

MEDIA RELEASE

MALAYSIA'S HOMESTAY PROGRAMME WINS THE UNWTO 2012 ULYSSES AWARDS



ONE FOR THE ALBUM...Mr. Rashidi Hasbullah holds the Ulysses Award.

PUTRAJAYA, 23 NOV 2012: The Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia's Homestay Experience Programme was announced as the winner of the UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation in Public Policy and Governance at the UNWTO Awards Ceremony held in Istanbul, Turkey on 15 Nov.

The runners-up in this category were Holiday Participation Center, Tourism Flanders, Belgium and the Pannonian Salt Lakes of Tuzla, Municipality of Tuzla, Bosnia Herzegovina.

Deputy Secretary General of Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia, Mr. Rashidi Hasbullah was on hand to receive the award.

The international recognition is another boost to Malaysia's tourism efforts in the wake of a string of accolades given to Malaysia in recent months. Just a few days

ago, global news network, CNN, had ranked Kuala Lumpur as the 4th best shopping destination in the world ahead of well-established shopping hubs such as Hong Kong, Paris and Dubai.

Earlier, Kuala Lumpur city was also crowned the second best shopping destination in Asia Pacific by Globe Shopper Index, created by the Economist Intelligence Unit, which is part of the Economist Group and commissioned by Switzerland-based shopping tourism company Global Blue.

In the same month, Malaysia was ranked 10th friendliest country in an article published by Forbes Online. The survey was based on a range of questions across four categories: the ability to befriend locals, success in learning local languages, capacity for integrating into the community, and ease of fitting into the new culture, asked among 5,339 expatriates from 97 countries.

A third recognition that went to Malaysia in October was the country's ranking as the 12th most competitive economy in the world for doing business. The report, released by the World Bank, placed Malaysia ahead of economies like Sweden, Taiwan, Germany, Japan and Switzerland. It affirms Malaysia's competitiveness as an economy, and reflects the successful implementation by the Government to improve the business environment and make it conducive for sustained economic growth.

In a separate report, also in October, Malaysia emerged 8th out of the 18 Asia Pacific countries surveyed for level of service sophistication, which was scored based on four key parameters - a survey of executives and market experts, score of the country's innovation levels, its business sophistication and technological readiness as measured by the World Economic Forum.

Other important recognitions this year include a study by DinarStandard which revealed Malaysia as one of the top tourist destinations for Muslim tourists, along with Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

HOMESTAY PROGRAMME

The homestay programme in Malaysia was first launched in 1995 and has become increasingly popular among local and foreign tourists. Under the homestay programme, tourists live with a local family in a kampung (village) house and learn about close-knit family relationships, enjoy sumptuous home-cooked food and discover the simple lifestyle in the country.

The programme, in many ways, has helped turn the tourism industry into a major and viable sector and also contributes to the socio-economic development of the local people and the country.

Up until August 2012, a total of 3,424 homestay operators from 159 villages throughout the country have been trained and licensed by the Ministry of Tourism.

From January to August this year, a total of 213,266 tourists participated in this programme, where 41,670 of them were foreign tourists.

Last year, the homestay programme attracted 254,981 participants with 59,657 of them being foreign tourists. The total homestay programme revenue for 2011 is RM15.74 million, which was an increase of 26.8% compared to 2010.

For more information on homestay programme, please visit <http://www.go2homestay.com>.

BACKGROUNDER

The UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism is a worldwide event highlighting knowledge innovation and its application in all five UNWTO regions (the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East).

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the UNWTO Knowledge Network confer the UNWTO Ulysses Prize and Awards annually to highlight and showcase Innovation and Application of Knowledge in Tourism.

In doing so, they seek to recognize and stimulate knowledge creation, dissemination and innovative applications in tourism and to bring to light the latest advances in this area. This has a transversal effect on governance and society at large.

Other UNWTO Ulysses Awards include the Innovation in Enterprises won by the Experiencias Xcaret Group for the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of Quintana Roo, Innovation in Non-Governmental Organisations (Nature Friends International, Austria for its Landscape of the Year) and Innovation in Research and Technology (Instituto de Biomecanica de Valencia, Spain for its TurAcces/IBV).

In addition to the Ulysses Prize and Awards, this year a new award category has been announced; the UNWTO Award for Lifetime Achievement, recognizing individuals who have demonstrated excellence throughout their career in tourism and who serves as an inspirational role model.

This year's recipients were Mr. Shao Qiwei, the Chairman of the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) and Mr. Gabriel Escarrer Juliá, the founder of the international hotel chain Meliá Hotels.

Besides that, the UNWTO Ulysses Prize for Excellence in the Creation and Dissemination of Knowledge was awarded to Mr. Erik Cohen, George S. Wise, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

For more information, please visit the UNWTO website at <http://www2.unwto.org>.

Website: www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my



<https://www.facebook.com/friendofmalaysia>



<http://twitter.com/TourismMalaysia/> Blog:<http://blog.tourism.gov.my>