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TAT OFFICIALLY LAUNCH "VISIT AMAZING THAILAND 2009"

TAT OFFICIALLY LAUNCH "VISIT AMAZING THAILAND 2009"



Bangkok, 8 October 2008 – The "Visit Amazing Thailand Year 2009" was officially launched today at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre as the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), THAI Airways International and partners joined forces to welcome more than 1,000 delegates who will be touring the Kingdom in line with the Invitation to Visit Amazing Thailand 2009 project.

Invitation is a project initiated as part of the Visit Thailand Year 2008-2009 to increase inbound tourism traffic as well as encourage locals to travel within the country instead of going abroad. However, as the tourism industry has been through a series of backlashes including the oil price crisis, political unrest and the current slump in the financial sector, Invitation becomes more than just an ordinary project that will face the challenge of boosting up the current slowdown in tourism.

"The success of the project is considered a big mission for the country, which is why a total of 62 agencies have joined forces to make it happen," according to Mrs. Phornsiri Manoharn, TAT's Governor.

Invitation largely involves the biggest Mega Familiarization Trip campaign ever in Thailand offering 30 routes as travel options for invited press members and operators: 14 in the Lower and Upper Northeast, and 16 in the North and Andaman. During 9-13 October, they will be travelling along their chosen route, each of which was created based on the "7 Wonders of Amazing Thailand" concept.

TAT initially received participants from 49 countries. Out of 1,049 delegates, visitors from ASEAN, the South Asia and South Pacific represent 31.55%, or 331, of the invited participants, followed by those from Europe and East Asia, representing 30.50% (320) and 29.45% (309), respectively and America 8.48% (89). Participants will have a chance to visit the attractions and destinations of Northeastern Thailand, Northern Thailand, and the Andaman region. Interesting tour programmes offered include World Heritage at Khao Yai; Youth & Family covering attractions for all ages in Nakhon Ratchasima; Colour of Heritage in Chiang Mai; Elephant Life Experience; and Extreme Adventure where participants will enjoy river rafting.

Following the announcement of the co-branding between THAI Airways International and TAT, Apinan Sumanaseni, President of THAI, said "As THAI is one of the first agencies to promote Thailand's tourism



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industry, the national carrier will continue playing a vital part to stimulate the tourist influx to revive the currently dormant travel

business. It will join forces with TAT on a sustainable basis to ensure uninterrupted development from now on."



Prior to the first 7 months of 2008, the industry had been performing relatively well. In the first seven months of this year, foreign visitors to Thailand totalled 9.14 million, a rise of 12.65% from the same period last year. European visitors totalled 2.49 million, up 8.9%, with East Asia up 15% to 4.85 million and South Asian visitors totalling 499,988, up 11.47%. US visitors totalled 580,629 up to 10.16%, with a similar rise from other parts of the Americas.

As the private sector in the south of Thailand encouraged TAT to include Phuket into the campaign, the Andaman route covering island visits and sea activities, chosen by over 100 delegates, was later added to the initial programmes to the North and Isan, or the Northeast. The latter was chosen as one of the highlights following the announcement of the "Visit Isan Year 2008-2010". Invited participants who choose to explore the Lower Northeast region will be joining the "Visit Isan Year" press conference in Nakhon Ratchasima on 11 October, while those selecting the route in the North will be attending the 4th Chiang Mai and North Tourism Forum (CTF 2008) organized on 10 October to promote the capital of the North as the aviation hub of the Mekong Sub-region, before embarking on their preferred trip for the next three days.



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