

Botanic Gardens tops list of Asia's parks

By **MELISSA LIN**

THE Singapore Botanic Gardens, which the country is hoping will be put on Unesco's World Heritage Site list, was yesterday named Asia's top park by online travel site TripAdvisor.

The website also named the Singapore Flyer, which is in financial trouble, as the country's top landmark, followed by Orchard Road and the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum at South Bridge Road.

The website's inaugural Travelers' Choice Attractions awards, which were revealed yesterday, were based on the quality and quantity of millions of travellers' reviews throughout last year.

TripAdvisor's chief marketing officer Barbara Messing said the awards aim to "inspire travellers setting out on summer trips".

Universal Studios Singapore came in second behind Indonesia's Waterbom Bali in the ranking of Asia's top 10 amusement and water parks.

The Asian Civilisations Museum was also named the 12th best museum in the region.

The rankings may provide a timely boost for the Botanic Gardens and the Flyer for very different reasons.

Last December, Singapore launched a bid to get the 154-year-old Botanic Gardens, which has plans for a heritage museum and separate gallery on its grounds, listed as the country's first Unesco World Heritage Site.

There are currently 981 such sites on the prestigious list.

Indonesian tourist Anthony Yang, 24, who visited the Botanic Gardens last year, agreed with TripAdvisor's ranking of the park as Asia's No. 1.

"The area is quiet and big. I like walking around and exploring the attractions inside, particularly the Swan Lake and gazebos. It's hard to find a similar park in Indonesia," he said.

Meanwhile, the \$240 million Flyer was placed under receivership by its main lender last month.

Still, Mr Tim Reid of the Flyer's appointed recovery firm Ferrer Hodgson said he was "not at all surprised" by the Flyer's rating. "It's a fantastic asset for the country and will continue to be a major draw for locals and tourists under the new ownership," he said.

Parties interested in buying the attraction at Marina Promenade were invited to submit their expressions of interest by June 14.

Mr Reid added that the Flyer received "overwhelming response in expressions of interest".

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