



Message from the Chairman

When a global health emergency was declared in January 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO), with the outbreak of COVID-19, the entire world went through an unimagined paradigm shift as never experienced in the recent past. Everything, which was believed to be unrelenting and enduring, was proven otherwise by the said novel coronavirus. At times, it is fascinating to witness, how a life form, not even visible to the naked eye held the entire world still, and how we fought in resilience to overcome these challenging times.

As reported by WHO, by the end of June 2020 the virus has infected over 10 million people and caused over 500,000 deaths worldwide. According to the reports released by WHO, a steep rise has been identified in the daily reported cases in the regions of Americas, South East Asia and Africa.

To date tourism sector continues to be the most affected industry from the coronavirus. This is mainly due to the fact that the industry is based on the interaction amongst people. This could be seen where the key strength and the greatest asset of the industry being its greatest downfall; where human interaction being the greatest threat imposed on the sustainability of the industry in these prevailing conditions. As a result, international tourism has been halted, and domestic tourism has been curtailed by lockdown conditions imposed in many countries.

An industry such as Tourism could not be automated because its sustenance is reliant on the experiences that are created which is only possible through the flair of the people involved. The human capital stands to be the greatest asset of an industry in a business where experiences are traded and memories are sold. It is also the main reason behind the multiplier effect of Tourism.

According to UNWTO records, the industry employs around 54 percent of women, which makes them one of the most affected and most vulnerable segment of the Industry. It also makes them mostly exposed to shocks along with the young workforce, as women are more likely to be entrepreneurs in tourism than in other sectors.

With the ever-evolving nature of the virus, future forecasts on recovery or any estimates on the total impact on the industry could not yet be made. Nevertheless, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has estimated international tourism to decline by 80% overall in 2020.

In certain regions, the industry has started to revive slowly through domestic demand, which has enabled to sustain jobs and livelihoods, but this is also affected largely through the impact arising from the second wave of the virus. It is very important for individual travelers to take utmost responsibility and all the necessary steps to protect themselves and others.

Travelers should familiarize themselves with the basic prevention practices that should be applied while travelling and in the day-to-day life as per the regulations issued by WHO for the general public. These include: regular hand-washing, normal cough etiquette and avoiding travel between isolated areas and to avoid coming into contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections.

Meanwhile it is vital to protect a healthy business and its people in the short-term, as we have limited capability to draw up strategies for long-term given the volatility of the situation.

The governments and private enterprises should work together to identify all the shortfalls in the regulations and protocols to safeguard the employees whilst protecting the businesses from the effects of any type of shock that could be imposed including unforeseeable circumstances as such. Enterprises should also identify aspects of the business that could benefit from sustainable approaches such as sustainable energy generation, rainwater harvesting and sustainable food consumption. These initiatives will certainly benefit any enterprise not only during adverse circumstances but also in the long-run in normalcy.

The key question is, how much time will be required for the industry to bounce back, once the imposed travel and health restrictions are lifted. This is an unprecedented blow to the entire world and the industry requires immediate action to prevent entire sectors from being wiped out, which are likely to recover even though it may not be in the recent future. We need to assess and identify what sectors of the industry could be further salvaged. It further raises the question, whether the industry will have its resilience to regain momentum after these unprecedented times even with the support of regulatory bodies and with the support of the international community.

The immediate issue for tourists will be the need for post-pandemic quarantine on arrival. The need for arrivals to self-isolate for two weeks would be a major barrier to travel.

Several countries have lifted this requirement already. There needs to be a careful and coordinated approach between source and destination countries with the commencement of travel. A common set of rules related to departure and arrival procedures and sanitation requirements for air travel would be highly beneficial. In the medium and longer term, governments should support economic diversification where possible. As these prevailing situations have made it evident that, high dependence on one sector increases vulnerability.

For some countries, diversification away from tourism may be difficult. Avenues for economic diversification may include increased regional integration, education and training programmes within targeted economic sectors to boost resilience and mitigate the cost of impact.



What Travelers Want to Hear From the Tourist Industry

By Richard Levick, Chairman and CEO of LEVICK



A pedestrian with a mask stands in front of a cruise ship during the COVID-19 lockdown in Cuxhaven, Germany. Post-pandemic travelers will demand that the industry embrace state-of-the-art health and safety standards. Photo: David Hecker/Getty Images

No business sector has been disrupted by COVID-19 more than travel and tourism. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, 75 million to 100 million travel and hospitality jobs have been lost or affected worldwide since the pandemic hit. Given the industry's multiplier effect across the globe, the economic and human toll is almost incalculable.

The industry's initial public pronouncements on COVID-19 were unfocused. In the span of about 10 days in mid-March, the public statements from too many of its leaders went from "Everything's fine," to "Well, maybe some precautions are in order," to "We're shutting everything down." These inconsistent statements undermined the industry's credibility, which is always the key element in any communications campaign.

Legal Jeopardy

Since that bumpy start, the messaging has been sharper, but the industry's short-term prospects remain daunting. Its legal liability exposure amid the crisis remains pronounced, despite encouraging developments in California. Two recent rulings dismissed lawsuits initiated by passengers who allegedly contracted COVID-19 while on cruise ships. These decisions suggest that it may be difficult for the plaintiffs' bar to prove causation on COVID-19 cases. But that doesn't

mean industry businesses can relax — far from it. They remain a target.

Indeed, the industry's outlook is not likely to improve in the foreseeable future, not with pandemic legal fears, omnipresent social distancing requirements, ship and airline travel bans, corporate travel cutbacks and huge events being postponed and canceled.

Desperate for More Government Help

"It is critical that leaders in Washington resume talks and move forward on much-needed coronavirus-related economic relief," U.S. Travel Association executive vice president of Public Affairs and Policy Tori Emerson Barnes said. "The travel and tourism industry accounts for 38% of all U.S. jobs lost so far, and travel companies — 83% of which are small businesses — remain particularly vulnerable to the economic impact of the health crisis. The Paycheck Protection Program needs to be extended immediately, and its eligibility expanded, or else millions of travel jobs are likely to disappear permanently, and a U.S. recovery will be severely weakened before it even starts."

An Industry That Thrives on Intimacy

It's incumbent on industry leaders not to be consumed by the pandemonium, but to begin the arduous process of planning for recovery. The longer

the pandemic remains, the greater the pent-up demand will be for travel and tourism services, even amid challenging economic circumstances. Now is the time for leaders to reimagine the industry's future — and take communications steps to assuage the fears of customers, stakeholders, partners, suppliers and vendors.

It's a big job. How can an industry that has thrived on intimacy convince wary travelers that it's taking social distancing, personal hygiene, mask-wearing and all the rest to heart and keeping customer health and safety uppermost in mind?

Step #1 is to recognize how the world has changed. Like it or not, we're all going to become experts on public health and cleanliness. Post-pandemic travelers will demand that the industry embrace state-of-the-art health and safety standards. Everything else — including cost, comfort and amenities — will be secondary. Consumers will want every assurance that their planes, trains, rental cars, hotel rooms and tours meet exacting sanitation measures. Such initiatives will become a huge competitive differentiator. If your competitor has stronger health and safety standards than your services or properties, you're going to lose market share.

Every organization in the industry should consider emulating Hertz, which has taken its commitment to cleanliness so seriously that it has instituted a seal each time it scrubs and fumigates a rental vehicle. Only the next customer can break the seal, which is exactly the kind of tangible "proof" that consumers need in today's climate.

Some industry trend watchers believe that, for the near term, consumers will be more comfortable staying at hotels, as opposed to bed and breakfasts, because traditional lodging — especially the chains — can afford to invest in better cleaning resources and technology. Once the pandemic finally leaves us, it will be fascinating to see if consumers are willing to continue paying additional money to stay in (purportedly) "safer" hotels — or if they return to less expensive, but perhaps less "safe," accommodations.

Step #2 is to continually conduct qualitative and quantitative research. Consumer and stakeholder fears and expectations will continually change as the COVID-19 crisis ebbs and flows and, prayerfully, peters out.

The industry cannot guess what their key constituencies are thinking and feeling. They need to know for sure. That means constant surveying and focus-grouping. Different ideas and techniques to promote health and safety need to be vigorously tested. So does the willingness of your customers to pay extra for state-of-the-art health and safety standards and practice. Once you find a proactive idea that resonates, make it your signature, tell everybody about it and expand on it.

Step #3 is to implement an organization-wide commitment to transparency and contingency planning. You can't do health and safety halfway —

you've got to be all-in. It's not enough to say you're adopting a certain health and safety initiative. You must show your constituencies how and why the initiative works through carefully produced videos and written and pictorial content posted on your website and amplified through social media.

Institute a strategic optimization campaign so that your messages and videos move to the top of Google searches. Crisis preparation is a marathon — not a miracle. Preparing ahead of time is the only way to enhance your prospect of winning. Obtain public approval from prominent safety experts, medical professionals and other third parties. They need to attest to the efficacy of your health and safety regimen and to your management team's devotion to principle.

Avoid Waxing Nostalgic

Companies need to be careful not to wax nostalgic about the good old pre-pandemic days or get caught up in a rosy post-pandemic scenario. Customers will demand what you're doing with the here and now. There will be no patience for any travel and tourism business that cuts corners on safety or takes customers on a trip down memory lane or a fantasia about the future.

Michael Brown, the CEO of Wyndham Destinations, the world's largest vacation ownership company, has pursued an aggressive communications strategy with his major stakeholders. "You cannot over communicate in times like these with customers, associates and industry colleagues," he advises. "Everyone is going through something that has never been gone through before. Even when times are good, the stock market doesn't like uncertainty. And customers and associates just want honest answers."

Smart and disciplined travel and tourism companies can position themselves to come roaring back post-pandemic. But while COVID-19 is still raging, you need restraint — and a signature health and safety initiative you can call your own.

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Brink

Would-be travelers in Taiwan live out dreams of flying again

By Associated Press (AP)

Like almost every region, Taiwan has been hit hard by restrictions on international travel imposed because of the coronavirus. Some residents have found comfort in boarding a flight that didn't take off, just to revisit some memories and plan for the day when they can fly again.

The fantasy flight was organized by Taiwan's Civil Aviation Administration to raise awareness of coronavirus prevention and control procedures to follow when passing through customs and boarding a plane at Taipei International Airport.

Participants won a lucky draw held online, with each allowed to bring a guest, putting the total number who boarded at 66. As with normal flights, they had to check in, obtain boarding passes and go through immigration and security procedures before being allowed on the plane.

"People who want to fly abroad have long been suffering," said Wang Chih-ching, deputy director of the airport.

The event and the publicity generated will help future travelers better prepare for when international flights resume in earnest, Wang said.

The online draw drew 10,000 entries. After taking their seats, the passengers — all wearing masks — were served food and drinks, participated in a pop quiz and were treated to a good luck salute from fire engines that



Participants take selfies in the cabin during a mock trip abroad at Taipei Songshan Airport in Taipei, Taiwan, Tuesday, July 7, 2020. Dozens of would-be travelers acted as passengers in an activity organized by Taiwan's Civil Aviation Administration to raise awareness of procedures to follow when passing through customs and boarding their plane at Taipei International Airport. (AP Photo/Chiang Ying-ying)



Participants are greeted by flight attendants in protective suits during a mock trip abroad at Taipei Songshan Airport in Taipei. (AP photo)

sprayed water. After they exited without the plane having left the ground, passengers were given a demonstration about security by customs officials accompanied by a sniffer dog.

Lucky draw winner Joyce Nieh and her friend Jessica Liu, both mobile game graphic designers, took selfies to mark the occasion.

"Finally, we're in a plane ... pretending that we're flying abroad," Nieh said.

"I had to cancel all my international travel plans," she said. "We were lucky to win the opportunity to participate."

Taiwan has largely contained the spread of the coronavirus but social distancing and travel restrictions remain in place. The government has reported 449 confirmed cases and seven deaths.

More such fantasy flights are planned for coming days.



Participants take a photo with airline souvenirs during a mock trip abroad at Taipei Songshan Airport in Taipei, Taiwan, Tuesday, July 7, 2020. (AP Photo/Chiang Ying-ying)



Participants show their boarding pass and passport during a mock trip abroad at Taipei Songshan Airport in Taipei, Taiwan, Tuesday, July 7, 2020. (AP Photo/Chiang Ying-ying)



Participants vie to answer "first in the cabin" during a mock trip abroad at Taipei Songshan Airport in Taipei, Taiwan, Tuesday, July 7, 2020. (AP Photo/Chiang Ying-ying)

Taiwan News

Tourism sector balances hopes and concerns as Tokyo joins Go To Travel

By Eric Johnston



Tokyo was included in the Go To Travel campaign from October 1, 2020. | KYODO

Tokyo on October 1, 2020 was included in the Go To Travel campaign, the government-subsidized discounts program to boost domestic tourism, raising concerns about the risk of spreading coronavirus infections to other prefectures.

Local governments were expressing a mixture of hope and unease about the inclusion of Tokyo's 13.9 million residents in the ¥1.35 trillion campaign, which began in late July for all other prefectures. While Tokyo

is a major source of domestic tourism for many areas, it is also the source of about 30 percent of Japan's nearly 84,000 coronavirus cases as of October 1, 2020.

Tokyo was initially excluded by the government from the July start of the campaign due to concerns that a large influx of Tokyo visitors elsewhere and vice versa could risk increased infections in places outside the capital with limited medical facilities.

But the government decided to let Tokyo residents participate from October 1, 2020 in hopes of giving a boost to the economy, while cautioning the public to maintain social distancing and other measures to prevent COVID-19 infections.

“Looking at Japan’s travel market, travel from Tokyo to elsewhere accounts for 20 percent of it, while 10 percent of all domestic travel is to Tokyo. By adding Tokyo to the campaign, we hope for an overall economic effect, including for other areas,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told reporters on the morning of October 1, 2020.

Surrounding prefectures, which are expected to welcome large numbers of Tokyo visitors, expressed both hope of increased tourism and concerns about preventing a rise in infections. In a joint message to Tokyo residents, the governors of Tokyo, Saitama, Chiba, Kanagawa and Yamanashi called on anyone in Tokyo who feels ill not to travel and to observe all social distancing practices.

The governors also called on Tokyo residents to go along with local virus countermeasures. In Nasushiobara, Tochigi Prefecture, this will mean agreeing to pay more hot spring tax to stay at local hotels and traditional inns offering hot springs.



A sign at a travel agency advertises discounts for trips to and from Tokyo in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo, on September 30, 2020. | KYODO

In September 2020, in a nationwide first and in preparation for the addition of the Tokyo market to the Go To Travel campaign, the Nasushiobara Municipal Assembly overwhelmingly passed an ordinance raising the tax on local hot spring resorts.

Costs will rise between ¥50 and ¥200, depending on the facility. The money will be used to pay for PCR tests for about 600 people working at resort facilities, in a city with a population of just over 116,000.

“By having the ordinance in place, we can raise our brand awareness,” Mayor Michitaro Watanabe said.



Passengers board a shinkansen at Tokyo Station on October 1, 2020. | KYODO

Elsewhere, local leaders hope that their prefectures will receive more Tokyo tourists, especially over the coming weeks, as the autumn leaves in many parts of the country start to turn, becoming an attraction in themselves.

“We’ve entered the stage where the aim is to avoid serious cases and death due to the coronavirus while engaging in tourism, so we hope for (good) results,” said Nara Gov. Shogo Arai.

Hajime Takahashi, an official with the Nara City Tourism Bureau, said that there was no indication of an overwhelming number of reservations from Tokyo customers yet, but that the inclusion of Tokyoites could trigger a revival of visitors from there.

“Tokyo is really a big market. That is the same with or without COVID-19. Not only Nara, but all the tourist destinations in Japan have been longing for them to come back. Otherwise, Japan’s tourism industry will be devastated,” Takahashi said.

But still, Nara residents who don’t have livelihoods linked to tourism — the majority — “may have serious concerns about the removal of restrictions for Tokyo, where the pandemic still continues,” he said.

In Osaka, major international hotel chains say they are aware of concerns about the spread of infections in Tokyo. Luxury hotels, such as the Intercontinental Osaka and the Hilton Osaka, have implemented thorough cleaning, sanitary and social distancing measures.

“We have been receiving many inquiries from Tokyo by phone. We are not sure that this will be reflected in actual reservations, but we have had many questions and inquiries,” says Naoko Nishida, a spokeswoman for the Intercontinental Osaka.

Japan Times



A Call to Rebuild a More Robust and Responsible Travel and Tourism Industry

“COVID-19 has drastically changed the entire travel and tourism landscape, and, some would argue, changed it forever.”

By Dr. Mario Hardy, Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)

As we have heard time and again, the current COVID-19 pandemic presents the greatest challenge the travel and tourism industry has ever seen. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, the tourism industry was seeing staggering, exponential growth with travel businesses booming and an overabundance of job opportunities available for students and young tourism professionals.

COVID-19 has drastically changed the entire travel and tourism landscape, and, some would argue, changed it forever. Since March 2020, the travel and tourism industry has almost entirely come to a complete standstill and there is little hope for recovery before 2021. According to a recent policy brief from the United Nations (UN) outlining COVID-19's impact on the tourism industry, over 100 million direct tourism jobs are at risk globally if a solution to reopen borders and rebuild consumer confidence is not found in the months to come.



The reopening of borders is an extremely complex issue, which requires a multitude of stakeholders and impactful cross-sectoral partnerships. COVID-19 is first and foremost a public health issue and a quick and poorly managed opening of borders could lead to catastrophic consequences. It's important to remember that COVID-19 is extremely infectious. If we used Thailand as an example with a population of over 69 million people and 1% of the total population became infected, we would be looking at 690,000 possible cases in the country. Take into account that current fatality rates differ per country, if we took the most modest estimate of 1%, there could be a possibility of 6,900 deaths. This also doesn't take into consideration population demographics (i.e. percentage

of elderly), overwhelmed hospitals and health workers, and limitations of PPE, ventilators and other necessary medical equipment. Therefore, it is understandable why destinations are taking a cautious approach to protect their citizens while observing each other's' approach in the hope that somebody will find the ideal solution to reopen borders safely.

However, on the other hand, the economic consequences of closed borders can be just as devastating as the pandemic. In addition to the jobs at risk, the UN policy brief also approximates nearly US\$1 trillion in losses in international visitors' spending with the most vulnerable directly affected. Numerous studies have already been published that show a direct correlation between unemployment and mortality. Already we know that Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in the travel sector have been severely impacted the most and are in the greatest need of assistance. Indeed, early in the crisis, many destinations have offered subsidies to assist tourism businesses and their employees. While leaders of the sector have greatly appreciated these actions, it is sadly not enough. With many borders likely to remain closed until 2021 and beyond, more available funding will be required.

Per the UN policy brief: “Short- and medium-term direct financial assistance is particularly needed for vulnerable communities, including women, workers in the informal economy and those dependent on nature-based tourism. This can be done through micro or small grants, work-for-nature schemes, providing additional bonuses, subsidies and vouchers for childcare to facilitate women's return to work, or targeted financing support to boost female entrepreneurship and women-led or owned MSMEs.”



As we look to rebuild the travel and tourism industry to be stronger, more sustainable and more resilient, I do encourage you to read the full UN policy brief as there are further details of note beyond just the five priority areas to rebuild tourism. For instance, the fourth priority to promote sustainability and green growth calls for investment in sustainable infrastructure projects such as renewable energy, smart buildings and the circular economy. I would add that infrastructure investment in second and third-tier destinations would also be something to consider, particularly as changing travel behaviour would make these areas (outside of bustling urban city centres) more attractive options post COVID-19.

Economic relief through direct cash payments may not be the answer if we are looking towards long term strategy and sustainable recovery. We must be innovative, and push ideas such as work-for-nature schemes that provide a valuable contribution to society and the environment. For example, employing people to help clean beaches, oceans, national parks, cities and tourist attractions benefits citizens, residents, and visitors who can all enjoy them. If each of the 100

million unemployed planted 100 trees, we could potentially have 10 billion more trees to help absorb CO2.

Every day over the last several months, I have been talking to people that have been affected in one way or another by the current crisis. For those who have been unemployed for months, the situation is getting dire to the point where some are having difficulties in putting food on the table. But beyond this, their morale is rock bottom, and they want to feel valued again, feel as they are helping make this world a better place. Green investments can provide rewarding jobs and make our world a better place.

While the road to recovery will be long and arduous, I am confident we will eventually travel again. To get there, beyond just close cooperation between the public and private sectors, we will need to be innovative, creative, and resourceful. If we do that, I am sure that we will rebuild a more robust and more responsible travel and tourism industry.

CEO Blog, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)

‘Best Island in Asia’ recognition a boost of confidence for Cebu’s tourism

By Morexette Marie B. Erram



The Kawasan Falls is a popular tourist destination in Barangay Matutinao, Badian. | CDN Digital file photo

Cebu’s recognition as the favorite island destination in Asia provides the much-needed boost to the local tourism industry that was badly hit by the pandemic.

Shalimar Tamano, director of the Department of Tourism in Central Visayas (DOT-7), said that the international recognition from Condé Nast Traveler (CNT), a prestigious international travel magazine, is expected to inspire tourism stakeholders here to ramp up their recovery efforts.

“We’re glad the New York-based magazine announce what we already know here – Cebu is number

one... Last year (2019) Cebu and Central Visayas got 4.4 million foreign visitors. That surely is a vote of confidence,” said Tamano.

CNT on October 7, 2020 (Philippine Standard Time) released its list of best travel destinations in the world. It named Cebu as the Best Island in Asia for its 33rd Readers’ Choice Awards.

Cebu beat other popular tourist destinations in Sri Lanka, Thailand, and even the islands of Palawan, Boracay, and Siargao in the Philippines.

Tamano and private tourism stakeholders in Cebu like the Cebu Association of Tour Operators (CATOS)

and the Hotel Resort Restaurant Association of Cebu (HRRAC) said that Cebu's recognition is a testament of the island's brand being a top tourist destination.

"The island of Cebu has a land area of around 5,000 square kilometers, almost like Bali. So expansion and our outdoors is vast and limitless. (This is why) we continue to work with LGUs (local government units), government agencies, and our stakeholders to sustain our leadership in the industry," the DOT-7 director said.

CNT's announcement came amid the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that has crippled the travel and tourism industry worldwide.

For tourism enterprises here, the recent citation for Cebu served as an inspiration for the industry to get back on its feet.

"We will bounce back stronger in 2021 as we transition to the new normal and begin to welcome domestic and international guests back to Cebu," said

Carlo Anton Suarez, HRRAC president.

In doing so, they emphasized collaboration in achieving this goal.

"Definitely, this positive perception of Cebu should inspire and help our tourism recovery. But it poses a challenge to do more, not only to sustain but to exceed tourists' expectations. While not an easy task in these trying times, focused collaboration of all could be the answer," said CATOS president Alice Queblatin.

Condé Nast said that voters and readers were given the chance to vote for their favorite picks for the 33rd Readers' Choice Awards.

Among the top tourist destinations in Cebu the magazine has cited are Kawasan Falls in Badian town, and the centuries-old Basilica Minore del Sto. Niño de Cebu in downtown Cebu City.

Cebu Daily News (CDN)

Turkey eyes \$1 bln in health tourism revenue this year



Turkey has earned about \$1 billion in health tourism revenues in the last 12 months despite travel restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, a health professional said on September 20, 2020.

Last year, more than 662,000 foreign patients visited Turkey, according to Doc's Health Tourism Agency CEO Yusuf Temrel.

"The figure was 143,266 in the first quarter of 2020. The revenue generated in that period was \$187.9 billion," he said.

"The top three countries sending international patients to Turkey were Iraq, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan," he added.

Turkey's health tourism revenue exceeded one billion in 2019, of which some 60 percent came from plastic surgeries.

The Turkish Health Ministry aims to increase the number of health tourists to 1.5 million by 2023 with a

revenue of \$10 billion.

Noting that during the COVID-19 pandemic the health infrastructures of the countries have been under pressure, Temrel said Turkey was a "shining star in terms of health tourism."

"Our country is one of the countries that survived this process with the least damage with its well-equipped hospitals, experienced doctors and health personnel," he said.

Citing Britain's National Health Service numbers, some 4.4 million patients were in waiting lists for dental treatments, hernia and cataracts operations, hip and knee replacement surgeries, said Temrel.

"We predict that this number will exceed 10 million by the end of the year," he said, noting that the United Kingdom, one of the countries most affected by the pandemic, holds great potential for Turkey's health tourism sector.

Hürriyet Daily News

Less crowded, safe tourist spots recommended amid pandemic

By Jun Ji-hye



*A man rides a bicycle on a trail that surrounds Lake Uiam in Chuncheon, Gangwon Province.
Courtesy of Korea Tourism Organization*

The Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) has selected 100 less-crowded domestic tourist spots where citizens can get away from bustling city life amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The organization cooperated with seven regional offices, including the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization and Busan Tourism Organization, to draw up a list of 100 tourist spots that allow for social distancing.

Requirements for locations to be included in the list were that they should be little-known to the public and that they are outdoor sites, so tourists can comply with the government's social distancing guidelines aimed at containing the transmission of the coronavirus, according to the organization.

The KTO said the list, announced ahead of the summer peak season, is expected to contribute to decentralizing travel demand for popular tourist destinations, so citizens can enjoy their trip in a safer and more relaxed environment.

The 100 tourist spots on the list included Imjingak Pyeonghwa Nuri Park in Paju, and Konjiam Resort that operates the "Healing Campus" in Gwangju, Gyeonggi Province.

Imjingak Pyeonghwa Nuri Park, located in the South Korean border city, gives a chance to visitors to take a rest in a large, grass-covered park, while looking around at various sculptures created with the theme of unification.

Konjiam Resort operates a variety of wellness programs to help visitors take care of their physical and

mental state to improve their quality of life.

In North Gyeongsang Province, Metasequoia Forest in Yeongdeok where visitors can enjoy abundant scents of the trees put its name on the list, along with the Mount Deunggi Skywalk in Uljin.

Hanbat Arboretum in Daejeon invites families and couples to take a nice and peaceful walk alongside the trees.

In Busan, Mount Jang that provides various hiking courses offer superb sceneries of Gwangan Bridge and Haeundae Marine City was included in the list, along with Amir Park in Yeongdo.

Ten spots in Seoul also made the list, including Mongchontoseong Fortress in Songpa-gu.

Mongchontoseong Fortress, located within Olympic Park, is the remains of earthen fortifications from the ancient Baekje Kingdom (18 BC-AD 660). Visitors can take a walk along a 2.4-kilometer walking trail and learn the historical value of the fortress at the museum there.

Tourists are also invited to Ara Canal in Incheon that links the Han River to West Sea. The site is known as one of the prime spots for camping and riding bicycles.

In Jeju Island, Huerim operated by the Jeju Forestry Cooperative was included in the list. The facility offers diverse experience programs to visitors, such as cultivating the saplings and producing forest products, as well as sites for camping.

Bicycle riders are invited to explore a trail that

surrounds Lake Uiam in Chuncheon, Gangwon Province.

"The KTO will keenly cooperate with regional tourism organizations to promote safe trips amid the pandemic," senior KTO official Jeong Chang-wook said.

"We will also expend greater efforts to discover new tourism content to revitalize domestic travel."

The Korea Times

Tourist attractions in Singapore can double visitor capacity to 50% as STB eases curbs

By Tiffany Fumiko Tay



Gardens by the Bay is among the operators that are planning to scale up their capacity to meet an expected increase in demand. Photo: The Strait Times File

Tourist attractions will be able to cater to more visitors, after more than two months of being restricted to filling just 25 per cent of operating capacity at any one time.

From Friday (September 18), they can apply to the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) to increase it to 50 per cent.

They can also seek permission to scale up the capacity at their outdoor shows to 250 people, up from 50 currently. But shows must be split into five zones with a maximum of 50 people in each zone and safe distancing between groups as well as zones.

This means the limit for their outdoor shows will be in line with the maximum number of participants soon to be allowed at approved Mice (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) events.

The STB said on September 16 that the easing of rules for attractions comes as operators have been effective in preventing and dispersing crowds as well as maintaining high standards of cleanliness and hygiene.

All attractions have also introduced online booking systems that help to monitor and control visitor numbers, it said.

Gardens by the Bay is among the operators that are planning to scale up their capacity to meet an expected increase in demand when the \$100 SingapoRediscover vouchers are issued to Singaporeans in December 2020.

Local support has been encouraging to date, with more than 480,000 recorded visits since July, said Mr Jason Koo, its director for attractions operations and visitor services.

Crowds will continue to be managed through the use of timed-entry tickets which must be pre-purchased online, he said.

Gardens by the Bay will also be bringing back programmes such as the Mid-Autumn Festival light-up and Christmas floral display at the Flower Dome, albeit on a smaller scale.

Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS), which operates the Singapore Zoo, Night Safari, River Safari and Jurong Bird Park, is also planning to increase capacity at its parks.

WRS deputy chief executive Cheng Wen-Haur said visitorship had dropped early in 2020, as fears over the coronavirus led some to avoid wildlife parks. But it

has since rebounded, with capacity maxed out on some weekends.

The added capacity allowance will "really help", he added, as many prefer to visit in the morning, while the later slots are less popular.

The larger audience size allowed at the parks' popular outdoor shows is also a relief.

"A lot of visitors have been disappointed because they can't catch the show" owing to the current limit of 50 people, he said.

Despite the pandemic-related setbacks, Jurong Bird Park is on track to move to the Mandai precinct in 2022, with the opening of the new Rainforest Park and other attractions in the eco-tourism hub to follow.

The new bird park will have bigger walk-in aviaries, new species, more interactive experiences and contactless touchpoints, Dr Cheng said.

The Strait Times

Tourism Authority of Thailand and Dusit International partner to promote sustainable tourism

By Harry S. Johnson



Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies, recently partnered with silent live concert specialists Sounds of Earth, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) and the Thai Chamber of Commerce to host an exclusive event designed to showcase how events and functions can be held safely, responsibly and sustainably in the new normal while delivering meaningful experiences for guests.

Called 'Listen to the Earth in Silence' – the exclusive event was held on Friday October 2 at Dusit Thani Hua Hin resort and was attended by travel industry specialists and high-ranking diplomats. The programme focused on low-impact, eco-friendly travel methods, community-focused activities, wellness-focused cuisine, and innovative solutions for events and functions which Dusit, the TAT and TCEB believes will be central to facilitating and encouraging responsible MICE travel in a post COVID-19 world.

In line with TCEB's basic guidelines for sustainable events in the new normal, which includes,

amongst others, the promotion of public transportation, local attractions, and locally sourced organic foods, the event began with a 'carbon-saving' private train journey from Bangkok, which also featured a healthy lunch expertly catered for by Dusit Events.

Upon arrival in Hua Hin, participants visited a local marine centre where they helped to release baby crabs to the wild. Staying at Dusit Thani Hua Hin, they learned about Dusit's hybrid meeting models that facilitate small and safe gatherings while simultaneously leveraging technology for secure, reliable and instant global reach.

The demonstration included a meeting room equipped as a high-end recording, live-streaming and presentation studio with the latest audio-visual equipment for worldwide broadcasting. This included a multi-screen set up which allows for real-time interactions with remote event participants; a green screen backdrop for high-definition virtual backgrounds; and dedicated professional event specialists who are on hand to ensure swift and seamless connectivity. Similar virtual meeting solutions will be rolled out at other

Dusit properties in Thailand, and will also be available for offsite functions catered for by Dusit Events. Highlighting Dusit's thoughtful, holistic and technology-focused approach to events, the event also featured a live-yet-silent beachside concert hosted by Sounds of Earth. Featuring music specially composed to raise awareness of the environment – both lyrically and sonically – the live performance was beamed to the audience via wireless headsets, allowing them to soak up the atmosphere and enjoy a shared experience amongst nature without any noise pollution. Guests also enjoyed an exclusive dinner featuring healthy ingredients from Dusit Thani Hua Hin's own organic gardens.

“With borders closed to international travel, and stringent regulations for social distancing in place, the tourism industry – a major economic contributor to Thailand – has been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we wanted to do our part to help support hotel operators, travel agents, event organisers, and all other impacted parties by hosting an innovative travel and event experience which we hope will serve as a model for our industry's sustainable success in a post COVID-19 world,” said Ms Suphajej Suthumpun, Group CEO, Dusit International.

“With mass tourism grinding to a halt during COVID-19, we have all seen with shocking clarity how much our environment had been strained by the sheer volume of visitors our destinations had previously hosted. As nature has regenerated, we have been reminded of our duty to protect the planet, not just for future generations, but also for ourselves. Put simply, we cannot return to the old way of doing things. Now is the time for the tourism industry to pause, reset and reassess the impact of our operations on the environment and work towards establishing new models that allow us to focus on quality tourism while educating and informing travellers about their responsibility too. In short, now is time to return with purpose, and we are delighted to partner with Sounds of Earth, the TAT and TCEB for this special showcase, which demonstrates our shared vision to build new foundations for sustainable tourism and environmentally friendly events in Thailand,” said Ms Suthumpun.

Renowned Thai singer and musician Mr John Rattanaverroj, founder of Sounds of Earth and an executive of Splash Interactive Company, said, “Music is a powerful medium for driving positive change – especially when it is enhanced by technology. Our new style of high-tech music events demonstrates how concerts can be held safely and sustainably in the new normal. Free from noise pollution and allowing for social distancing, Sounds of Earth's events are kind to the environment and serve as a good model for quality, responsible tourism. We look forward to seeing our green music solution implemented at similar events in the future.”

Mr Nithee Seeprae, Executive Director for Advertising and Public Relations Department, TAT, said, “To successfully restart tourism in Thailand, it is important for everyone in our industry to share ideas for how we can bounce back more sustainably with new models for doing business focused on the triple bottom line – people, profit and planet. While we have all suffered tremendously during this crisis, we have seen significant improvements in our land and marine ecosystems, and we must nurture and protect this to build a greener, brighter future for us all. In line with our vision for a sustainable future for our industry, this event showcased some of the innovative ways we can welcome and delight visitors in the new normal while limiting our impact on the environment. We look forward to supporting more initiatives like this nationwide.” Mr Puripan Bunnag, Director, Executive and Legal Affairs, TCEB, said, “To support the industry and promote Thailand as a safe destination for MICE, we have released several guidelines covering all aspects of hosting a meeting or event in the new normal. Arranged in line with our MICE Venue Hygiene Guidelines, the creative solutions presented at the Listen to the Earth in Silence event fully demonstrated how hotels can bring together crowds without compromising safety and well-being. We were also happy to see that, except teambuilding, the event also demonstrated six of the seven ‘Thailand 7 MICE Magnificent Themes’ we have identified for outstanding MICE products and events in the new normal – namely fascinating history and culture, exhilarating adventures, CSR activities, beach bliss, lavish luxury, and culinary journeys. By inviting ambassadors and leading industry specialists to experience this event first hand, we have demonstrated how Thailand is ready to welcome international visitors as soon as the situation allows. Sustainable, meaningful experiences like this will remain at the very top of our agenda.”

Dusit's innovative MICE models fully embrace TCEB's guidelines for sustainable events to ensure all processes are as environmentally friendly as possible. All Dusit Hotels and Resorts in Thailand have also been certified for Thailand MICE Venue Standard (TMVS) by TCEB.

Groupwide, Dusit has also rolled out several new services designed to offer extra convenience, experience and value across all aspects of the guest and customer journey.

This includes Dusit Care – Stay with Confidence services, which comprise, amongst others, officially certified, heightened standards of hygiene and cleanliness; flexible check-in and check-out; anytime breakfast, the introduction of mobile payment methods, and more operational enhancements designed to bring utmost peace of mind to guests.

Travel Daily

Tourism Australia launches destination-based 8D Audio Escapes

8D audio is a sound engineering treatment that, when the viewer wears headphones, gives the music and sounds a three-dimensional effect thereby making viewers feel like they are experiencing them firsthand.

By BW Online Bureau



Tourism Australia has launched a new series of immersive videos that harness the innovative 8D audio technology, and take viewers on a sensory journey of the unique sights, sounds and textures of Australia's iconic destinations. 8D audio is a sound engineering treatment that, when the viewer wears headphones, gives the music and sounds a three-dimensional effect thereby making viewers feel like they are experiencing them firsthand.

From the fiery red sand of Uluru to the glassy turquoise waters of the Great Barrier Reef, and the deep greens of the Daintree Rainforest, Australia's landscapes span the full colour spectrum. And to showcase this visual diversity and vibrancy that Australia is distinctly known for, each video is themed by a colour - blue, red, magenta, green, black and white – to evoke a range of feelings and emotions.

BLUE: Girt by deep blue seas, there are seemingly endless ways to enjoy a moment of joy with the colour blue in Australia. According to colour psychology, blue calls to mind feelings of calmness or serenity. Showcasing Great Barrier Reef, Queensland; Spotting whales in the deep blue seas of Queensland and swimming with dolphins and sea lions in South Australia, the experience will let the visitors get rid of the blues.

RED: A moment of escape for adventure lovers, experience the colour red across Australia. Red is one of the most stimulating colours, known to be associated with feelings of excitement and increased energy. This allows the tourists to witness the warm tones of sunset, or sail across King George River, The Kimberley; Dine under the canopy of the desert night at Uluru, Northern

Territory and then wander through the red wine vines in the Barossa, South Australia

MAGENTA: A moment of freedom for romantics, be tickled pink with these experiences. As magenta is a rarely occurring colour in nature, finding environments soaked in the purple pink tones allow for a rare and intriguing experience. The Magenta experience allows one to drive past the rose-coloured Hutt Lagoon, Western Australia; experience the magenta glow surrounding Hinchinbrook Island National Park, Queensland and enjoy a sunset camel ride to a flushing sunset backdrop in Broome, Western Australia.

GREEN: A moment of relaxation for nature lovers, green experiences are in abundance across Australia's lush and varied landscapes. Research shows that the colour green allows people to feel refreshed, healthy and tranquil. One can witness the otherworldly spectrum of green in the Daintree Rainforest, Queensland; Explore the lush wetlands of Arnhem Land, Northern Territory and spot one of the world's cutest animals in the deep green brush of Rottnest Island, Western Australia

BLACK: A moment of inspiration for creatives, explore Australia's depths with the colour black. Black absorbs all light in the colour spectrum and is associated with the water element in Feng Shui which evokes power, mystery and calm. One can delve into the elegance and mystery of the art scene in Melbourne, Victoria; Watch the march of the penguins along pebbles on Phillip Island, Victoria and at nightfall stargaze into the skies of the Little Sandy Desert, Western Australia

WHITE: A moment of calm for minimalists. Experiencing a white environment allows travellers to

embark on a blank slate, symbolising a new beginning or fresh start. Start with flying over the blinding white salt plains of Lake Eyre, South Australia, then immerse yourself in the winter wonderland of Mount Kosciuszko,

New South Wales and finally squish your toes in the white sand of Whitehaven Beach.

Bw Bwhotelier

Air New Zealand offers 140,000 flights for under \$60



The fares are available for travel in the second half of November through to the first half of February 2021. Photo / file

Air New Zealand is selling more than 140,000 domestic fares for under \$60 in the hope Kiwis will travel domestically during the summer.

The \$60 fares are for one-way travel between the second half of November 2020 through to the first half of February 2021.

Whether Kiwis are looking to check out a place they're yet to explore in New Zealand or planning a catch up with friends and family, this is their chance to fly at a fantastic price," Air New Zealand chief customer and sales officer Leanne Geraghty said.

"The school holidays brought a big boost to domestic tourism and we hope these fares will encourage New Zealanders to keep travelling and take advantage of some of the great deals tourism operators are providing at the moment."

A quick search for an Aucklander wanting to catch up with friends or family in Nelson for the first weekend of December, can fly down on Saturday and return on Monday for \$59 each way.

However, for anyone in Wellington wanting to jump on and catch a deal the weekend before Christmas is out of luck, with flights \$169 to get there and \$79 to get back home.

Blenheim residents keen for a quick post New Years catch up with mates in Dunedin, flying down on

Monday January 4 and returning on the Thursday, will also be out of luck with \$199 the cheapest on the way there and \$159 for the return flight.

Flights from Christchurch to Hamilton could be cheap if you go in February but depends which day. Waitangi Weekend could be out as a flight up to the city of the future on Friday February 5 are \$139 but at least getting home will be cheaper at \$69 for just the seat on the Monday.

Tourism's hard Covid landing

Figures of October 2020 from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment showed tourism spending dropped across all regions for 2020 ending August compared to the previous year. It dropped 15 per cent to \$25.1 billion.

Auckland, Otago and West Coast experienced the biggest decline, with a 20 per cent drop in annual spend. Northland and Hawke's Bay had the smallest drop in annual tourism spending, down 7 per cent.

Auckland has continued seeing the largest fall in tourism spend in August, down 61 per cent to \$255 million.

NZ Herald



Sri Lanka to offer livestreams from wildlife parks

By Bharatha Mallawarachi



FILE- In this Aug. 12, 2011 file photo, a herd of Asiatic wild elephants gather at a national park in Minneriya, some 200 kilometers (125 miles) from Colombo, Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan authorities announced Wednesday that they will offer livestreams from the island nation's wildlife parks in an apparent move to help revive a tourism industry that has been decimated by the coronavirus pandemic. (AP Photo/Chamila Karunaratne, File)

Sri Lankan authorities announced on September 23, 2020 that they will offer livestreams from the island nation's wildlife parks, in a move to help revive a tourism industry that has been decimated by the coronavirus pandemic.

The government's Tourism Promotion Bureau said livestreaming will initially cover four national parks to showcase the South Asian country's exotic wildlife, including leopards, bears, elephants, crocodiles and birds.

The project will offer eight wildlife streaming video sessions of one hour each which will be shown on social media platforms and shared further through broadcast media, the bureau said in a statement.

Tourism in Sri Lanka — which was named the world's top travel destination for 2019 by Lonely Planet — has suffered severely due to the coronavirus, with authorities indefinitely postponing the reopening of the country to foreign tourists.

The government had planned to reopen to tourists on August 1, 2020, but shelved the plan when a new cluster of COVID-19 patients emerged in July.

Tourism is vital for Sri Lanka, accounting for about 5% of its GDP and employing 250,000 people directly and up to 2 million indirectly. Several thousand

hotel workers have been laid off since the pandemic started.

Sri Lankan health officials say they have prevented community spread of the virus, and that the patients now being reported belong to two known clusters. The country has reported 3,315 cases, including 13 deaths.

Sri Lanka imposed a nationwide curfew in March. The government gradually lifted the curfew in April and has taken steps to reopen the country in phases over the last three months, but schools and airports are still closed.

In an effort to contain the virus, Sri Lanka suspended all passenger flights and ship arrivals in mid-March, crippling the tourism industry.

According to the Tourism Development Authority, no foreign tourists arrived in Sri Lanka in April through August. There was a 60% decline in total tourist arrivals from January to August compared to the same period in 2019.

To meet the income loss, most hotels are offering discounted prices for local tourists.

Associated Press (AP)

'Majestic Iran, a Different Experience' chosen as tourism motto

Majestic Iran, a Different Experience' was introduced as the official motto for Iran's tourism industry on September 27, 2020 as the country aims to hammer home the message of

diversity and richness in recreational, cultural, and medical tourism.

"Turquoise Simorgh" and "Majestic Iran, a Different Experience" were respectively selected as the

logo and the motto of Iran's tourism industry in a special ceremony held in Tehran to mark the World Tourism Day.



Addressing the event, Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan said Simorgh is the most comprehensive logo for the country's tourism because it depicts the religious and national identity of the people and conveys all the positive characteristics of Iranians. It is unique and belongs to Iran, ISNA reported.

Mounesan added that the shape of this mythical flying bird signifies the rise of Iranian tourism.

On the wings of this Simorgh, Muqarnas - a form of ornamented vaulting in Islamic architecture - is depicted. The tail of Simorgh consists of seven feathers, whose number is a symbol of the sanctity in Iranian culture and other religions and nations. The bird is illustrated in turquoise blue (Persian blue) with the word "Iran" in terracotta, displaying the dominant color of nature and architecture of Iran.

According to Zahed Shafiei, project manager of the tourism brand, the selection of this logo and motto took more than two years.

Studies of Iran's tourism brand officially began two decades ago. Different logos, ranging from lotus

flower to saffron flower, were selected and Iran has sometimes appeared in international forums with slogans such as 'See Iran'. However, none of them have survived to this day.

The Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization – which later turned into a ministry, formed a committee for designing slogans, logos, and brands of Iran's tourism in 2013.

The tourism ministry now believes that field studies have made Iran's new tourism brand defensible, saying it had received the opinions of about 1,700 experts to design the logo, slogan, and color for Iran's tourism industry.

Earlier this month and regarding the coronavirus pandemic, which has been crippled traveling in Iran and many other countries across the globe, Mounesan said: "Tourism [industry of Iran] was growing before the corona [outbreak], its revenues reached \$11.7 billion in 2019, which accounted for 2.8% of GDP, near the average share of tourism in the world GDP."

"Corona has caused damage to many countries around the world, and our country's travel sector has so far suffered a loss of 12 trillion rials (some \$2.85 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials)."

In one of his latest speeches, the minister said that responsible tourism is a workable solution for holidaymakers to get assured of safe traveling during the coronavirus pandemic.

"The tourism ministry has no authority over [people's plans for] travels and we cannot tell people to travel or not.

Many people travel on their own without using the capacity of tours, which can have its own impacts the virus spread but if trips are carried out through tours and in official accommodation centers that follow all health protocols, they would be safer with lower risks."

Tehran Times

Georgia: two new certified “Cultural Routes of Georgia” and Memorandum of Understanding with the National Tourism Administration

On June 18, 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia and the National Tourism Administration of Georgia, in order to promote and develop cultural tourism. The Memorandum was signed by the Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia Mr. Levan Kharatishvili and the Head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration Mrs. Mariam Kvrivishvili.

The Memorandum covers issues on supporting and developing of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme in Georgia, the planning and



Photo Credit: Sulkhan Namicheishvili | Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia

implementation of joint projects in the field of cultural tourism as well as the integration of Cultural Routes in common tourist destinations.



Photo Credit: Sul Khan Namicheishvili | Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia

In the same event, with the opening of domestic tourism in the country, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia and the Georgian National Tourism Administration presented the mobile application “Cultural Routes of Georgia”. Created by the initiative of the Ministry, the application allows tourists to plan a visit along both European and national certified Cultural Routes, and get acquainted with the diverse culture of Georgia. The Cultural Routes that received the certification by the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia are marked on the application.



Photo Credit: Sul Khan Namicheishvili | Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia

According to the decision of the Government of Georgia, domestic tourism has been opened in the country since June 15, 2020. The Cultural Routes App will play an important role in informing tourists, as well as helping them plan interesting routes by following all

safety rules.

On June 18, the Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia Mr. Levan Kharatishvili handed over the certification “Cultural Route of Georgia” to two new cultural routes: “St. Andrew Path” and “From Capital to Capital”.

“St. Andrew’s Path” is a pilgrimage route, the main theme of which is an excursion-pilgrimage. According to the materials preserved in the Greco-Latin texts and in the Life of Kartli, the route introduces us to the way covered by St. Andrew in Georgia. At this stage, the route includes several regions of Georgia (Adjara, Imereti, Samtskhe-Javakheti) and 7 different destinations. The governing organization of the route is the “Academy of Tourism and Management” of Georgia.

“From Capital to Capital” links the two most important cities in the history of Georgia, Mtskheta and Tbilisi. These two cities have maintained the function of a political or religious center for centuries. In the 5th century, Vakhtang Gorgasali started the most important urban construction on the territory of Tbilisi. Vakhtang Gorgasali’s successor, Dachi I Ujarmeli, completed the construction of the city wall by the beginning of the 6th century and moved the capital city from Mtskheta to Tbilisi according to his father’s will. Within the framework of the route, through 22 monuments marked between Tbilisi and Mtskheta, the visitor will travel to the past and follow the path set by Vakhtang Gorgasali. The managing organization of “From Capital to Capital” is the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia.



Photo Credit: Sul Khan Namicheishvili | Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia

Council of Europe

Vietnam proposes tourism travel bubbles within ASEAN

By Hoang Thuy

Vietnam has suggested ASEAN to research safe “tourism travel bubbles” within the region amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Specifically, Vietnam wants ASEAN to research “travel bubbles” between “green countries” as a preliminary initiative in opening borders and forming

safe travel zones, said Nguyen Manh Tien, deputy head of the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee. He made the remarks at a meeting on September 9, 2020 of the Committee on Economic Matters of the 41st General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA 41).

"Tourism travel bubbles" would include specialized air routes to tourism sites in member countries, Tien explained. It means people traveling from and to different destinations are tested to make sure they are not infected with the novel coronavirus, and that they would visit only those tourism sites before returning, using transport within a closed loop. "Green countries" are defined as those that ensure certain green coverage and use organic products, Tien said.

The Covid-19 pandemic is not only a medical crisis, but a crisis in development when international trade and supply chains are broken, Tien stated. Southeast Asia's GDP growth in 2020 is expected to drop to negative 2.7 percent, as opposed to an increase of 4.4 percent last year, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

"The Vietnamese delegation wants the ASEAN community to agree on executing a series of breakthroughs and possible solutions, first to enhance information exchange regarding tourism, health and other necessary methods to control the spread of Covid-19," he added.

Also at the meeting, Vietnam suggested hastening the ratification of trade agreements within the region, including completing negotiations and signings of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) within 2020. Increasing the capacity and participation of parliamentary oversight regarding the implementation

of trade and investment commitments within the regional and international framework was also tabled.

As the coronavirus pandemic ravages the globe, countries and territories have deployed different measures to curb its spread, including international travel restrictions. Vietnam, for example, had already

suspended international flights since late March 2020.

As Vietnam began to bring the Covid-19 outbreak under control, talks of resuming international flights took off. Most recently, Vietnamese aviation authorities have prepared detailed plans for resuming commercial flights to Guangzhou, Seoul, Tokyo, Taipei, Cambodia, and Laos starting



A Vietnam Airlines plane lands at the Tan Son Nhat Airport, HCMC, June 15, 2020. Photo by VnExpress/Quynh Tran.

September 15, 2020.

Passengers arriving in Vietnam must have been in these Asian destinations for at least 30 days prior to boarding their flights, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of Vietnam (CAAV). Transit passengers will not be allowed in.

Passengers must also furnish a certificate showing they tested negative for the novel coronavirus within three days before departure. On arrival, they would undergo rapid testing for Covid-19 with the costs covered by the airlines. They will have to pay for their quarantine.

Vietnam has recorded 1,059 Covid-19 cases, 131 still active. A total 35 have succumbed to the disease, many being elderly patients suffering underlying conditions like diabetes or kidney failure.

The country has recorded no new local transmissions for a week.

VnExpress International

Published by the Secretariat, Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry

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