

MALAY STATE PENANG BOOSTS ITS TOURISM INDUSTRY



Penang is the second smallest state in Malaysia and it is also the eighth most populous region of this South Asian federation. The island state is located on the north-west coast of peninsular Malaysia. It is one of Malaysia's main tourist draws. Penang is attractive for its rich multicultural history which is full of colonial and Chinese influences.

These days, the Malay government wants to boost the tourism industry in the northern region. There is the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) initiative that should help. According to Malay Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the core of tourism development initiative in the region will focus on raising the number of days tourists spend in the state and offering them unique products that make them spend more during their stay. There are various plans how to boost the tourism industry. State Tourism Development Committee chairman Teng Chang Yeow wants Penang to be a medical tourism centre. In fact, the island is already involved in the global medical tourism industry. "The number of foreigners coming in for medical tourism is very encouraging, with 200,000 of them seeking medical services in Penang last year." Mr. Teng said: "In the next three years, we are looking at 500,000 foreigners coming here to seek treatment and medical services." The state plans to promote its tourism and wants to bring people from all over the world. "We don't want to be satisfied with just luring tourists from the South-East Asia and Pacific region. We also want to capture the Western market, especially from Europe," Mr. Teng added. The medical tourism is not the only sector the state wants to expand. Mr. Teng claims that Penang is also very attractive for the MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) sector. He mentioned that the state will also see the hosting of more international entertainment events. "Penang already hosted four international festivals - the World Music Festival, the Island Jazz Festival, World Music Day and the International Ballroom Dancing competition," he added.

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