



**TOURISM AROUND
THE WORLD MONTHLY**

The interview of
Mrs. Malinee Kitaphanich,
Director of meetings and incentives of
Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau
during IT&CMA show 09 October 2009
Bangkok, Thailand.



While attending the IT&CMA show in Bangkok in October 2009, **TOURISM AROUND THE WORLD Monthly** met with the outgoing Director of Meetings and Incentives of the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, just days before she left. We take this opportunity of wishing Mrs. Kitaphanich success in her new role. Here is what she had to say regarding Thailand and its m.i.c.e. industry.

In your opinion what is the conference infrastructure in Bangkok like and how would rate the level of service offered by hotels in Bangkok?

The infrastructure in Bangkok for any conferences is state of the art technology. Many venues are purpose built where conference organisers can make selections to suit their event needs. For example, Bangkok International Trade and Exhibition Center (BITEC) is offering their pillar-less venue which is excellent for heavy industry exhibitions or conferences. Queen Sirikit National Convention Center (QSNCC) is well equipped with maximum number of break out rooms for any government level conference and its prestige image is a plus. IMPACT is excellent as the largest venue with excellent track record of world class events i.e. 25,000 delegates of Herbalife Extra Vacanza in 2008, 35,000 delegates of Lion International conference in 2008. Hospitality in any hotel service is at a premium level. Generally all business hotels in Bangkok are regarded as a breakthrough in the hotel industry, for example, Grand Hyatt Erawan is the first property in the world that launches its innovative meeting concept as Campus. The Ramada Menam Riverside hotel is the world awarded for the best facilities for disabilities, etc. Overall, Bangkok is responding to all the needs at all levels especially when it comes to value for money, Bangkok is also truly the best to serve all.

How do you think the global economic crisis has affected tourism in Bangkok and how are the city's tourism sector coping with the situation?

The global economy is a world challenge for every destination. The city tourism sector has already taken this opportunity to explore more of their product development and to make their city ready when economic recovery returns. The latest, Bangkok Art and Exhibition Center is open in the heart of the city and its national art exhibition has been lined up to create new interest to their visitors. The Museum of Siam, the renovation of colonial style buildings, has been selected to be the greatest event backdrop for many of the world's conferences and its private receptions. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) has just launched their Bangkok Smile campaign which aims to enhance the visitor experience. The recovery is healed best with human touch and genuine hospitality which is Bangkok's strength.

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What do you think the future holds for conference tourism in Bangkok and why should one select Thailand as the destination for its conference?

The fact that the recovery of Conference as well as corporate business events has started to pick up positively is good. Forward booking is now in place till 2010. ITCMA&CTW 2009 has proved the most successful since its establishment in Thailand in 2001. The increase of 28% buyers are appealing to all exhibitors, especially Thai exhibitors whom have already confirmed that 15% more will be participating in this show in 2010. We are expecting to welcome back at least 20% of the 150 buyers who continued their trip in Thailand after the show. With an aggressive marketing programme planned in 2010 and onwards, we are expecting to boost the number of business event up to 10-15% in 2011-2012. Our future is bright with some promising conferences, such as, Rotary International in 2011 for 3,500 delegates, for example.

In general how is the current (inbound) tourist flow in Bangkok?

The current inbound tourist flow is picking up in the last quarter of 2009 onwards. Some significant long haul markets from Scandinavian countries are very popular. The opening of Thai Airways International flight from Oslo to Bangkok is overwhelming and to be increased as demand is high. The short haul flights from India remain the highest load factor and thus, high loyalty to Thailand. Bangkok is serving well as the capital and gateway to other provinces. The Tourism Authority of Thailand has confirmed their target to reach 14 million visitors in 2010.

Why do you believe that Bangkok is a safe destination for its visitors?

Bangkok is a large city, with its population of 10 million people. Bangkok is growing very fast. It is the first city in the World that is having their famous tourist police. This is one of the measures that Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) is very proud of, as they are well aware that safety is essential. The tourist police are actually there to help facilitate all the directions of foreign visitors as well as to help solving any problems that may occur when foreigners travelling around. As such, Bangkok has gone beyond other international standards for safety when compared to other destinations. However, like any other large cities in the world, all foreigners are reminded to avoid being in any isolated areas where even local people are not going.



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How does Bangkok maintain its position as the Destination in the South East part of the Asian continent?

Being strategically staged as a hub in SEA, Bangkok is a place that is not to miss when travellers come to this region. The real charm of Bangkok remains the Thai hospitality that many travellers will be very impressed with. Besides, culture, historical sites and a variety of attractions as well as first class accommodation, its standard is much beyond that of the European standard and this is a plus to any travellers.

How do you see the future of Bangkok tourism in attracting European and Middle Eastern Business Travellers?

Business travellers will position Bangkok as the most significant place for new business development as growing opportunities for meetings and business matching are available with strong support from the Thai government. With long term good relationships of both countries, statistically, Germany is the first and Britain is the second for numbers of inbound business travellers. In terms of investment, Britain ranks second for Foreign Direct Investment in Thailand. Following a recent visit from Prince Andrew, Duke of York, who represents Britain for trade and investment in Bangkok in October 2009, the potential for business travellers from the UK would be more positive especially following the world economic recovery. This has proved the best timing to attract more business traffic and such increase the number of business travellers. The other rising star of Europe will be expanding the Scandinavian market as well as Eastern Europe with Poland, the Czech Republic etc. The Middle East has become a fast growing market that continues to increase its business alliances in Thailand. With appropriate flights from the Middle East many business travellers will look at Thailand as their premium incentive destination. This approach will soon develop into a better business relationship in due course.

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