ASEAN Tourism Ministers Stir the Pot for Gastro Tourism in Southeast Asia for 2018

Robust tourism results for 2017, and plans for gastronomic tourism in 2018 among the highlights of ATF 2018 and the 21st ASEAN Tourism Ministers gathering

CHIANG MAI, THAILAND – The ASEAN Tourism Forum ended on a high 26 January, with ASEAN tourism ministers itemising a list of achievements for the region's robust travel and tourism sector.

Lauding the completion of a strong VisitASEAN@50 campaign in 2017, which generated a better than expected response, ASEAN's 10 tourism ministers were optimistic about new marketing campaigns for ASEAN tourism in 2018 and beyond.

The ministers revealed the following new priorities.

There will be a new emphasis on promoting the many aspects of gastronomic travel, as outlined in the minsters' Joint Declaration on Gastronomy and Tourism. The declaration notes that, "gastronomic tourism helps to create a strong sense of place for branding and marketing destinations, and also assists in maintaining and preserving local heritage and identity, and protecting biodiversity".

Cruise tourism will be developed further due to its high economic impacts. There will be renewed focus on the effectiveness of destination management, specifically environmental and social issues and the welfare of local communities that cruise tourism touches.

Cross border bus and coach traffic will also be promoted further, following an agreement by ASEAN Transport Ministers to ease restrictions. The ministers noted that recommendations from studies on recognising domestic driving licences in neighbouring ASEAN countries could boost tourism significantly, especially if there were road enhancements along major tourism corridors.

Ministers noted that the quality of work supplied by tourism professionals throughout Southeast Asia will continue to rise, in part, due to the completion of all 242 'toolboxes' for job training. Jakarta will host a permanent secretariat in order to improve and unite tourism industry standards across ASEAN.

Positive Legacy of VisitASEAN@50 Campaign
The Tourism Ministers at ATF were buoyed by public and travel industry response to VisitASEAN@50 campaign in 2017. Based on preliminary figures from member states, ASEAN is expected to receive 125 million international visitors, exceeding the target of 121 million international tourist arrivals to the region set for VisitASEAN@50.

If confirmed, this new record will indicate a growth of 8.4 per cent from 2016. Arrivals were dominated by intra-ASEAN travel, accounting for 42 per cent of total international arrivals.

Targets for length of stay and revenue were also achieved, with ASEAN averaging 7.98 days of stay for international tourists, generating an estimated US$93 billion from tourism in 2017.

“As we celebrate this most recent success,” said Weerasak Kowsurat, Minister for Tourism and Sports of Thailand, who chaired the Ministers’ meeting, “we still recognise the scale of the task before us and the urgency in enhancing our competitiveness to achieve sustainable development. We must therefore ensure that we unite to create the synergy which brings about inclusive growth and that none of us is left behind.”

ATF 2019 will be held in Halong Bay, Viet Nam in January next year. The 2020 edition will be in Brunei Darussalam.

###

Further information
Visit www.aseantourism.travel

ASEAN Tourism Competitiveness Committee:
contact: atmcwg@gmail.com

ASEAN Secretariat:
contact: eddy@asean.org