

**Speech by Dr. Yuthasak Supasorn,
Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)
ATF 2016's Thailand Media Briefing
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Meeting Room 7&8, SMX Convention Center
Manila, Philippines**

Amazing Thailand Luxury: where life rules everything! (Video 3 minutes)

Sawasdee khrap and good morning,

Members of the media, ladies and gentlemen,

Life is a blessing... because every day there is a chance for happiness.

To live life to the fullest, we do not need to put a value to luxury. It is defined by the memories that are priceless instead. And this happiness... it is something you can always find in Thailand.

The video that you just saw the ***Amazing Thailand Luxury: where life rules everything!*** reflects the new perception of Thailand. This video is part of a very important MOVE of the Thai tourism industry.

Thailand is aiming to be a "Quality Leisure Destination" through "Thainess" with sustainable growth by creating "value-added experiences" and striking the balance between revenue, community and the environment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is my first ASEAN Tourism Forum since assuming my position as Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand in September last year. In these few months, I am honoured to have been entrusted in taking an important role in the travel and tourism industry in advancing the socio-economic development of Thailand.

May I provide you with a bit of my background. I graduated from Chulalongkorn University and received a scholarship for the Master's and Doctoral Program at the Keio University of Japan. I am not a new face to the Thai tourism industry. My previous experiences in working with the Board of Investment (BOI), the National Food Institute (NFI), and the Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion (SME), have provided me with the proper background in working as the Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

Government Support for Thai Tourism

The Royal Thai Government recognises the tourism industry as one of its priority economic sectors. Tourism is, of course, a major contributor as a source of foreign exchange earnings and income distribution, especially for the benefit of the rural areas and SMEs (Small and Medium Sized Enterprises) as well as the tool for helping the Thai people preserve their culture, environment, history and heritage.

Last year, the Royal Thai Government declared the 2015 Discover Thainess Year. With the full support from the government and the cooperation from both the public and private sectors, Thailand ended the year 2015 with great success.

Thailand's Tourism Situation

In 2015, the Thai tourism industry hit the highest record in our history both in terms of revenue and number of tourist arrivals. According to the preliminary figures of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand received tourism revenue of 1.4 trillion Baht or around 42 billion US Dollars with the growth of 23 percent, and a total number of international visitor arrivals of 29.8 million, which was an increase of 20 percent over 2014.

Targeted Revenue

For this year, we will be focussing less on the number of visitor arrivals and more on attracting quality tourists. Therefore, we are targeting 2.4 trillion Baht or around 66.5 billion US dollars in revenue this year. Of that total, 1.5 trillion Baht or 43 billion US dollars will come from international markets and 850 billion Baht or 23.5 billion US dollars from domestic travel.

2016 Marketing Strategy for the International Market

Our primary focus will be to promote the kingdom as a “Quality Leisure Destination through Thainess.” TAT is aiming at enhancing the image of Thailand as a quality leisure destination for the quality tourist markets by offering ‘Thainess’ as a unique selling proposition.

The wording of the new strategy indicates the focus of “quality” as measured by visitor expenditure, average length of stay, and the overall quality of the visitor experience.

We would like to place more emphasis on creating the overall quality of the visitor experience, or in other words, Thailand intends to maximise the overall tourist satisfaction.

We realise full well that in order to attract more “quality” tourists, we will need to provide a “quality” tourism product. This will mean upgrading our tourism management efforts system wide.

At the same time, we need to ensure a balance between tourism growth and its social and environmental impact.

As part of our quality over quantity approach, we are focussing more on our marketing efforts on niche markets and specific customer segments. These are some of the niche-markets we are prioritising:

Luxury Travel: Thailand has much potential and variety in terms of upscale products and services to accommodate high-end tourists in all dimensions including the stylish boutiques or beachfront pool villas in Phuket or Ko Samui, which offer an unrivalled holiday experience, many fine-dining restaurants guaranteed by global awards as well as numerous high-class department stores with countless brand-name flagship stores. For luxury travel, there are well-equipped yachts in Phuket and Pattaya to accommodate the need of classy island hoppers.

Another promising area is the cruise market. Thailand welcomes an average of about 100,000 cruise passengers per year, but we are projecting more after the completion of an upgraded cruise ship port in Phuket this year. We will also launch a “Super Yacht” show in Phuket during 11-14 February, 2016, to kick off the Super Yacht market. Foreign investors will also be invited to build more super yacht marinas.

Health and Wellness: The art of rejuvenation and healing, from organic spa therapies to traditional Thai massage, is an integral part of Thai culture. Our wellness providers are consistently recognised as among the best in the world. Recently, the Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary and Holistic Spa on Ko Samui won the Spa of the Year (Southeast Asia and the Pacific) from the Asia Spa Awards 2015 along with the winners in other categories.

Thailand’s private hospitals have internationally certified physicians and specialists in a wide range of fields backed up by state-of-the-art medical facilities. Also, we have seen remarkable advancement in anti-aging care in Thailand. The wellness centres offer a full range of services from a complete ‘eat clean’ diet to personalised regenerative and metabolic treatments.

Female Travellers: TAT will target more on female travellers. Thailand is the perfect destination for female travellers, with its extensive array of shopping complexes, spas and health resorts, diet-watched culinary attractions and a great variety of other options and tours. Muay Thai class is now very popular among young ladies to build their muscles and meditation in temple, are surprisingly growing among young executive working ladies.

Golf: Thailand offers a wide choice of golf courses for golfers who come from all around the world to play and attend international tournaments at one of over 200 courses with superb facilities and a breath-taking selection of locations around the country. We also hold an annual golf travel mart to provide more networking opportunities. Apart from beautiful golf courses, stunning 5-star accommodation and facilities on site or nearby and the excellent services. These are the things that combine Thailand to be the perfect and golf vacation paradise.

Community-Based Tourism: We will also retain a strong focus on catering to the continuing growing trend for Community-based tourism, a holiday that compliments its environment and the local communities. Rural Thailand offers a chance for visitors to interact with local communities and partake in exciting green activities like trekking, birdwatching and sea canoeing.

For example, Ban Na Ton Chan Community, Sukhothai Province, in northern Thailand infuses local wisdom to create a charming homestay experience. In the south, visitors are able to learn about the local way of life; such as building a Hua Tong boat and painting Batik at the Ko Klang Community, Krabi province. In the east, the Ban Nam Chiao Ecotourism Community, Trat province displays the unity between the art and culture of Buddhism and Islam.

2016 Marketing Strategy for the Domestic Market

One key policy measure is to better balance our domestic and international tourism sectors. This year, we will do more to boost domestic tourism by encouraging Thai people to travel within Thailand. Local tourism destinations will be developed to inject income to the local economy. This is aiming to support the government policy of creating the “**Strength from Within.**”

We plan to launch various measures and promotional campaigns through cooperation with related organisations, the private sector and airlines.

The “One District One Tourist Destination” project will add more value to popular destinations as well as create new destinations through a story line to encourage travellers to explore new places. The policy will strive to develop tourism and local products by upgrading the quality of souvenirs, tourism activities and walking streets. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports, TAT as well as the Board of Investment of Thailand have been assigned to launch incentive measures to encourage the private sector and communities to invest in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Campaigns will encourage travellers to explore beyond popular tourist destinations. In line with the strategy to promote greater distribution of visitors and reduce the congestion of the popular tourist spots, the specific campaigns include the 12 Hidden Gems, and the 12 Hidden Gems Plus.

ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)

Collectively the third largest economy in Asia and the seventh in the world, the ASEAN Economic Community or AEC offers many prospects and opportunities to the business community and general public. Following its formal establishment this year, the AEC will have great impact on the way we live, work and do business. It will open up huge opportunities for building on our geographical advantage in accessibility, trade and travel in ASEAN.

The theme for this year ATF is One Community for Sustainability. It is the first ATF since the AEC took effect. We see a promising future ahead of us as we work together to fulfill the vision of One Vision, One Identity, One Community in the traditional ASEAN spirit of friendship and cooperation.

ASEAN members have been working together on joint promotional campaigns to promote ASEAN as One Single Destination. Aside from strengthening the local economy of each country, it will also strengthen the economy of the whole ASEAN region.

TAT is now introducing a “Two Countries One Destination” package to global travellers. We will emphasise our connectivity with Myanmar, Cambodia, Lao PDR. and Vietnam. For example, we have set up a sample road-tour programme called “Crossing 2 Checkpoints, Travelling in 2 Countries”. This includes a five-day tour to visit various attractions of Thailand and Cambodia. The tour has been designed in a way that allows visitors to fully utilise the new cross-border highways and the international border checkpoints.

During 7-16 January, 2016, TAT organised a “Mega Caravan to ASEAN” that introduced media and travel trade representatives from Asia to the wonderful world of road travel through Thailand-Lao PDR.-Vietnam to Cambodia. The caravan began and ended in Bangkok and went through nine cities and towns of unique historic and heritage of interest including Da Lat, Siem Reap, Buri Ram, and Champasak.

Participants in the caravan were able to see for themselves the state of the Asian Highway network, the facilities at the border checkpoints and the many products and services that have emerged to facilitate road travel.

The ASEAN members will benefit from the integration of the ASEAN Economic Community to promote travel throughout the region. Improved accessibility via highways and low-cost airlines will enable tour operators to introduce their clients to many new destinations in ASEAN. I am sure that with the integration of the AEC, we will see “Thailand and ASEAN: Stronger Together”.

TTM+ 2016

This year, our leading travel show, the Thailand Travel Mart Plus or TTM+ 2016, will be for the first time opened to our ASEAN NTO Members, and held for the first time outside Bangkok. Chiang Mai, which we refer to as the Rose of the North, has been selected to promote its readiness and potential as a tourism hub for North Thailand and the border regions of Myanmar and Lao PDR.

This year’s theme is “Smile with Us.” The event will be held on 8-10 June, 2016, at the Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Centre. We believe it will go a long way towards raising the profile of the many fascinating new products and destinations in that part of the region.

Registration for buyers and sellers is now open. Please visit the official website: www.thailandtravelmartplus.com for more information.

Closing

On behalf of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, I would like to thank our gracious hosts, the Department of Tourism of the Philippines, and all other members of the Philippines tourism private and public sectors for their excellent arrangements and hospitality.

With the ASEAN Economic Community, we shall grow together hand in hand with co-prosperity among the members.

Finally, I thank all of you for joining us here today. No matter how much effort we put into promoting Amazing Thailand, we cannot succeed without your support.

Sawasdee khrap. I will be happy to take a few questions.