

HOI AN FACES THE CHALLENGE OF MASS TOURISM



The destination of Hoi An sees itself forced to take on many challenges in order to manage the influx of ever more visitors. Around 10,000 visitors a day enter the old quarter of Hoi An, a Vietnamese UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, its small surface area of one square kilometer is not suited to accommodate so many onlookers within it. The same goes for the rest of the city, where infrastructure and architecture are put to the test by mass tourism.

The challenges are numerous in terms of waste management, traffic jams, noise pollution, but also those related to fierce competition from vendors and tourist services. **Over a few years, the landscape of the gentle and tranquil city has changed: the streets are now crowded with tourists, street vendors and vehicles.** The peak occurs mainly between 15h and 21h with about 8,000 visitors, where even pedestrian areas are congested. It's difficult, therefore, to move about.

All these problems were discussed during a meeting of the professionals from the sector: managers of hotels, resorts, restaurants, and architects but also local administrations, in order to find solutions and improve the quality of the tourist services of Hoi An, who are struggling to deal with a growing number of visitors. In particular, the development of a database on tourism has been proposed. This database would make it possible to "identify the different classes of tourists who visit Hoi An, in order to propose solutions adapted to the problem of tourism overload".

Several proposals emerged from this meeting, such as the development of new infrastructure. However, as pointed out by the president of the Vietnam Association of Architects, Tran Tan Van, the ancient architecture in Hoi An is fragile and could be damaged by major works. Developing activities, as well as the nightlife around the old city, would offer other opportunities for visitors, rather than just going to the city center. It is also about opening more shopping centers, entertainment areas, art scenes, shops, night markets and pedestrian streets around the old city.

Some ideas stand out and would help reduce the peak of attendance in simple ways. The introduction of a 50% reduction on the city's admission tickets during off-peak hours from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. could better distribute the number of visitors, and thus significantly reduce the influx during the rush hours.

The environmental issue was also raised: Hoi An wonders about the clean-up efforts it has to make, especially in the Cam Thanh district and on the beach of An Bàng. **A major challenge when it's known that Hoi An collects around 33,500 tons of waste each year when there are no adequate treatment plants in the area.**

During the first nine months of the year, the city welcomed 1.7 million tourists, including 1.4 million foreigners, with a return of 198 billion VND (US\$8.6 million), a 28% increase compared to the same period last year.

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