

NEWS RELEASE

STRONGER TOURISM TIES BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND PHILIPPINES

MANILA, 24 February 2012 - In an effort to boost tourism arrival numbers from the Philippines, the Minister of Tourism, Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen today welcomes greater collaboration with the Philippines after holding discussions with the Philippines' Secretary of Tourism, Mr. Ramon Jimenez, Jr.

"With the strengthening of collaboration in the travel trade, Malaysia has the opportunity to leverage on connectivity and tourism strengths of the Philippines in the US market, and likewise, Philippines can also leverage on the connectivity and tourism strengths of Malaysia in the European, Middle Eastern, and Indian markets," Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen said at a media conference here.

"In order for this partnership to be successful, the involvement of the tour operators is of paramount importance and packages offered to consumers must be of the highest quality." added Mr. Ramon Jimenez, Jr.

Also present at the meeting were Dato' Sri Dr. Ibrahim Saad, Ambassador of Malaysia to the Philippines, and Mr. Jose Eduardo E. Malaya III, Ambassador of Philippines to Malaysia.

Earlier, Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen hosted a Luxury Malaysia Gala Lunch for 300 key personalities in Manila in line with the aim of attracting more high-end travellers to Malaysia.

The Gala Lunch featured a fashion showcase by Malaysian and international designers in conjunction with the Islamic Fashion Festival (IFF). The IFF is part of an ongoing effort to position Malaysia as a luxurious holiday destination.

Guests comprising foreign dignitaries, tour agents, trade associations, fashion designers, individuals from the Muslim community and the business sector were exposed to the many luxurious experiences Malaysia offers.

To further promote luxury tourism in Malaysia, the Minister's visit from 22-25 February to Manila also includes interviews with foreign media, notably Lifestyle Asia Magazine, People Asia Magazine, and ABS-CBN TV.

There were also meetings held with senior officials from the key airlines to discuss opportunities in improving air connectivity between Malaysia and Philippines.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

Tourism Malaysia inbound travel

Last year, Malaysia received a total of 24.7 million tourists, with receipts of 58.3 billion Ringgit (approx. 19.2 billion USD). The United Nations World Tourism Organisation has listed Malaysia as ninth most visited country in the world in 2009 and 2010. Philippines was listed as one of the top ten tourist generating countries with a total of **362,101** tourist arrivals in Malaysia last year.

Luxury Tourism in Malaysia

As part of the Tourism Transformation Plan to attract more high-yield tourists, Malaysia is promoting itself as an affordable luxury tourist destination. Visitors to Malaysia can look forward to numerous experiences, such as:

1) *Duty free Shopping*

Aside from 5 categories of products – cars, glass & pyrex, cigarettes, alcohol and chocolates, all other products are tax exempted in Malaysia, attracting shoppers from all over the world seeking bargain buys from luxurious brands. The recent opening of the Johor Premium Outlet, featuring more than 80 designer labels along with Malaysia's three annual sales have also turned the country into the ideal place for tourists to shop.

2) *Parks and Gardens*

Tourism Malaysia welcomes visitors to more than 22 parks and garden trails across the country. Our parks have been recognized with 2 gold awards at the internationally acclaimed Chelsea Flower Show in London.

3) *Special Activities / Events*

Other luxury products and events being promoted are Helicopter tours, the Malaysia International Shoe Festival and A Journey through Time, an esteemed watch and jewellery showcase. For the culturally inclined, the Fabulous Food 1Malaysia is an annual food festival featuring the many different local, regional and international culinary treats, as well as the 1Malaysia Contemporary Art Tourism Festival, which promotes modern art by Malaysian artists.

4) *Exclusive wedding / honeymoon destinations*

Malaysia is also a popular wedding/honeymoon destination, with many romantic beaches and islands that provide adventure activities such as scuba diving and mountain climbing.

The Tanjung Rhu resort in Langkawi was recently listed as one of the top ten wedding destinations by 'cnngo.com' for being a renowned wedding destination where foreign couples may choose to wed in traditional Malay, Chinese, or Indian ceremonies, while those looking for a relaxing honeymoon may indulge in the serenity and comfort of the award-winning Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat in Perak.

5) *Luxurious Business Travel*

Malaysia is also an attractive business events hub. The Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau recently announced that it had secured 49 international and regional conventions to be held in Malaysia between 2012 and 2019. With an expected attendance of 35,750 delegates, these events are estimated to generate in excess of RM382 million (approx. 123 million USD) in economic impact for the country.

Upcoming 2012 Malaysia Tourism-related Events

Malaysia will be hosting the Formula1 Malaysia Grand Prix 2012 once again from 23 to 25 March. To add to the excitement, several celebrations are also being organized around the same time, i.e. the Future Music Festival Asia 2012 on 17 March and a special concert by Kylie Minogue. Visitors to Malaysia will also be able to see a vast collection of shoes at the Malaysia International Shoe Festival from 6 to 8 April and enjoy greater retail savings at the 1Malaysia GP Sale from 10 March to 15 April.

For the tennis lovers, Malaysia will welcome top tennis stars including China's rising star, Peng Shuai for the BMW Malaysian Open from 27 February to 4 March. It is just one of many international-level events being brought into Malaysia.

The Tourism Transformation Plan has a goal of attracting 36 million tourists with tourist receipts amounting to 168 billion Ringgit (approx. 55.5 billion USD) in 2020.