

CRUISE TOURISM IS VIETNAM'S GOLD MINE



Vietnam has seen encouraging growth in the number of international arrivals by sea in the first quarter of 2023, showing that cruise tourism has great potential for development in this Southeast Asian destination.

According to Vietnam's General Statistics Office, in March, international arrivals to Vietnam by sea increased more than 2.8 times compared to the previous month. **In the first three months of the year, Vietnam welcomed 33,700 cruise passengers, 936.3 times higher than in the same period last year.**

Since the beginning of the year, a series of cruise ships, with thousands of cruise passengers on board, mostly from Europe and Asia, have docked at ports in Quang Ninh (North), Nha Trang, Đà Nẵng (Center), Bà Rịa-Vung Tàu, Ho Chi Minh City (South). The province of Khanh Hoà (Center), one of the most attractive localities for cruise passengers, is expected to welcome about 20 cruise ships by the end of the year.

According to Vietnam's 2020 Tourism Development Strategy and 2030 Vision, the country prioritizes the development of maritime and island tourism. Vietnam has many advantages to attracting international cruise tourism. The country has a coastline of 3,260 km, with more than 4,000 islands and islets, beautiful beaches, and especially deep-water ports.

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), cruise tourism generates 40% more revenue than tourism by air or road. The UNWTO expects cruise tourism to recover better in 2023 when the COVID-19 pandemic is under control.

However, experts pointed out some difficulties affecting the development of the cruise tourism segment in Vietnam, **including the lack of ports to dock cruise ships, experienced human resources and communication activities to promote cruise tourism.**

To exploit the "gold mine" of cruise tourism, experts called on coastal communities to develop policies to encourage businesses to invest in port infrastructure and develop new tourism products to better serve cruise passengers. Experts also stressed the importance of a development strategy and a master plan for the development of maritime and island tourism.

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