



Lyon – A Fantastic Look at the Future for Rotomo(u)lding

NOTES FROM THE ROAD



» The Spectacular Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur

light dishes that highlight specific technology developments to main courses dealing with the impact of plastics on society and the environment to delicious desserts in the form of workshops on developments that will affect your future production and markets. My contribution will be to convince attendees that rotomolding truly can be ‘Fantastique!’ and to assist with the workshops on fuel tanks. It will be a powerful mix sure to leave your head spinning, but with something to satisfy everyone and leave you full (of ideas) with lots to digest.

The themes set for the conference are six areas of change which have been identified for the world at large: population explosion and

October will see the global rotomolding community converge on Lyon in the heart of France. Apparently the real reason we are going there is for the food. Of course, there will be a dash of rotomolding thrown in too, European style, but the real reason we’re heading there is that Lyon is considered to be the capital of culinary delights not just in France but the entire world (!). With more restaurants per capita than any other city in France, it appears to be quite famous for sausages (although the Andouillete version made from tripe is something that we might avoid) and we can look forward to such culinary delights as gratons (little snacks of deep fried pork grease). Yum.

Ah, ‘European style’, you ask. Yes, there is something different about conferences in Europe. We’ve had quite a few over the years from Brussels to Rome to Paris and they are always crammed full. The style is punchy and fast with lots of short information packed 15-20 minute slots. Over two days we will be presented with a 28 course menu ranging from

changing demographics; climate change and the environment; energy crises; expanding globalization; accelerating technological development; and disease prevention and longevity. The interesting challenge set for the rotomolding community is how to respond to these drivers in terms of new processes, materials and products, which help conserve scarce resources and improve the quality of life for as many people as possible. Rotomolding may be a small niche process but you may be surprised at how important it can be in many areas. And while the social pressure felt by molders to respond may be strongest in Europe, there can be no doubt that molders in every region around the world will have to react sooner rather than later. The ideal situation will be to develop paths which allow molders to respond competitively in profitable ways without simply adding burdens of cost to achieve well intended, though sometimes unrealistic goals. We shall see.

AFR, the French Rotomolding Association, has worked hard to involve as many people as possible including helping to organize visits to molder and supplier companies after the show. As a backdrop, the French rotomolding market is one of the more sophisticated with over 30 of the 60+ molders active in the association. The latest consumption figures are reported to be around 36,000 tonnes per year with a high concentration of molders operating in markets such as automotive, marine, environmental products and high-end furniture. The website for more information and registration is www.ARMO2012.org - look forward to seeing you for sausages in Lyon!

From Sausages to Noodles

Malaysia is an unusual place, and interesting. While tropical jungles, modern cities, a British colonial heritage and friendly people mark it as somewhere well worth a visit, it is the blend of Muslim, Chinese and Western-friendly cultures that make it one of the few places on earth where you might see Western and Iranian aircraft sitting on the same runway both delivering holidaymakers. Muslim visitors are welcomed by people who understand and respect their needs, but who also understand Western visitors and their style. Some people like the food but I can't say that it is my favorite place in the world - I still can't figure out why they leave all the bones in their chicken dishes

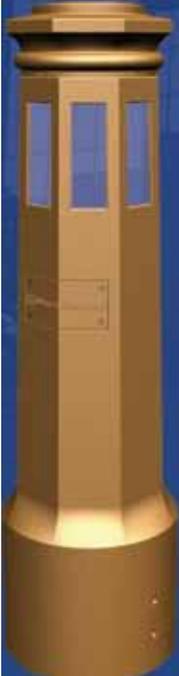
and eating off banana leaves is quaint but messy!

Central to South East Asia, it is highly accessible with most people speaking English as a second language - it is also well positioned to provide onward access to the surrounding region (half of the world's population can be reached by air within 6 hours). The appeal is clear for both tourists and business: low cost infrastructure, an educated population, proximity to the major shipping centers of Singapore and a functioning and open legal system (not to mention great beaches and low cost resorts).

The local rotomolding community is relatively small (there are around 40 molders consuming about 15,000 tonnes per year) dealing with typical rotomolding products at a basic to moderate level of quality. While a lot of the equipment used is open flame and home-made ovens, there are some molders using international machines and there is some technical support for molders through local suppliers. There is also growing interest from international customers and molders to develop higher end products to suit the requirements of international OEMs and also to supply products to surrounding countries, including China and India. Material is available from one major local producer but there is ready access to material from Thailand and Korea. Malaysia has lots of potential and lots of willing molders - somewhere to continue to keep an eye on for the future.

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