

Laos Ready to Host Ecotourism Forum in Pakse



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Post-forum trips visit the world's widest waterfall and the Four Thousand Islands wetland area

PAKSE in southern Laos will be the venue for the ASEAN Ecotourism Forum 2016, 22-25 June, 2016. The event is being organised by the Lao PDR government in its role as the chairman of ASEAN in 2016.

The forum includes a two-day conference with an ASEAN ministerial roundtable, followed by a choice of two tours in southern Laos, one of them is to Khone Pahpheng, at 10 km across, the world's widest waterfall.

The forum will address the theme, "ASEAN Without Borders: a Roadmap for Strategic Development of Ecotourism Clusters and Tourism Corridors."

At the end, tourism ministers will adopt a Pakse declaration that will aim to align the region's ecotourism destinations. The declaration will call for an ASEAN coordinated roadmap for both public and private sectors to pool resources and unlock economic opportunities along designated tourism corridors. The aim is to stimulate the flow of ecotourism tourists across borders whether by land, river, air or sea.

"Intra-ASEAN travel will help to generate economies of scope and scale, especially in the rural areas and strengthen the sustainability of ASEAN's ecotourism industry," said Dr. Bosengkham Vongdara, Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR.

"The forum comes at an opportune time for international tourism investors, developers and operators to tap in to the exciting tourism opportunities ahead in the region," he said.

Lao PDR has placed a great focus on ecotourism over the past 12 years. In 2004, the Lao National Tourism Administration issued a National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan.

In 2009, Laos hosted the first World Ecotourism Conference. It produced the Vientiane Declaration on Ecotourism for Developing Countries. The declaration was endorsed by UNWTO. It emphasised the commitment of ecotourism stakeholders from over 30 countries, mainly from Asia and the Pacific, to support sustainable tourism principles and practices.

Speaking on the expected outcomes from the 2016 ecotourism forum, getting the balance between conservation and sustainable development right will require coordinated effort, said Minister Bosengkham.

"Such an undertaking will require the concerted efforts of all ASEAN Member States as well as the support and expertise of ecotourism practitioners, authorities, ground operators and investors," he said.

Speakers from institutions such as the World Wildlife Fund, the Adventure Travel Trade Association, the Asian Development Bank, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and Birdlife International will attend. Apart from ASEAN region, speakers will join from Europe, Latin America and the United States.

For further information and registration for the 2016 ASEAN Ecotourism Forum, visit <http://www.aef2016laos.com/>

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For editors, images of ASEAN destinations and tourism leaders can be downloaded at <http://www.scottasia.net/clients/asean/media/>.

Further information

Visit www.aseantourism.travel

ASEAN Tourism Competitiveness Committee:

contact: atmcwg@gmail.com

ASEAN Secretariat:

contact: eddy@asean.org