

VIETNAM'S FLOURISHING TOURISM DURING TRADITIONAL LUNAR NEW YEAR



During the Lunar New Year Holiday, a big number of both domestic and international visitors traveled across Vietnam indicating a bright outlook of the tourism sector in the country. State-run news agency of the country revealed that between Feb.9 and 17, Ba Ria-Vung Tau, Vietnam's coastal province, welcomed about 650,000 visitors with its many beautiful beaches, which was a 10 percent surge over the same period of the previous year.

The Sports, Culture and Tourism provincial department revealed that most of the visitors came from Japan, Russia and South Korea. At the same time, **Hanoi has welcomed 2.08 million visitors including 60,000 foreigners during the period, an 11 percent increase from 2012.** Between Feb. 9 and 18, Ha Long Bay, a world heritage site in the eastern Quang Ninh province, hosted about 350,000 visitors, up by 17 percent compared to same period in 2011.

During the same period, Da Nang city welcomed around 150,000 visitors with 48,000 being foreign visitors mainly from Australia, China, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and the U.S. Visitors mainly came to the city by air with sea routes increasing dramatically. A total of 5,160 foreign visitors came to the city by more than 40 flights during the initial three days, a 26 percent increase compared to the same period in 2012.

According to Vietnam's Saigon tourists travel Service Company, about 47 cruise ships with 42,000 tourists aboard will land at the Tien Sa port during the initial 4 months of this year, a 31 percent surge from 2012. The Deputy General Director of the Vietnam National Administration on Tourism, Nguyen Manh Cuong, said that **the international travel trend is currently shifting from the United States as well as Europe to Asia**, in particular the Asia-Pacific region.

Reaping the benefits of this shift, travel operators and accommodation providers in the country have in recent times been much more involved in promoting the country's image so as to attract more visitors. Vietnam has added around 500 accommodation facilities in 2012, including 60 accommodation facilities with 3 to 5 stars rating which are mainly found in the central parts of the coastal region. Moreover, travel operators as well as accommodation suppliers work with airline services closely to provide direct flights so as to facilitate attracting tourists.

In 2012, the tourism sector of the country hosted more than 6.84 million international tourists and about 32.5 million domestic tourists, earning 160 trillion Vietnamese dong (\$7.67 billion). But despite the results attained, the capability to advance the tourism sector is yet to be fully utilized because of a low budget as well as poor management. Vietnam's tourism sector presently has to face the hard truth that between 80 to 85 foreign tourists never go back to country after their first visit. The country's authority has to take drastic measures to deal with this issue.

In order to curb this, the prime minister of Vietnam has approved a master plan on Vietnam's tourism development to 2020. The overall objective to 2020 is developing tourism into an important economic industry with a lot of professionalism, modern and simultaneously-developed tourist infrastructure and variety of tourist products of high quality which are imprinted with unparalleled traditional cultural characteristics.

Its main objective is to create 7 tourism zones with particular tourism products and key tourist spots including 46 national tourist destinations, 41 national tourist spots and 12 tourist cities. According to Vietnam Administration of Tourism, the country set target to host around 10 to 10.5 million international visitors and 17 to 18 million local visitors by the year 2020 with a revenue of \$18-19 billion, making up 6.5 to 7 percent of Vietnam's total GDP.

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