

21 million tourists, and still counting!

Phoowadon Duangmee

29, 2012 1:00 am

Amid rising country profile and strong performance in 2012, TAT expects to see 24.5 million arrivals next year

Thailand's international tourist arrivals reached the 21-million mark yesterday and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) now aims to achieve 24.5 million next year.

The 21-millionth international tourist this year was on Thai Airways International's flight TG 551 from Ho Chi Minh City, which landed at Suvarnabhumi Airport in the afternoon, according to the TAT, which described the achievement as promising for the country's tourism industry.

"We're confident that the number will increase a little more to 22 million by the year-end," said TAT Governor Suraphon Svetasreni, who presided over the ceremony at the airport's arrival terminal to welcome the 21-millionth international tourist.

International tourist arrivals, according to TAT, have increased 15 per cent from last year and earned the country more than Bt965 billion, a 24-per-cent rise from last year.

Seeing this promising trend, the TAT now aims higher for 24.5 million international tourists next year, and an estimated Bt1.14 trillion in tourist revenue, according to its press release.

Among the top-10 source countries for international visitors, China stays at the top, followed by Malaysia, Japan, Russia, South Korea, India, Laos, Australia, the United Kingdom and Singapore, according to the TAT.

"Asian tourists are still our main market, and we saw the number of arrivals through Suvarnabhumi and Phuket airports increase 35 and 47 per cent respectively in the first two weeks of December," the TAT governor said.

The Asean Economic Community will take off in 2015 but the idea of an "Asean zone" is already drawing many more

THAILAND: 21 Million Tourists And Still Counting – The Nation, December 2012

Asian tourists to Thailand. It has increased a strong sense of travel, and encouraged Asians to visit their neighbouring countries, he said.

"Our family often takes a holiday in Thailand. We love the beaches here, as they're more beautiful and well-organised than what we have back home in Vietnam," said Niculas Carlsson, a Swedish expatriate, who travelled with his Vietnamese wife and two children on THAI TG 551 from Ho Chi Minh City to Bangkok.

"Last year, we went to Phuket and now we are returning for a holiday in Samui Island."

Thailand's tourism industry is also wooing Russian tourists, who seek an escape from the cold winter at home, to the "tropical paradise" in Thailand.

Conde Nast Traveler, a respected travel magazine, recently released its annual reader survey, and the voting result spreads a positive image of Thailand to global readers.

Bangkok has become travellers' first choice among Asian cities, beating Hong Kong, Kyoto and Singapore. Chiang Mai, in Thailand's North, is ranked fifth in the annual Readers' Choice Awards.

In the Top 10 Islands in Asia category, Phuket is ranked second behind Bali, and Koh Samui is ranked fifth.