

THAILAND

THE GREATEST STORY

IN GLOBAL
TOURISM HISTORY

A 60TH ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE TO
THE TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND



Key Developments

1999

- The auspicious 6th cycle 72nd birthday of H.M. King Rama IX the Great on December 5
- Impact Muang Thong Thani Exhibition and Convention Centre opens
- Australian Society of Travel Writers (ASTW) Convention held 7 August, Bangkok.
- Mr Pradech Phayakvichien takes over as TAT Governor

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UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY TO DIVERSIFY THE DEPTH AND BREADTH OF THAI TOUR PACKAGES



Mr. Pitak Intrawityanunt

*Minister to the Prime Minister's Office
and TAT Chairman*

SYDNEY, 5 MARCH 1999

G'day and Sawasdee Khrap, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome and thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today. Australia and Thailand share a very close relationship, especially in the field of travel & tourism. It has never been forgotten in Thailand that one of the pillars of our policy to build bridges into the Greater Mekong sub-region was founded upon the Australian-financed construction of the first Friendship Bridge built across the Mekong river from Thailand to Laos. This Friendship Bridge is playing a major role in the development of a region wracked by years of war and poverty. So, the people of the region owe a lot to Australia and its continued focus on development co-operation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my warm and heartfelt thanks to the Australian and Thai travel agents, media and all our friends for their continued support for tourism to Thailand. This support is critical towards helping us recover from our economic crisis in Thailand. I am proud to report that the Travel & Tourism industry exceeded its target visitor arrivals for 1998. The official target for 1998, the first of our 1998-99 Amazing Thailand campaign years, was 7.72 million. We achieved 7.76 million, up 7.5% over 1997.



Visitors from Australia played a major role in that success. Counted by nationality, visitors from Australia totalled 287,134, up a solid 22.36% over 1997. We are very pleased to notice that this figure was almost evenly distributed year-around, unlike the very large peaks and troughs we face in arrivals from Europe or North America. This is of course very much due to the hard work of many people, including airlines like THAI, Qantas and British Airways, the many tour operators who support us as well as, of course, the hard-working staff at our TAT office in Sydney.

Let me share with you some interesting statistics. In January-November 1998, we saw a 35% increase in the number of female visitors from Australia which I think should immediately end all speculation that Thailand is favoured by men only. At the same time, there was a 35% increase in the number of Australian children aged under 15 which also testifies to the strength of Thailand as a family destination. We also noticed a 54% increase in first-time visitors and a 65% increase in the number of Australians attending conventions in Thailand. We are most happy with these figures because they prove that our Amazing Thailand campaign strategy to diversify our visitor sources is clearly working.

Indeed, we strongly believe that all this growth will last for several reasons. The Australian dollar now fetches 23.94 baht, as against 19.02 baht before the devaluation of the baht in July 1997. Thailand remains politically and economically stable. All the 70 international airlines flying to Thailand are maintaining their routes as normal. And very significantly, the colourful Amazing Thailand campaign, the new niche-market focus launched in 1997 to cover the years 1998/99, is having a strong impact in Australia and around the world.

We are now in the second year of our Amazing Thailand campaign, and this year will be even more important and bigger than the first because it will climax with what we call the last great celebration of the 20th century, the auspicious 72nd birthday of His Majesty the King. This will be celebrated on 5 December 1999 when our beloved king, the world's longest reigning monarch, will complete what we consider in Asian and Thai culture to be the auspicious 6th 12-year cycle of his

life. The event will be marked by some spectacular events, including the Royal Barge procession along the , which we expect to be televised around the world.

“ These days, many young people are travelling to get away from the stress of their desks. I can recommend them at least 10 Buddhist meditation centres in and around Bangkok, at least some of them run by westerners who have mastered the art even better than us Thais. ”

All through this year, there will be a number of royal events and celebrations, many of them involving the Chao Phraya river, now the highlight of our latest campaign called the Amazing River of Kings. This river on which Bangkok was founded has played a critical role in our history, culture and civilisation. It is to us what the Nile is to Egypt, dotted by many famous temples, landmarks, universities. There are now 10 hotels located along the river itself. All through the years, we will be organising special tours focusing on the river. We will also be attracting conventions and conferences with a river theme. In a few minutes, we will be watching a brief three-minute video on the Amazing River of Kings.

The experience of Bangkok as the capital of Thailand is of course uniquely different from that of the provincial regions where we believe the “real Thailand” prevails. Perhaps not many of you may know that we boast 79 national parks, the archaeological digs of the ancient civilisation of Ban Chiang, three World Heritage sites and the amazing ethnic diversity of Hmong hilltribes in the North to Islamic traditions in the south. I don’t think I need mention the wonders of Phuket, an island that you Australians helped put on the world map with your very creative way of pronouncing its name.

These days, many young people are travelling to get away from the stress of their desks. I can recommend them at least 10 Buddhist meditation centres in and around Bangkok, at least some of them run by westerners who have mastered the art even better than us Thais. Good health also runs through our food. Indeed, I myself was quite intrigued to see this little booklet called Amazing Thai Herbs which informed me that Thai chilis can aid the digestive process and that Thai mint has mild antiseptic properties. Actually, I was looking for something a little more exciting but perhaps we can feature that in our next edition.

What we are offering you, ladies and gentlemen, is an unprecedented opportunity to diversify the depth and breadth of your tour programmes. No sooner do we finish the royal celebrations at the end of 1999 that we will be into the year 2000 when we will mark the first great travel event of the 21st century, the ASEAN Tourism Forum to be held in Bangkok in January 2000. At that forum, you will see more of the bridges that we are building into the entire ASEAN and Mekong Regions, thanks again very much to the Friendship Bridge. The theme of the ASEAN Tourism Forum is Promotion of Seamless Intra-ASEAN travel. Over the next few months, you will see a lot of new developments in that area, especially opening of more border-crossings and relaxation of visa formalities to facilitate travel through one of Asia’s most important frontiers. Indeed, we also

hope to make inroads into developing travel links with India, Bangladesh and Myanmar through a new grouping called BIMST-EC that is emerging on our western frontier.

Thailand, in the midst of it all, is truly emerging as the centre of Asia Pacific Travel & Tourism. Clearly, that is something that our airlines well recognise -- Qantas/BA have a very good hub and spokes operation out of Bangkok, while your other major airline Ansett International is a member of the Star Alliance with THAI. So all the airlines have a great interest in promoting Thailand, I am happy to note.

Some of you may have some questions regarding our declining outbound travel figures. I am aware that Thai outbound to Australia has dropped considerably. But believe me, it is a temporary phenomena, until such time as our economy recovers. Thanks to some very intensive promotion by the Australian Tourist Commission in the old days, our Thai people have been well-bitten by the travel bug and will be heading your way in record numbers once the crisis abates.

However, in order to help the crisis abate quickly, we need you to pump more of your Australian dollars into our economy. So the more Australians who visit and spend money in Thailand, the faster we will be able to get our outbound Thai travellers moving again. And I would like to very specifically point out that our TAT office here in Sydney is ever-ready to help you with any inquiries and assistance you may need.

Let me end by lauding the warm co-operation that we have between the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Australian Tourism Commission. We value the contacts that we have both here and in Bangkok. There is much that we can still do together and I plan to see how we can forge stronger relations, especially to help Australia promote the 2000 Olympics. We just recently finished hosting the last great sports event of the 20th century, the Asian Games, and will be passing the baton on to you for the first great sports event of the 21st century. We wish you all the best of success in pulling this off.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, that is all I have time for today. Once more, thank you for being with us today and for giving me an opportunity to address you. Sawasdee-khrap and a very good evening to you all.



BUILDING NEW BRIDGES: PROMOTING NORTH THAILAND IN MALAYSIA



Mr. Pannara Choochan

Deputy Governor, Marketing

THAILAND MARKETING ROADSHOW 19 JULY 1999, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Nii Hao, Salaam-alaikum and Sawasdee Khrap, Ladies and Gentlemen. On behalf of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, may I thank all our friends in the (Malaysian/Singaporean) media, travel agents, airline, hotel, and tour representatives, for joining us here today and for your interest in Thailand.

We are here to build new kinds of bridges between two very different parts of our ASEAN region -- from the commercial and economic centres of Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to North Thailand, the gateway to the Greater Mekong Subregion and Indochina. Building such bridges is a very important part of our overall strategy under ASEAN tourism development to diversify tourism into the rural and provincial regions of our countries. We know that (Singaporeans/Malaysians) are very fond of our beach resorts in South Thailand. This has made our travel industry in North Thailand feel a bit neglected. So today, we felt it would be good to tell you a little about North Thailand and beyond.

Chiang Mai, the capital of North Thailand, is also known as the “rose of the north.” It has a more peaceful and relaxed lifestyle and cooler weather. Perhaps the most important asset Chiang Mai can claim is its people. Their beauty, hospitality and good manners are legendary throughout Thailand.

It is a city full of religious and cultural importance with the famous hill tribes, Lanna traditions and golden



pagodas and temples. Chiang Mai is also rich in beautiful scenery and tourist attractions including the highest point of Thailand, hot springs, waterfalls and caves, orchid and butterfly farms, snake shows and not forgetting the elephant village. The shopping is equally as good as Haad Yai, but of a slightly different kind.

We are thankful to Malaysian Airlines and Silk Air for providing direct flights from both KL and Singapore to the Rose of North Thailand. Of course, you can also pass through Bangkok and make a very convenient connection on THAI Airways International which has 10 daily flights to Chiang Mai and four daily flights to Chiang Rai.

While North Thailand has numerous charms and attractions on its own, it is also the emerging hub for travel through the Greater Mekong Sub-region. Laos and Myanmar. There are now direct flights from Chiang Mai to Kunming and Vientiane. Occasionally, charters are also operated to Mandalay and Luang Prabang.

However, it is the prospects of road-travel throughout the Mekong region that excites us most. I believe some of you have joined the Friendship rallies that have been occasionally organised from Singapore through Malaysia to Thailand. Now car-lovers from Malaysia and Singapore can drive right through Thailand and to North Thailand. We are working with our tourism counterparts in Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Southern China to allow the entire Mekong region to be opened up for road travel through easier frontier and visa formalities.

Several friendship caravans have been organised in this regard. Indeed, even as I speak, a friendship caravan is crossing over the Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge to Laos, and then into Vietnam. Such caravans are great ways of strengthening relations among the ASEAN neighbours, promoting understanding of different culture and lifestyle, boosting tourism by land and most of all supporting each other's tourism campaigns.

Indeed, I would suggest that you start preparing now for the next era in ASEAN travel that we will

be launching at the ASEAN Tourism Forum in January 2000 -- the promotion of intra-ASEAN travel. Thailand is the only ASEAN country directly linked by road, rail, air and water to the neighbouring countries of ASEAN, the Greater Mekong Sub-region and the newly-formed Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand -- Economic Co-operation (BIMST-EC).

This puts us in a very good position to develop Thailand as the regional hub for tourism in and around the entire region, including Indochina and South Asia. Naturally, the Mekong river is of special interest, one of the last great frontiers of tourism and slated to become a very popular tourism destination in the future as we work with our colleagues in Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, China and Vietnam to promote this region.



There is much work to be done over the next few years. We need to open more border crossing points between neighbouring countries, relax visa formalities to facilitate road travel and create seamless linkages similar to those in Europe. This will take time, but once it is all done, it will create one of the greatest tourism destinations in the world that will benefit us all. For example, during these Amazing Thailand campaign years 1998-99, Malaysians may use their “border pass” to visit Thailand for up to 30 days and visit all parts of the country, as against only the southern peninsula up to Bangkok. We are going to push for more such measures in the future to allow ASEAN citizens to travel throughout the region.

Indeed, visitor arrivals to Thailand from Malaysia and Singapore have been top among the ASEAN group for several years. In 1998, we recorded 918,071 visitors from Malaysia, down slightly over 1997, and 586,113 from Singapore, up quite significantly over 1997. In the first three months of 1999, I am happy to report that the trend is rising again, just as the trend of Thai visitors to both Singapore and Malaysia is also rising.

Before I conclude, allow me to mention that we are currently in the throes of our Amazing Thailand campaign for 1998-99 which will reach its climax at the end of this year. The period November 1999 to January 2000 has been designated as the Golden Months during which a number of magnificent events will be organised around our majestic Chao Phraya river, the River of Kings, to celebrate the auspicious occasion of H.M. the King’s 72nd Birthday on December 5th, 1999.



The Rivers, the Kings, and the Thai people have long been intricately entwined, forming the essence of the Kingdom of Thailand for more than 700 years. Among the highlights of events to celebrate this campaign is the Royal Barge procession which will take place along the Chao Phraya River on November 4, 1999; the Maha Loykrathong and Candle Festival on November 21-23, 1999 throughout the Kingdom and Chiang Mai Food Festival in December 1999.

Our main long-term goal over the next 10-15 years is to establish the uniqueness of Thailand as a world class tourist destination with world class service. The TAT believes that ecotourism will become a big concern for tourism promotion in the new millennium. Another major source market will be health tourism, especially for old people and stressed out yuppies. These are among the themes of the Amazing Thailand years and we will be developing them in the years to come.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are very excited by the future prospects of developing more travel between our three countries, focusing more on new destinations. My objective today has been to focus on North Thailand and the Greater Mekong Sub-region. I hope I have achieved some small success in this regard. With me today are several product sellers from the region in question. You will find them more than eager to do business with you. Please avail of this opportunity.

Thank you, once more, for being with us today, and for your continued interest in Thailand.

PROMOTING THAILAND AS A STOPOVER FOR THE 2000 SYDNEY OLYMPICS



Mr. Seree Wangpaitchitr
Governor

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF TRAVEL WRITERS (ASTW) 7 AUGUST 1999, BANGKOK

Sawasdee Khrap, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Thai tourism industry and the Tourism Authority of Thailand, I am honoured to welcome such a distinguished group of Australia's top travel industry journalists and communications professionals to Thailand. Thank you for selecting our Amazing kingdom to be the venue for your Annual General Meeting.

Since you arrived, I am sure you have seen some of our Kingdom's popular tourist sight-seeing places and tasted some of our Thai food. I hope the experience has whet your appetites, satisfied your taste buds and tempted you to see more of our amazing country. I also hope you have found some amazing story ideas to write and help spread the word that Thailand is truly Amazing!

Ladies and gentlemen, to give you a quick rundown of how Australian visitor arrivals into Thailand have been faring over the last few years, we will be distributing some statistical charts and analysis for your reference. These will give you a good background. In my brief today, I will just give you a broad overview of some of our strategic tourism promotion and marketing initiatives.

In 1997, the economic crisis took a big toll on local

and regional tourism, but the devaluation of the baht from 25 to about 37 to the US dollar made Thailand very attractive for visitors from hard currency markets. The price of taking a holiday in Thailand dropped. Hence the numbers are growing, inspite of the fact that our marketing budget was “devalued” by nearly 60%.

We in the TAT are projecting a promising outlook for the coming year as the region emerges from financial turmoil. The first year of the Amazing Thailand campaign has been successful. Today, we are taking advantage of lifestyle trends, targeting highly-stressed urban dwellers to come for a relaxing holiday in Thailand. At the same time we are focusing on new markets, like India, Israel, the countries of Eastern Europe, even Vietnam. Our latest move was to relax visa facilities for visitors from China and Taiwan.

AMAZING THAILAND CAMPAIGN

The Amazing Thailand campaign 1998-99 came at a critical time for Thailand. Because of its foreign exchange earning potential, the revival of tourism was critical to the revival of the national economy at large. We designed the campaign to steer Thailand away from the promotion of mass markets and instead focus on niche-markets, especially food, shopping, health and culture. This comes in response to shifting global travel trends and the recognition that travellers are becoming more sophisticated, seeking more unique, healthy and culturally rich holidays.

Promotion of tourism to the emerging destinations of Indochina is also an important part of the new strategy. Australia has played a major role in this. Australia generously funded the construction of the Friendship Bridge which opened in 1994, the first bridge across the Mekong river between Thailand and Laos, a move that has contributed to the economic progress of our landlocked neighbour to the north.



“ Thailand is an ideal place to break journey. Royal Orchid Holidays offered by our national carrier, THAI Airways, offers a variety of exciting trips to explore the depth and breath of Amazing Thailand. ”

AMAZING RIVER OF KINGS

The main driving event of the Amazing Thailand campaign is the auspicious occasion of His Majesty the King's 72nd Birthday on December 5th, 1999. To commemorate that event, which we call the last grand celebration of the 20th century, we created a theme called the Amazing River of Kings which is intended to pay tribute to the Chao Phraya river, where we are now, and its role in the development of Thai history, economy and culture. Several exhibitions and festivals will be held highlighting houses, buildings and public places all over the country will be decorated in celebration of this occasion.

AMAZING STOPOVER FOR OLYMPICS 2000

Bangkok has been one of the historical hubs for flights between Europe and Australia. It is anticipated that many of the thousands people heading from Europe and Asia to participate or attend the Sydney 2000 Olympics will be stopping over in Bangkok. Currently there are 52 direct flights every week from Australia to Thailand by international airlines such as Thai Airways International, Qantas/British Airways and Olympic Airways.

Thailand is an ideal place to break journey. Royal Orchid Holidays offered by our national carrier, THAI Airways, offers a variety of exciting trips to explore the depth and breath of Amazing Thailand. Tours and packages range from a half-day to several days, and generally include hotels and meals, sightseeing, excursions and transfer between hotel and airport.

SHOPPING

More than anything else, we want Australians to come to shop, especially now that the Australian dollar fetches 25 baht, as against 18 before the devaluation. Our TAT office in Sydney reports that in 1998 shopping came second on the list of desirable holiday activities for Australian visitors, after our amazing beaches and our amazing soft adventure tours.

To help you get better deals, we have been holding Amazing Thailand Grand Sales twice a year in Bangkok as well as other major cities for the second year. This event was last held in June 1999 but if you missed it, never mind. Please come again in November-December and stock up on your Christmas/Millennium shopping. Major department stores and shops nation-wide will be offering sale prices of 10-80%. You can also now get a VAT refund when you leave, affording you further savings.



FOOD

Thai food not only tastes good, it also makes you feel good. I know there are Thai restaurants in nearly every city of Australia and at virtually every street corner of your major cities. A couple of months ago, we held a major Thai food conference to which we invited many Australian owners and operators of Thai restaurants. The event was a huge success.

We are hoping to convert the roughly 25,000 Thai restaurants world-wide into tourism sales and marketing outlets. It is one of the world's fastest growing cuisine, thanks also to our entrepreneur Thai people who live in every corner of the world from Hollywood to Alice Springs. Hopefully, those who eat in those restaurants today will come and visit Thailand tomorrow.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes my brief remarks. I want to reiterate how pleased we are to see you here. I'm sure you will have a nice time and find plenty to write about. If there's anything my staff or I can do for you, please do let us know. I wish you a pleasant and successful stay in Amazing Thailand.

IN REAL LIFE, ELEPHANTS ARE ANYTHING BUT CARTOON CHARACTERS



Mr. Pradech Phayakvichien
Governor

OPENING CEREMONY OF UNIT 3 OF THE ELEPHANT HOSPITAL 27 DECEMBER 1999 THAI ELEPHANT CONSERVATION CENTRE, LAMPANG

The Director of Thai Elephant Conservation Centre
Mr. Tadashi Kinoshita and Honoured Guests

I am greatly pleased and honoured to be with you here today for the opening of Unit Three of the Elephant Hospital in Lampang. Allow me to thank the Friends of the Asian Elephant Foundation and other related organisations for their support as well as their hard work in the preservation of this extremely important species of animal. They play a significant role in making people aware of how important elephants are to our Southeast Asian history and ways of life.

When we learn about elephants these days, it is usually in the form of cartoon characters with funny names. But in real life, elephants are anything but cartoon characters. They are the largest land animals in the world, weighing anything between 2,500 to 3,000 kilogrammes and requiring food intake of up to 200 kilograms of grains and water a day. They also need large tracts of natural habitat in which to roam and survive.

“ Today, unfortunately, modern trucks can do all the heavy work and the role of elephants has gone into decline. ”

Elephants have also played a major role in Thai and Southeast Asian history. They were once used to defend our borders against invaders. Later, they were used for pulling logs in the forests and then for carrying heavy loads over long distances. Their role is recognised in our national emblem of Thailand in which an elephant head is prominently emblazoned. Indeed, if one studies the map of Thailand, it is said that the country itself looks like an elephant's head.

Today, unfortunately, modern trucks can do all the heavy work and the role of elephants has gone into decline. They are being neglected and because few want to seriously devote their attentions towards taking care of these wonderful animals, they are falling sick and dying. Many of them are seriously malnourished. Others suffer accidents in the forests.



We in the tourism industry are trying to do what we can to help. Many elephants are used for jungle treks in the growing number of ecotourism lodges all over the country. We also pay tribute to the role of the elephants through our famous annual Surin elephant round-up which is organised every November and attended by thousands of tourists. This way, the elephants themselves and all those involved in breeding them do develop alternate sources of income and livelihood.

The Friends of the Asian Elephants Foundation also has a major role to play. It has brought together a group of like-minded help with a common desire to help the elephants by raising awareness of their importance and becoming focal points for projects such as this.



The Elephant Hospital itself was established in 1994 with the objective of helping sick elephants, regardless of whether they are owned by govt or private interests. No charge is levied for the treatment of the elephants during their stay in hospital. This is the third unit in the Elephant Hospital but I understand the ultimate target is 11 units. I hope and pray that the wish is fulfilled.



The completion of this Unit Three is due to the generosity of Tadashi Kinoshita, the owner of the Kinoshita circus in Japan who donated 3.3 million yen or about one million baht through the TAT office in Osaka. On behalf of the TAT and all elephant lovers everywhere, I would like to thank Kinoshita-san for his benevolence and generosity. I believe the construction of this Unit Three with the help of his donation will go a long way towards improving the living conditions of the elephants and safeguard them from going extinct.

I would also like to thank the Thai Elephant Conservation Centre and the Friends of the Asian Elephant Foundation and other related organisations who have been involved in this laudable effort.

The auspicious time of opening the Unit Three is now here. My best wishes to all those who have helped bring it to fruition and I pray that their efforts will bear good fruit in the years to come.

Thank you for having me here with you.

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TOURISM HISTORY

A 60TH ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE TO
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