



PRESS RELEASE

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TOURISM MALAYSIA PROMOTION GAINS MOMENTUM IN CHINA

KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 10 JULY 2014: It was the wee hours of the morning, but the arriving Chinese tourists on a charter flight from Wuhan at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport on July 10 had smiles on their faces.

The flight, one of many during the year-long charter agreement between Tourism Malaysia and Hubei Wanda New Airlines Travel Services based in Wuhan, marks a symbolic new stage of the Malaysia-China tourism recovery plan following the disappearance of flight MH370 in early March.

“The Wuhan-Kuala Lumpur charter flight route is a major development to regain our footing in the China market and it reflects the strong, long-standing partnership that we have with our China counterparts,” says Chairman of Tourism Malaysia YBhg. Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen.

Until recently, Tourism Malaysia had suspended its advertising and promotions in China during the critical weeks of the MH370 investigation.

“During that time, we maintained constant personal contact with our China partners, engaging with them and communicating with them, so as to uphold the relations that we had built over the years. They have been extremely supportive of our efforts, then and now,” YBhg. Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Dr. Ng says.

To reassure its partners of Malaysia’s commitment to tourism promotions, Tourism Malaysia started a series of familiarisation trips for CEOs of major tour operators in China. The first programme in the series took place from 26 April to 3 May and involved 10 major tour operators from Northern China. Using Malaysia Airlines services, the participants experienced tourism products such as Penang, Royal Belum Rainforest, Perhentian Island, Redang Island, Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur. They were also introduced to new tourism products such as Fly and Drive, cycling tourism and ecotourism.

By then, Tourism Malaysia’s promotional efforts had been shifted to second- and third-tier cities in China. Among the positive outcomes of the effort was the agreement for Hubei Wanda New Airlines Travel Services to offer thrice-weekly Wuhan-Kuala Lumpur charter services for the duration of one year. Discussions are also underway for Air China to resume its direct flights from Beijing to Kuala Lumpur.



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YBhg. Tan Sri Dato' Sri Dr. Ng says, "The turning point to our promotional efforts came when YAB Prime Minister of Malaysia visited China in late May. His visit was essential to further strengthen government and tourism relations between the two countries at a critical juncture."

Tourism Malaysia has since gone into full promotion gear in China by organising FIT (Free Independent Tourist) seminars in Xian, Wuhan, Chengdu and Xiamen; supporting the Malaysia Inbound Tourism Association (MITA) with their B2B seminar with China travel agencies; and organising familiarisation trips to Malaysia for C-trip travel agents in Shanghai.

Tourism Malaysia is also working with AirAsia and AirAsia X on a tactical campaign in the second half of the year to promote Malaysia among the family, couples and singles segments. YBhg. Tan Sri Dato' Sri Dr. Ng says, "The AirAsia and AirAsia X brand has been flying strong in the region and we are excited to be working together with them to regain market confidence. I believe the China market will welcome this collaboration."

She adds, "Globally, we are strengthening promotional efforts in the region as well as in medium-haul markets such as Singapore, Indonesia and Brunei, India, West Asia and Australia, which we hope to see immediate returns. For the long term, we are focusing on the Europe and the Americas."

Tourism Malaysia is exploring all avenues of promotion including digital marketing to help local and international airlines to step up promotions of online ticket sales.

Tourist arrivals in the first four months of 2014 saw a 9.9% increase year on year. However, China arrivals registered a 19.5% dip in April following the MH370 incident.

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MALAYSIA TOURISM PROMOTION BOARD OR TOURISM MALAYSIA is an agency under the Ministry of Tourism & Culture, Malaysia. Tourism Malaysia focuses on the specific task of promoting Malaysia at all levels. Since its inception, Tourism Malaysia has grown by leaps and bounds and it has emerged as a major player in the international tourism scene. In 2013, Malaysia registered 25.7 million tourist arrivals and RM65.4 billion in receipts, making tourism its second largest foreign exchange earner and the sixth highest contributor to its Gross National Income (GNI).

Malaysia is celebrating its fourth **VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR (VMY)** in 2014 with the theme "Celebrating 1Malaysia Truly Asia". The VMY 2014 promotional campaign has started in 2013 with a series of year-long special events and activities leading to VMY 2014. It will contribute to the Government's target to receive 36 million tourist arrivals and RM168 billion in receipts by 2020, as outlined in the Malaysia Tourism Transformation Plan (MTTP) 2020.



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