

LAOS TARGETS 900,000 FOREIGN VISITORS IN 2022



The outlook of the tourism industry in Laos is positive after the country reopened to international tourists on May 9. As a result, the number of tourist arrivals has increased significantly over the past few months, giving the economy a much-needed boost in foreign currency.

More than 35,980 foreign tourists visited Laos in May and this number increased to more than 171,800 visitors in June.

Of the total 211,898 foreign tourist arrivals in Laos in the first six months of this year, **more than 60 percent came from Thailand, 30 percent from Vietnam and the rest from other Asia-Pacific countries.**

The full operation of the Laos-China railroad and the attractions of the Vangvieng landscape, the Luang Prabang World Heritage Site and the low value of the kip are among the main attractions for visitors from neighboring countries.

The high-end tourists from Europe, the United States, South Korea, China and Japan have not yet returned.

In Europe, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has had an impact that has contributed to the economic slowdown and inflation, while in China, the continuing Covid-19 restriction measures are preventing people from traveling. Other problems with air links to Laos are also hindering the rapid recovery of tourism and the service industry.

Tourism is one of the six important priorities for the socio-economic development of the country. Therefore, the Lao Ministry of Culture and Tourism has developed the Lao Tourism Development Strategic Plan for the period 2021-2025, which is part of the government's policy to promote the country's natural, cultural, historical and agricultural attractions to support "green tourism" and its sustainability.

In 2022, the government plans to attract 900,000 foreign tourists.

Tourism has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in a decline in the number of foreign tourists, while revenue generated from tourism has declined sharply in 2021 compared to 2020.

With the reopening of Laos, the service and hotel sector has started to recover, but very slowly. To compensate for the loss of revenue from foreign tourists, the government has tried to promote domestic tourism by launching the Lao-Visit-Laos campaign to encourage Laotians to travel within the country.

However, given the current economic situation and rising prices, it is difficult to target local tourists as a key driver of the service sector recovery.

Laos is largely a destination for long-distance tourists who also visit neighboring countries like Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. Therefore, the number of tourists coming to Laos highly

depends on various factors, such as the convenience of transportation, ease of departure and arrival, diversity and quality of tourism products, and safety and security.

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