		USDm	LC	22E	23E	22E	23E	22E	23E	22E	23E	22E	23E	1M	3M	6M	YTD
AOT TB	AIRPORTS OF THAILAND PCL	30,233	73.50	95.5	37.8	9.33	8.08	200.5	152.9	0.6	1.7	10.5	23.3	(3.0)	1.0	6.9	20.5
CENTEL	CENTRAL PLAZA HOTEL PCL	1,866	48.00	210.5	43.9	3.49	3.36	nm	379.8	0.1	0.7	1.5	8.2	(4.5)	1.6	12.3	53.6
M TB	MK RESTAURANTS GROUP PCL	1,525	57.50	32.9	22.7	3.89	3.79	1,198.1	44.7	2.8	4.0	12.1	16.8	0.4	(3.0)	12.7	10.6
MINT TB	MINOR INTERNATIONAL PCL	4,671	30.75	126.5	35.2	2.42	2.33	nm	259.7	0.0	0.8	2.3	7.0	(1.6)	0.8	(12.8)	7.0
ERW TB	ERAWAN GROUP PCL/THE	582	4.46	n.m.	63.7	3.54	3.39	79.3	nm	0.0	0.3	(8.0)	5.7	(0.9)	13.2	18.0	48.7
AWC TB	ASSET WORLD CORP PCL	5,713	6.20	344.4	137.8	2.46	2.46	125.2	(150.0)	0.4	0.3	0.6	1.8	1.6	5.1	25.5	33.6
SHR TB	S HOTELS & RESORTS PCL	410	3.96	n.m.	44.5	0.91	0.90	87.8	nm	0.0	0.8	(0.6)	2.0	2.6	3.1	(12.8)	32.0
DUSIT TB	DUSIT THANI PUBLIC CO LTD	274	11.20	n.m.	n.m.	3.61	3.76	59.9	87.5	0.0	0.4	(22.4)	(4.6)	4.7	(8.9)	14.3	10.9
VRANDA TB	VERANDA RESORT PCL	65	7.05	705.0	28.2	1.17	1.14	nm	2,400.0	0.1	1.4	0.2	4.0	(9.0)	(2.8)	(3.4)	13.7
69 HK	SHANGRI-LA ASIA LTD	2,847	6.19	n.m.	36.1	6.92	6.73	28.5	nm	0.0	0.0	(3.1)	1.8	30.4	0.0	(0.8)	(5.2)
Average (simple)						252.5	50.0	3.8	3.6	254.2	453.5	0.4	1.0	(0.7)	6.6		

Source: Bloomberg

## Appendix

### 9. 3Q22 recap and 4Q22 outlook

In 3Q22, all Thai tourism names were loss-making except MINT which registered a decent core profit of THB2b, owing to the recovery in its hotels in Europe. Thai hoteliers saw a good recovery QoQ, in terms of revenues, driven by the easing of entry rules since July 2022. However, EBITDA margins disappointed as costs soared especially for hotel operations. This was the main reason why they were loss-making, despite decent revenue recovery.

Fig 36: 3Q22 review

	Core profit (THB m)	% QoQ	% YoY	Details
AOT	-1,057	-40	-74	Narrower loss but still a loss as the 50% discount to suppliers still applied in this quarter.
AWC	-265	-31	-75	Narrower loss due to better RevPar but EBITDA margin missed
CENTEL	27	-16	-104	Narrower loss because of the recovery in the food business. Hotel EBITDA margin disappointed.
ERW	-11	-92	-98	Narrower loss due to better RevPar but EBITDA margin missed
MINT	2,010	67	-184	Better profit from the recovery in hotel operations in Europe.

Source: MST

In 4Q22, we expect all Thai tourism names to return to profitability as we expect revenues to recover substantially QoQ and YoY due to high seasonality.

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