

THAILAND: TOURISM AUTHORITY REVISES THE 2019 FORECAST



The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has revised down its growth forecast for this year, bringing the estimated number of international arrivals to 40.2 million, below the 41.3 million targeted with confidence by authorities in early 2019.

The TAT also estimates that tourism revenue growth will be 9.5% instead of the previous 10%, due to the global economic slowdown, the strength of the baht, and rising fuel prices.

According to the governor of the TAT, Yuthasak Supasorn, **the sector's revenues should, therefore, amount to 3,380 billion baht (about US\$109.8 billion), rather than 3,400 billion (about US\$110.5 billion) as previously expected.** Of this total, 2,210 billion baht would come from international tourists.

The challenges surrounding Thai tourism are expected to ease over the next year, and the TAT marketing plans could help bring the sector's turnover to 3,720 billion baht (about US\$120.8 billion) in 2020, a growth of 10% year-on-year.

This target is particularly ambitious but achievable, says Yuthasak, as the TAT will focus more on segmentation and niche markets.

Cooperation with foreign travel agencies should also be strengthened to diversify opportunities and to facilitate the support for international travelers from their home countries, he added.

Rethinking Tourism in Thailand

The executive estimates that 42 million foreigners will arrive in Thailand next year, contributing about 2,430 billion baht (about US\$79 billion) to total revenue, or 65%, while domestic travel will account for 1,280 billion (approximately US\$41.6 billion).

"We need to rethink the marketing plan of the tourism sector, not by adopting a hasty approach, but by making it sustainable in the long term," he said. "The TAT is not aiming solely to increase revenues, but also to ensure sustainable development through a strategy that focuses on local experiences and encourages visitors to come back. "

Tossaporn Sirisamphan, Chairman of the tourism authority board, said **it was essential for the authorities to improve existing tourist destinations and offer new attractions that respond to global trends in order to maintain Thailand's status as a top destination.**

One of the goals for the country is to move from 34th to 30th place in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report by 2022, Tossaporn pointed. He added that the national tourism policy plan is focusing on promoting tourism in so-called secondary provinces in order to redirect revenues to local populations.

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