

# VIETNAM TOURISM BOOSTED BY NEW IMAGE



More and more foreigners visit Vietnam: during the first 9 months of this year Vietnam have welcomed 30% more tourists than last year. Tourism has so far accounted for USD 2.2 billion of the total USD 5.15 billion of foreign investments. The reasons for this success have been accounted to constant investments and new marketing strategy: Vietnam successfully create an attractive image in foreign markets, especially in Germany and Russia.

German tour operators have been using Vietnam as the rising star of south Asian tourism, and the number of Germans visiting Vietnam tripled between 1999 and 2005, reaching its highest at 64.488 last year. 460 thousands Germans are expected to visit Thailand this year, a figure the Vietnamese would like to have in their records.

Much effort has been made to emphasise Vietnam's friendly people, unspoilt nature, attractive beaches and cultural attractions. Tour operators have been striving to make Vietnam appear to be an untouched paradise, exactly like neighboring Thailand used to be many years ago before it was swamped with tourism. W.M Van Doorn, co-director of many Vietnamese tourism projects has recently stressed the importance of promoting "Vietnam now" as "like Thailand used to be" for potential visitors.

Similar efforts have been made in Russia as Vietnam has welcomed 54% more Russian tourists this year than last year.

The beach city of Vung Tau has benefited from the largest amount of foreign investment, seen as vital to the growth of the Vietnamese tourism industry. The American company Winwest has invested USD 300 million in a new modern hotel area, known as the Saigon resort, which has catered for 6.000 foreign tourists so far this year. Similarly, the American Platinum Dragon Empire has invested USD 550 million into the same city. These investments are intended to improve the quality of services offered to tourists and market the new country's image, finally tempting more people to Vietnam.

Vietnam hopes to welcome 5-6 million foreigners by 2010, earning an estimated USD 4.5 billion in the process.

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