

GROWING CAMBODIA TOURISM TO BE BOOSTED BY KHMER ROUGE ATTRACTIONS



Cambodia welcomed more than 2 million tourists in 2009. Tourism industry is to be boosted not only by innovations at Angkor Wat Temple but also by developing 'Khmer Rouge' tourism.

According to the recent report 'Tourism Highlights' released by the Cambodian government **the country's tourism sector has seen steady growth over the last 5 years, with an average annual growth of 16%, reaching a peak in 2009 of 2.13 million arrivals.** 15% of the visitors came from neighboring Vietnam, whereas Koreans accounted for 9% and Americans 7%.

The South Koreans have indeed aided the Cambodians not only by visiting the country, yet also by investing money into Cambodia. South Korea has provided \$9.2 million to build a new road around the Angkor Wat area. This much-needed piece of development is set to decrease traffic in the area, which subsequently reduces the threats made by noise and vibration to the ancient ruins.

Angkor Wat Temple built between 9th to 12th centuries is the most popular tourist attraction in the country. The archaic temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, adds to the outstanding level of cultural tourism offered by the Cambodians. More than half of the tourists who annually come to Cambodia visit the temple and spend the majority of their budgets in or around the Angkor Wat area of Siem Reap. The temple has provided a massive amount of help in placing Cambodia onto the tourism map.

Among other projects that the government wants to develop to lure more tourists is turning various sites connected with Khmer Rouge regime into tourist attractions. Thus the Fortress of the Khmer Rouge is planned to be open soon to foreign and local tourists. Also, the Anlong Veng region, the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge to come under government control in 1998 will become a historic landmark. Similarly, the final resting place of the leader Pol Pot is to be further developed as an important landmark. Visitors will be able to get acquainted with the history of the country, Khmer Rouge and the genocide.

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