

THAI TOURISM AWAITS 530,000 FOREIGN TOURISTS FOR THE THAI NEW YEAR



Thai tourism authorities announced that more than 530,000 foreign tourists are expected in Thailand to enjoy the festivities of Songkran, the Thai New Year, generating an income of 9 billion baht (about \$290 million).

This year the government has decided to add an additional day off (April 12th) and Thais will therefore enjoy five full days of vacation, from April 12th to 16th (April 13th is the date that traditionally marks the Thai New Year).

Thai travelers are expected to make up to 3 million trips themselves and spend 10 billion baht during the five-day holiday.

The TAT (Thai Tourism Authority) stated that tourists will spend, on average, three days in Thailand, to spend 5,500 baht per person per day.

Weerasak Kowsurat, Minister of Thai Tourism and Sports, said the forecast data from the TAT indicate that 530,000 foreign tourists will come to Thailand between April 12 and 16, which is 13% more than last year, with tourism revenues up 21% to 9.37 billion baht.

The number of tourists from Mainland China alone is expected to increase by 38% to 165,000.

The TAT also expects domestic travel to increase by 12 percent to 3 million, with accommodation spending increasing to 10.4 billion baht, an increase of 15 percent year-on-year.

The combined tourist revenue of locals and foreigners from the festival could bring in nearly 20 billion baht, 18% more than last year's holiday.

Market growth projections are based on advance bookings made with airlines: they are increasing for flights from France, Taiwan, South Korea, Russia, Australia, India, United Arab Emirates and Japan. But US bookings have dropped 9%.

In addition to advance bookings on regular flights, tourists also arrive in Thailand via charter flights and low-cost airlines.

For the domestic market, the government's tax deduction plan and extended five-day leave are intended to encourage more people to spend family time in the province or to visit secondary provinces.

Weerasak said the government will highlight Songkran in five secondary provinces - Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Kalasin, Chanthaburi, Sing Buri and Kamphaeng Phet - to increase the number of visitors to these lesser known places.

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