

## MEDIA RELEASE

### TOURISM MALAYSIA PARTICIPATES IN TOURISM FUTURES NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2008



*(From L-R) Mr Karl Flowers (Tourism Australia), Mrs Phornsiri Manoharn (Governor, Tourism Authority of Thailand), Dato' Mirza Mohammad Taiyab (Director General, Tourism Malaysia), Mr Tony Charters (Principal, Tony Charters)*

The Director General of Tourism Malaysia, YBhg. Dato' Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, gave a glimpse of Tourism Malaysia's future direction and goals to key industry players at the sixth **Tourism Futures National Conference**. Held at the Crowne Plaza Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia, from 2 to 4 June, the conference was organised by Tourism Australia, Tourism Queensland and Gold Coast Tourism.

Speaking on Malaysia's tourism future, Dato' Mirza expressed that he wasn't surprised to see the increase in tourist arrivals from Australia to Malaysia and vice versa. "The strong and growing Malaysian presence here can be largely attributed to the operations of low cost carrier, Air Asia X, between the two cities - Kuala Lumpur and Gold Coast," said Dato' Mirza. "Likewise, the increase of Australian tourists to Malaysia is also being felt quite strongly in Malaysia, especially since the commencement of Jetstar and Air Asia X flights between the two countries last year."

*On tourism targets*, Dato' Mirza said: "Tourist arrivals to Malaysia made up 11.3% of the total tourist arrivals in the Asia Pacific region, or 2.2% worldwide in 2007, with 20.9 million arrivals. We are currently working towards target arrivals of 22.5 million by the end of 2008, and ultimately 25.7 million by 2010."

*On challenges*: "The tourism industry that we face today is a challenging one. The rising oil prices and airfares; the emerging and strengthening of new tourist destinations and brands such as Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia; as well as the control gained by individual travellers with the use of the World Wide Web as opposed to consulting travel agents – all influence the way we campaign in each market and in each country."

*On marketing*: "We are also gradually moving away from branding activities to bring more focus to destination marketing; as well as catering to new and emerging niche markets including weddings, homestay, student travels, wellness tourism, cruising and many more."

"Two important travel trends we see emerging include the IT savvy independent travellers who prefer researching and booking their holidays online, as well as sophisticated travellers who look for unique and authentic experiences as opposed to just a holiday in a resort."

"Because of this, we have moved our traditional marketing activities to become more interactive and stimulating for our target market. For example, we have a web-training course which is proving very popular, especially with journalists and first time travellers to Malaysia; and we are also doing more radio promotions, especially in Australia where the radio listeners throughout the country are wide and most importantly, interested in travelling."

*On joint marketing efforts*: "In our activities, we are also working closely with our neighbouring countries Singapore and Thailand to package the region as an attractive destination. Many would think we are competing countries competing for the same travellers, but the reality is there are plenty of tourists to go around. And since each country has its own special characteristics or selling points, it only makes sense for us to work together as a region to attract tourists."

*On travel trends*: "It is quite evident that due to work commitments and lifestyle choices, many prefer taking regular short breaks away as opposed to the traditional one long-haul holiday that could last for weeks. This is where low cost carriers servicing the region play an important role as their low fares encourage more frequent travel to the region – with easy and equally cheap access to other cities on the low cost carrier's network."

"There will always be changes in travel trends; and while Asia Pacific remains the 'flavour of the month', the key to keeping new and returning tourists interested in Malaysia lies within niche markets, where we aim to continue introducing new products and destinations that appeal to Australian travellers."

## **BACKGROUNDER:**

The Tourism Futures National Conference brings together sectors that have a direct and indirect role in tourism so that collectively they can examine and respond to the issues influencing its growth. Delegates at Tourism Futures who are engaged with international and national bodies will receive the latest information on industry performance, trends and forecasts; obtain a global perspective on the needs of the industry; and receive updates on best practice and trends. Most importantly, Tourism Futures focuses on issues and opportunities that are emerging over the next ten years. More than 80% of the delegates are senior executives, CEOs and presidents of their organisations.

This year's conference theme 'Global Market, Competitive Edge' focused on the ways and means destinations can maintain or achieve a competitive edge despite operating in an increasingly globalised and homogenised world.

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