

THAILAND

Monday, September 24, 2007

The Kingdom of amazing contrast

A founding member of the Association of South East Asian Nations, the Kingdom of Thailand shares its borders to the west and north with Myanmar, to the northeast with the Mekong River and Laos, to the east lies Cambodia, and to the south Malaysia. Although only slightly larger than California, Thailand's geographical medley and tropical climate constitute one of the most dazzling and captivating travel destinations in the world.



Thailand offers an indescribable paradise for beach lovers and those seeking an idyllic getaway.

"The key to Thailand's popularity with tourists is its diversity," asserts Minister of Tourism, Suvit Yodmani. "We have a great deal of variety, whether we are talking about tourism sites, nature, heritage or whether we are talking about infrastructure."



SUVIT YODMANI
Minister of Tourism
and Sports

In Bangkok, the range of public transport alone sets the City of Angels apart from many other world capitals. Visitors are able to access the myriad attractions Bangkok has to offer by subway, by skytrain, by boat or by over-

land train. On a national scale, from the indigenous hill tribes in the northern province of Chiang Mai to the sun-drenched tropical idyll of the southern islands, Thailand's tourism offer lures a kaleidoscope of travelers, lending an international complexion to the colorful tapestry of the country. Famed for their open and welcoming nature, Thais carry a well-deserved reputation as genuinely friendly and open-minded

hosts. Naturally inquisitive, They are eager to embrace foreign cultures and are enthusiastic in disseminating their own – to the extent that a Thai household is anyone's castle.

"Homestay, where visitors stay with Thai families in their homes, is designed for the more intellectually inclined who are interested in learning more about communities and their way of life," explains Dr. Suvit. "Long-stay is also very popular in quiet places and seaside resorts. The friendliness of the Thai people is something that cannot be taught – it is in-

grained in the Thai culture. The warm family system and the notion of always being considerate to others are attitudes genuinely intrinsic to the Thai people."

Another facet of Thailand's international appeal is that of value for money. From the upmarket resorts on Phi Phi, Krabi and Samui to the beachside bungalows favored by backpackers and younger travelers, the quality of Thailand's tourism offer is second-to-none. Dramatic scenery blankets the country in a vibrant palette - verdant forested hills stretch away from calm, azure shores, water buffalo graze nonchalantly beside snaking rivers and mountainous trails cut through the clouds to reveal panoramas that have inspired and beguiled generation after generation of visitors – forming a canvas that long remains imprinted in the memory of those who experience Thailand's many wonders.

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Taking regional air travel to a new level

Serving more than 20 destinations in the region with a blend of style and diligence unmatched by its peers, Bangkok Airways is the epitome of boutique air travel

We are the pioneers in bringing new and exciting destinations – we call them ‘exotic gems’ – to travelers,” asserts Prasert Prasarttong-Osoth, CEO of multi-award winning Bangkok Airways, which next year celebrates its 40th anniversary.

Voted the ‘Best Regional Airline for Asia’ and the ‘Best Regional Airline for South East Asia’ in the 2007 Skytrax poll – exclusively voted for by passengers from over 93 countries worldwide – Bangkok Airways has many reasons for cheer ahead of its birthday. The saying goes that life begins at 40, but for

Bangkok Airways it will be simply a continuation of the excellence that already lauds it as an airline of distinction, and the natural choice of discerning travelers to the South East Asian re-

gion. Dubbed Asia’s Boutique Airline, Bangkok Airways has pulled out all the stops to ensure that its constituent parts are so much more than just a corporate moniker. Serving more cities in the region than any other carrier is mere logistics. Creating its own boutique airports, focusing on front-line service such as streamlined check-in, luxurious departure lounges designed for optimum passenger comfort, state-of-the-art aircraft, and helpful and friendly staff – these are the elements that re-



PRASERT PRASARTTONG-OSOTH
CEO of Bangkok Airways

ally set Bangkok Airways apart from the competition.

“It is very different from what low-cost airlines offer,” continues Dr. Prasert. “Their strategy falls into pricing, ours centers on quality services. This is our niche. We are positioning ourselves apart from low-cost airlines.

We are service driven and committed to giving our clients the most comfortable flight experience.”

That this is achieved at exceptional rates and delivered

through boutique class Airbus A320, A319 Boeing 717 and ATR-72 aircraft, with the added personal touch of specifically designed airports, is testament to the emphasis on individuality that Bangkok Airways is adhering to in an age of rentakit budget carriers.

“The boutique concept is a small store with specialized products,” explains Dr. Prasert. “In this respect we own three airports, namely Samui, a natural hub, Sukhothai, a cultural

hub, and Trat, also a natural hub. Each airport is designed to blend with the natural and cultural surroundings of its location. Samui has been designed to complement the tropical gardens and coconut groves in the area. Sukhothai incorporates traditional Thai architecture into its structure.” Bangkok Airways has been the recipient of countless environmental awards



Samui Airport’s new terminal is a showcase project.

for its efforts in this aspect – in addition to its use of the cleanest and most environmentally-efficient aircraft available.

The introduction in 2008 of Bangkok Airways’ ‘Blue Ribbon Club’ – its business class arm – will further serve to distinguish Bangkok Airways from its peers, and cement the company’s supremacy in regional air travel for years to come.

A unique way to discover Indochina

The ‘Mekong Visa’ is a mooted project close to the heart of Bangkok Airways. A single visa for tourists to visit the six countries that constitute the Mekong River area – southern China, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar – the Mekong Visa would be the Indo-Chinese version of the European Schengen agreement. The scheme would see a tourist visa issued in one of the six participating countries, with entry fees for any other member country a tourist wished to visit paid at the same time, saving time and red tape in equal measures. “I have personally talked with the leaders of some of the countries in the region, and most agree in principle,” states Dr. Prasert. “I think that by next year the Mekong Visa could be a reality.”

40th anniversary & environmental awareness

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of Bangkok Airways in 2008, the company plans to emphasize its commitment to environmental protection. It was awarded the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Monitoring Award in 2006 for the fifth consecutive year. The award recognized the achievements of Bangkok Airways for its work at Sukhothai Airport, where incentives including garbage management, the ‘Big Clean Day’ and organic rice farming for in-flight meals have garnered international praise.

“As an airline we cannot do a great deal but we can assure people that we are aware of the impact of global warming and in our own small capacity we will try to educate people,” says Dr. Prasert.

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Technicolor tourism

Thailand has been striving to increase the already broad diversity of its tourist potential, something the 'Seven Amazing Wonders of Thailand' campaign can only add to

Ranked consistently among the top ten worldwide destinations for its beaches, cuisine, entertainment, shopping, sports and leisure facilities, and in terms of value for money, Thailand is in a position to capitalize on the positive image it generates on the world stage. This year, Thailand will enjoy a projected influx of nearly 15 million arrivals, 18 percent greater than in 2006.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is eager to maintain this momentum and ensure sustainability, in line with the country's goal of becoming a leading quality tourism destination. "We have adjusted our marketing plan to concentrate on quality instead of quantity," explains Phornsiri Manoham, the authority's governor, "backpackers are still more than welcome, but we must avoid the cheap destination trap. Previously TAT concentrated on marketing and we are very advanced in this aspect, but as far as management of our tourism

product and related services are concerned, we need to do more. We will work with all the parties concerned to achieve this."

The foundation stone of the authority's drive to categorize and manage Thailand's tourist appeal is the Seven Amazing Wonders of Thailand, an umbrella term for the packaging of the country's main tourism attractions – Thai-ness, treasure, beaches, nature, health and wellness, trendiness and festivals – to be showcased under the slogan 'Amazing Thailand.'

'The availability of exotic jungle and beach settings, low production costs and a mature industry that provides experienced crew make Thailand an attractive location for international film makers'

"We believe that the 'Amazing Thailand' campaign reflects the country's ability to excite, awe and surprise visitors," states Mrs. Phornsiri. A similar

campaign in the late 90s under the same watchword was an unprecedented success. "I hope that visitors will see all parts of Thailand, not just the major destinations such as Phuket, Pattaya, Samui and Chiang Mai. We need to promote other Thai brands, our rich culture and variety of attrac-



Upmarket resorts such as Sri Panwa in Phuket are targeting a more discerning clientele.

tions, all the while operating within our sustainable tourism goals."

As well as highlighting Thailand's outstanding medical and health services, TAT has also targeted innovative, less traveled sub-sectors from golf and honeymoon packages aimed at the South Korean market to a campaign to appeal to female Japanese executives. Film makers are also being courted. Mrs. Phornsiri cites the array of celluloid history captured in Thailand, including the iconic 'James Bond island' in the "Man with the Golden Gun," and the lagoons and islands featured in "The Beach". Robert De Niro stalked through Thai forests in the "Deer Hunter", while Robin Williams bade Vietnam a 'Good Morning' from Bangkok.

Homestay on holiday

In today's world, the beaten track is ever more covered by carbon footprints. Credit then to Thailand's Ministry of Tourism as it seeks to exploit its natural advantages and ease pressure upon its valuable resources. Innovations in tourism are increasingly rare as the global market relies on cheap packages, but in Thailand the exception to the rule exists. Homestay is the result of a determined shift towards green tourism in the Kingdom, and an attractive prospect for those travelers seeking a culturally enriching experience – with ancillary benefits in revenue and infrastructure reaching rural areas. Minister of Tourism Suvit Yodmani has pioneered green resorts and inaugurated the Thailand Tourism Awards to promote sustainable development within a framework of environmental protection and community-based tourism development. The awards are intended to honor the work of the industry in realizing this goal.



Bangkok Convention Center at CentralWorld, the capital's new, fully integrated convention venue.

MICE roars at Tiger economy

Thailand, with its geographical location in the heart of the Asias and its sound national infrastructure, is keen to take advantage of sustainable growth in the regional Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions (MICE) sector. The Kingdom has no shortage of products, services and facilities perfectly suited to the needs of meeting planners and trade show organizers. Visa-free accessibility, increased frequency of direct flights between the U.S. and Bangkok, world-class convention

venues, quality hotels and serviced apartments mean Thailand is well placed to become a prime international business destination. Significant growth in this sector was the impetus for the establishment in 2002 of the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) to act as a coordination and facilitation center for MICE business operators. TCEB offers an integrated 'one-stop' service for organizations involved in the hosting of conferences and exhibitions in Thailand.

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A sporting paradise

Professionally designed golf courses, new stadia, the Asian Cup, ATP Tour tennis - Thailand is heaven for sports enthusiasts

With the wealth of sports and outdoor activities on offer in Thailand, visitors seeking a more active holiday are sure to be spoiled for choice. Whether it be rock climbing on the spectacular limestone cliffs around Krabi, scuba diving in the crystal-clear waters of the Andaman sea, or a round of golf on one of the country's numerous championship standard courses, Thailand caters for sports enthusiasts from across the board.

Golf is one of the most popular sports in Thailand, boasting courses by renowned designers such as Jack Nicklaus, Arnold

Palmer and Gary Roger Baird. Perfected modern layouts using the best grasses and the latest techniques added to spectacular surroundings make for some of the most attractive courses on the planet.

In addition to being an ideal destination for recreational sport, Thailand is increasingly playing host to top flight international competitions and tournaments. Taking advantage of the Kingdom's excellent sporting facilities, Thailand this year welcomed several events, including the Asian Football Confederation Cup which was held in July, and the 24th World University Games staged in Bangkok in August.

This week's Thailand Open Tennis Tournament is expected to



The Johnnie Walker Classic in Phuket attracts the world's top golfers.

feature a number of the world's top ten players including Rafael Nadal and Andy Roddick – although local favorite Paradorn Srichaphan is absent through injury. Outside of Bangkok, the World Weightlifting Championships are being held in September in the northern town of Chiang Mai and in December,

Nakhon Ratchasima Province will host the 27th Southeast Asian Games. A 20,000-seat, \$65-million sports complex has been built specially for the Games, which will feature more events than the Olympics and coincides with the 80th birthday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

www.bangkoktourist.com

Bangkok is a world-class metropolis and entertainment center that will fill your senses with dazzling colors, delicious flavors, aromatic flowers and silky textures. Shopping, eating, wandering, watching and even just relaxing in this city, which was voted Asia's 1st and the world's 3rd Top Visiting Places consecutively year after year by Travel & Leisure magazine, is unlike anything you've ever experienced. Home to some of the world's top hotels, vibrant and cultural nightlife, famous cuisine and unbeatable shopping, Bangkok is a travel destination in itself. Come and see for yourself what the buzz is all about!

Siam Bangkok Thailand

The Charms of Bangkok

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Bangkok: a top-tier tourist destination

Bangkok's international stock has never been higher as innovations in public transport, ancient wonders, modern lifestyles and world renown attest

Bangkok's ceremonial name is listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the longest place name in the world, but two sobriquets stand out: the City of Angels and the Happy City. Famed for the cheerful disposition and open-mindedness of its inhabitants, Bangkok is also renowned across the globe for its amazing architecture, monuments, diversity and cosmopolitanism.

The home of the Grand Palace and the Emerald Buddha, Bangkok is the spiritual and commercial center of Thailand, and has been ranked as the world's third-best city for two years running by Travel and Leisure magazine. A bestir of colorful markets, wats and pagodas and vast

shopping malls that stock everything it is possible to imagine, Bangkok is a tantalizing blend of the traditional and the avant-garde. Buddhist monks sing as they zig-zag through throngs of shoppers, and customary courtesy and contemporary service pervade throughout the city. The Chatuchak market is a glimpse into the time-honored lifestyle of Bangkok; Siam Square, Paragon and Central World, a timely reminder of the city's place in global culture.



APIRAK KOSAYODHIN
Governor of Bangkok

Dubbed the 'Venice of the East', Bangkok's labyrinth of over 1,000 canals provide a vital logistical artery for traders and a unique experience for tourists, while the Chao Phraya river rivals the Seine and the Thames as a landmark. The epicurean delights of Bangkok's

nightlife vie for attention with cultural extravaganza such as theatre, dance, and music. The aroma of its world-famous cuisine



At the heart of Bangkok's progress plan is a balance between history and development.

diffuses the air, mingling with exotic strains of traditional luk thung and mor lam, the popular music of Thailand.

"We have successfully created a balance between development and history," explains Apirak Kosayodhin, Governor of Bangkok. "We think it is important not to lose sight of where we came from. While we have a bustling city, we also have the majestic and scenic heritage for which Bangkok is famous. We offer a different and exciting tourism experience, and people can choose which kind of Bangkok experience to have. All of this, combined with Thai hospitality, is designed to make visitors feel at home."

Bangkok makes green progress the new gold

Having attended the climate summit organized by Bill Clinton in May this year to put pen to paper on an agreement to combat climate change and the greenhouse effect, Bangkok is one of the 40 major cities worldwide at the forefront of the battle against global warming. The announcement of a five-year plan was made after the summit, drawing on the issues and proposed solutions brought up there.

Focusing on the championing of public transport to reduce traffic pollution, the utilization of cleaner fuel sources, the reduction of waste and better management of refuse, and the creation of more open spaces in the city to reduce the impact of CO2 emissions, the plan calls for one million trees to be planted annually with a view to a thirty percent increase in green areas by 2012. It also involves the installation of energy saving lightbulbs in all public buildings.

The project will give the city a foothold on the way to a cleaner, sustainable future, and the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority is working with the World Bank to finance these measures, aiming to become a global example in terms of responsible city planning and management.

Infrastructure in focus

In the last decade Bangkok has endeavored to make significant changes to its make-up, especially in infrastructure—culminating in the construction of the new Suvarnabhumi Airport and the completion of the city's Skytrain. Plans to extend the subway system further still are underway. Many visitors to the city are taking advantage of the world-class facilities at the Bumrungrad International, Samitivej and BNH hospitals. Digital infrastructures and communications have been brought into line with the most developed countries in the world; this too helps to benchmark in-



ternational standards in public services.

In addition to infrastructure, Bangkok has been nurturing its reputation as a world city. More and more expatriates are making their homes in the Thai capital,

lending the city a cosmopolitan, international feel.

"The destination 'Made in Bangkok' has become synonymous with quality," says Apirak Kosayodhin, the city's governor. "Bangkok's role as a national and international trendsetter is a strength that can help to define its image and position on the world stage."



Discover, Celebrate, Relax

amazing THAILAND

We won't deny that Thailand is a land of pristine beaches, lushly forested mountains, exciting cities, ancient temples and delicious cuisine.

But did you also know that there are world-class resorts, golf courses and spas, as well as exceptional diving, shopping and entertainment?

His Majesty the King's 80th birthday is the perfect time to visit one of the world's most beautiful and exciting countries. With celebrations planned throughout 2007, why not come discover Thailand now?

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