

VIETNAM: REPORTED TOURISM ACHIEVEMENTS UNRELIABLE



Tour operators remain unconvinced by the recently published figures of domestic and inbound tourism in Vietnam in 2012. The data seem to be "abnormally high" taking into consideration the current global economic crisis.

The V.N.A.T (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism) acknowledged 2012 to be a successful year particularly for the tourism sector stating that: the 32 million domestic travelers together with the 6.7 million tourists grossed a total of 160 trillion dong. Interesting thing about these achievements is the fact that they exceed targets which were set earlier on in the year.

Dai Don ket newspaper cited a report by the V.N.A.T which stated that: **numbers of foreign travelers coming to Vietnam went up by 11% in 2012.** The largest percentage of travelers representing the 11% were from Russia while the rest were from Finland, South Korea, Malaysia and Laos respectively.

The same report also stated that the total figures of domestic travelers rose by 8.3% consequently making the new gross revenue from tourism activities to rise to 23%.

Another interesting thing about these reports is the fact that when compared to the figures by General Statistics Office, there is difference. For instance, the actual numbers of travelers is reported to have only gone up by 9.5% - although this still shows that Vietnam received its record high for foreign travelers in 2012.

The United States Tourism Association (USTOA) came out in support of these reports that showed the potential of the Vietnam's tourism sector. USTOA reported that Vietnam was actually placed second among newly emerging destination choices. On the other hand, Vietnamese tour operators all of which affirmed to have had a tough year termed the reports and figures "unreliable".

Things get more interesting as Thanh nien, that organized a survey of the top 20 international travel firms, found out that not only did **the overall number of clients for travel firms significantly went down in 2012, profits per client equally dropped.** This has made travel firms strongly believe that the figures and reports released by V.N.A.T might have been fabricated.

Tuan Minh tourism and Trade Company's director Mr. Nguyen Kien Cuong argued that the total number for orders especially for international travel firms during the high season had significantly went down by as much as 40%.

Estimated incomes earned from foreign travelers might have also been countered twice in some cases. For instance, as the VNAT estimated the income it would receive from foreign travelers who come in by air, the transport industry on the other hand also entered into their accounts all receipts from the travelers' transportation services.

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