

VIETNAM - RISING KING AMONG ASIAN CRUISE TOURISM DESTINATIONS?



It is well known that the most popular cruise ship destinations are in Caribbean, North America and in Europe. Nevertheless, there are also Asian destinations, that endeavor to capitalize on this business and Vietnam definitely belongs to them. Some 3.8 million travelers came to this country during the January to November 2007 period. Among these there were also 200,000 cruise ship tourists. Last year many cruise travel firms opened or resumed sea tours to Vietnam. Among the companies that operate the cruise ship businesses which include Vietnam as a destination is e.g. Star Cruises, Costa Crociere, Silversea Cruises or P&O Princess Cruises.

The development in this sector is also reported from some domestic travel companies. There were 40,000 cruise visitors among Saigontourists' customers during the period between January and November 2007. This was a 159% growth compared to the same period of 2006. Other tourism business player Tan Hong Tourism Company expects to welcome approximately 40,000 in 2008.

The country has ideal preconditions for a cruise tourism destination. It has 3,000 km of coast and thousands of beautiful islands. It is also located between Singapore and Hong Kong, which are the two important tourism centers of the region. Thus it is supposed that the Vietnamese cruise tourism will rise in the upcoming years.

According to the Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism Hoang Tuan Anh, Vietnam plans to attract 1 million cruise visitors in 2015. This development would make the cruise sector a generator of 10% of the whole Vietnamese tourism industry revenue. Nowadays, cruise sector accounts only for some 3-4%. There may, however, be some obstacles. According to the ASEAN Cruise Working Group, in 2015 there will be approximately 2 million cruise visitors in Asia. Vietnam also lacks proper infrastructure facilities and there are also problems with advertising and developing human resources for this particular sector of tourism industry.

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