



PRESS RELEASE

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## FASCINATING TOURISM OFFERINGS AWAIT ASEAN TOURISM FORUM (ATF) 2014 DELEGATES

**KUCHING, 16 JAN 2014:** The ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2014, scheduled to begin here today will provide an excellent platform for Malaysia to showcase its diverse range of tourism attractions, particularly in Sarawak and Sabah, as well as the year-long celebration of Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) 2014.

With an attendance of over 1,600 delegates, including 879 sellers from ASEAN countries, 462 international buyers and 100 foreign and local travel trade media, Malaysia is expected to receive comprehensive global publicity through the 8-day hosting of this prestigious annual tourism event.

Being the host venue of ATF 2014, Sarawak will be featured extensively throughout the 8-day event. Endowed with the world's richest and most diverse ecosystem, Sarawak has indeed plenty to offer when it comes to culture, adventure and nature.

"The ATF 2014 is expected to raise the profile of Sarawak in terms of a tourist destination especially during Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) 2014 and in turn, benefit the travel industry and local communities with the influx of increasing number of arrivals.

"Sarawak is fast gaining popularity as a must-visit tourism destination amongst international and domestic travellers generating an excess of 4 million visitor arrivals annually including 2.6 million foreign arrivals and RM6.2 billion in foreign visitor receipts in 2012," said the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Tan Sri Abdul Aziz.

The 33<sup>rd</sup> ATF in Kuching will also be the premier international event to usher VMY 2014, showcasing the best of Malaysia as the nation celebrates 1Malaysia Truly Asia and plays host to a targeted arrival of 28 million foreign tourists.

Over 200 exciting and vibrant tourism events have been lined-up throughout the year to cater to the interest of different types of travellers. The country will be abuzz with various colourful parades, carnivals, festivals, shows, events, conventions and celebrations. They cover a range of activities from sports and culture to festivals and arts, reflecting a celebration of the diverse lifestyles and customs of Malaysia.



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“The 33<sup>rd</sup> ATF will help ensure that VMY 2014 starts on a high note. It will give Malaysia an opportunity to raise awareness of VMY among ASEAN delegates while the presence of international media and buyers will further boost the publicity of the event internationally,” said Dato’ Seri Mohamed Nazri Tan Sri Abdul Aziz.

“Adopting the theme, *ASEAN – Advancing Tourism Together*, the ATF 2014 will explore the sustainable development of tourism and look at how tourism initiatives and plans can further support the mantra of *Tourism Conserves, Preserves and Protects*,” he added.

The Sarawak Tourism Board is organising two pre-tours around Kuching City on 20 January for ATF delegates. The Kuching Sightseeing Tour will take delegates to both Kuching North and Kuching South while the Walking Tour will enable delegates to experience the daily activities and experiences of the local communities.

The post-tours to Sarawak offer more choices for delegates. Half-day tours include visits to the Sarawak Cultural Village or the Semenggoh Wildlife Centre to see Orang Utan while full-day tours take delegates to Bako National Park or Gunung Gading National Park. Delegates can also opt for overnight tours to Iban longhouses or the Mulu National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that boasts the world’s most extensive cave system and largest cave chamber.

Post-tours to Sabah, another haven for nature lovers and adventure seekers, are also available. Delegates have a choice of two to three nights tours to Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, Sukau, Mount Kinabalu, Tabin Wildlife Reserve, or the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary.

Details of all the post-tours, including contact details, programmes and prices, are available at ATF 2014 website (<http://www.atf-malaysia.com/>).

### **Backgrounder**

Each year, the hosting of ATF is rotated among the member countries. ATF 2014 marks the 33rd anniversary of this event since its inauguration in Malaysia in 1981.

Among the core objectives of ATF include:

- Projecting ASEAN as an attractive, multi-faceted single destination;
- Creating and increasing awareness of ASEAN as a highly competitive regional tourist destination in the Asia Pacific;
- Attracting more tourists to ASEAN member countries;
- Promoting intra-ASEAN travel; and
- Strengthening cooperation among the various sectors of the ASEAN tourism industry.

First established in 1981, the ATF has been a key driving force in developing tourism in the ASEAN region. For over three decades, government and private sector associations have come together



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annually at ATF to discuss, review and strategise ways to continuously promote ASEAN as the world's top travel destination.

The very first ATF was hosted in Genting Highlands, Malaysia. It was seen as an early indication of the willingness of ASEAN countries to work together for the common good of every member country. Since then, ASEAN has grown economically by leaps and bounds, and garnered international recognition for its diverse culture, and the quality of ASEAN as an unforgettable holiday destination. Among the major initiatives of ATF was the promotion of Visit ASEAN Year 1992 and Visit ASEAN Campaign 2002.

With all 10 ASEAN member nations working hand in hand with the public and private sectors, significant progress has been made in growing a sustainable tourism industry in the region. Through increased cooperation and exploring mutually beneficial collaboration in facing common regional challenges, every ASEAN nation stands to benefit from sharing its unique, diverse cultures with the rest of the world through tourism.

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For more media releases, media info and media features on Malaysia's tourism industry, kindly visit the Media Centre of Tourism Malaysia's website at <http://www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my/>

**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 2012, Malaysia registered 25 million tourist arrivals and RM60.6 billion in tourist receipts, placing the country firmly as the 10<sup>th</sup> most popular tourism destination in the world.

In 2014, Malaysia will celebrate its fourth **VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR (VMY)** with the theme "Celebrating 1Malaysia Truly Asia". The VMY 2014 promotional campaign has started this year 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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