

# Miracle Year

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[www.tourismthailand.org](http://www.tourismthailand.org)

## Happy New Year



**GOODBYE** 2011 and let's bid a warm welcome to brand new 2012. It's time to put the all the old problems away and greet the new year with new resolutions and plans.

And when it comes to travelling plans, where better to spend your holidays than to take a few days off and spend them in Thailand. Many things are there in store for you from the south right up to the north of the country where you would find festivals and attractions galore.

There is a flower festival in Chiang Mai to complement the Royal Flora Ratchaphruek while in Hat Yai the new year lights up with a Lantern Festival at the Hat Yai Municipal Park. For those desiring something colder, just next door is the Ice Dome specially created by ice carvers flown in from China.

A few months down the road are the Songkran Festival to beckon the Thai New Year and by the middle of the year, we would have our popular Grand Sale.

But before that, we would like to wish all our Chinese friends a Happy Lunar New Year. Head on down to Bangkok Chinatown or Yaowaraj to experience one of the most colourful and exhilarating celebrations. Watch the streets come to life as crowds of worshippers, exploding firecrackers, dragon dancers, and families of Chinese descent gather to partake in the

street fanfare as well as enjoy sumptuous Chinese banquets. Spend a full day exploring and watching dragon parades.

This year the Chinese Lunar New Year is celebrated on January 23 and although not a public holiday in Thailand, members of Bangkok Chinese communities usually take at least one day off from work and engage themselves in various New Year activities.

It has become one of the most exhilarating times filled with dynamic sights and sounds. Shop and home owners of Chinese descent decorate their places with red paper lanterns, Chinese calligraphy banners, and posters.

The whole Bangkok Chinatown turns red literally from beginning to end. Street fanfares and cultural festivities, such as the dragon parades, acrobatic dances and firecrackers, are the highlights not to be missed.

Once celebrated amongst Bangkok's Chinese communities, today Chinese New Year is a festival for all. Get into the spirit of Chinese New Year by wearing a red shirt, blouse or dress.

Other provinces where Chinese New Year is celebrated are Nakhon Sawan, Chachoengsao, Chonburi, Suphanburi, home of the biggest Chinese descendants museum in South East Asia, Phuket, Trang, Songkhla and Chiang Mai.

## Director's Message

### HAPPY NEW YEAR.

I HOPE you are looking forward to a great year. In the past few months some parts of Thailand, notably those located along the Chao Phraya River had been affected by massive flooding.

However, we are happy to note that things have gone back to normal in Bangkok and the surroundings. Most tourism areas that were affected in Bangkok, notably the Jatujak Weekend Market, most popular among Malaysians, and other tourism attractions in Ayutthaya are now operating as before.

While the flooding had a minor impact on tourism areas like Chiang Mai, Pattaya and the southern destinations such as Koh Samui, Phuket, Hat Yai and Krabi, we have recently launched a recovery campaign called *Beautiful Thailand*. This campaign is aimed at restoring tourist arrivals for the duration of the high season.

Our Malaysian friends and media had always stepped in to help us during our time of need. The Malaysian government as well as private organisations and individuals have shown their concern by contributing in cash and kind to those affected by the recent flood. For this we are extremely grateful and thank the Malaysians on behalf of the Thai people.

Despite the setbacks of the last few months we are happy to note that for the first 11 months of the year the number of Malaysian tourist arrivals to Thailand had increased by 15.92 per cent over the same period last year. Up until the month of November, the total number of Malaysians who visited Thailand stood at 2,093,987 which made up 12.24 per cent of the 17,105,283 total arrivals.

These figures amply illustrate the confidence that Malaysian tourists have in Thailand as their favourite holiday destination.

Many events and festivals are back on track such as the Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations in Bangkok's Chinatown, provinces such as Suphanburi, Chachoengsao and Nakhon Sawan.

In the south, the Lantern Festival kicks off the tourism calendar in Hat Yai. This is followed by the Trang Underwater Wedding in mid-February, a one of its kind event that had become popular among those who wanted to tie the knot with a difference.

Meanwhile, in the north we have the Chiang Mai Flower Festival held on the first weekend of February annually and the on-going Royal Flora Ratchaphruek.

As you can see there are no shortage of events and festivals for you to enjoy and take part in throughout the year all over the country.

So see you in Thailand soon.  
Thank you and sawatdi khrap.

MR WIBOON NIMITRWANICH  
Director  
Malaysia & Brunei



# Campaign to restore tourists confidence

AS the flooding situation in Thailand has stabilised and flood waters are receding, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is accelerating its efforts to ensure travellers and tour operators worldwide to understand that Thailand's tourism sector is open for business and welcoming visitors through a recovery campaign called *Beautiful Thailand*.

Although the flood mainly affected provinces in the Central Region, it had minor impact on tourist attractions throughout Thailand. Popular destinations in the North such as Chiang Mai and Sukothai, in the South such as Phuket and Krabi and even in the Central Region such as Hua Hin and Pattaya, were not affected. Central Bangkok also remained dry as did Suvarnabhumi Airport. The World Heritage Site in Ayutthaya, the most notable tourist attraction to be flooded, is undergoing restoration but is fully accessible. It has already seen an increase in the number of foreign visitors.

"For the past several months, the TAT has been reaching out to media worldwide and tour operators to give them an accurate picture of the situation. We made it very clear that most of Thailand's tourist destinations were welcoming visitors, the airport was operating and inner Bangkok was dry. We also emphasized that there was really no need to avoid coming to Thailand during the high season," said TAT Governor Suraphon Svetasreni.

"We are now focused on restoring tourist arrivals for the duration of the high season. The TAT is confident that from the year-end holiday period until March 2012, the second half of the high season, the tourism sector will have recovered. In the past, the Thai tourism sector has come back quickly when faced with similar situations. This clearly shows travellers' preference for and loyalty to the Thailand brand," he said.

To ensure the rapid recovery of the Thai tourism sector, the TAT is conducting a comprehensive communications and marketing campaign called *Beautiful Thailand*. It involves engaging media from key markets worldwide. Since the middle of November, TAT executives have met with the bulk of foreign media stationed in Thailand, broadcast media visiting from China, the Ukraine, Japan, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Israel, and have appeared on regional cable channels such as, Bloomberg TV.

The TAT is also planning a mega fam-trip during December that will bring over 300 travel media from overseas to see for themselves that most of Thailand's tourism attractions and infrastructure remain intact.

BEAUTIFUL  
THAILAND  
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The TAT's 25 overseas offices are working directly with tour operators in their local markets to develop campaigns and promotions to restore confidence and support tourist arrivals. These initiatives include special promotions with airlines and tour operators, TV and movie production and celebrity marketing.

According to Governor Suraphon, the most effective strategy to restore tourist confidence and build lasting momentum for the Thai tourism sector is to focus on value-added services and warm Thai hospitality, not engage in price cutting.

To help to mitigate the impact of any crises that should occur in the future, Governor Suraphon recently joined a panel discussion held by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Thailand Chapter. Other participants included Dr Seksan Narkwong, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Sports; and Mr Martin Craigs, Chief Executive Officer of PATA, and a large group of PATA members.

While the PATA membership commended the TAT's global crisis communications outreach during the flood, participants at the seminar agreed that the tourism industry needs to work closer together to ensure balanced media coverage when this type of situation occurs.

"Recovering from a significant event such as this year's flood requires the full co-ordination and co-operation of the public and private sectors. All of us must work together to provide unified, clear messages about the real situation to help build confidence and show that we are open for business and visitors can enjoy their holiday here. This will help protect the jobs of more than two million Thais working in the tourism sector," concluded Governor Suraphon.

In conjunction with the launch, TAT also held a mega educational trip for journalists from all over the world to visit Bangkok and the areas affected by the flood.

Malaysia was represented by all the major newspapers and national news agency BERNAMA at the event. Apart from visiting Bangkok, the journalists also had a chance to visit Ayutthaya and Kanchanaburi.



# King's birthday celebrations in Brunei and Malaysia

THE Tourism Authority of Thailand flew in a group of dancers from the Rajabhat University in Hua Hin for the 84th birthday celebrations of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej in Brunei and Malaysia.

Apart from dances from the various regions of Thailand, visitors to both events also were given a demonstration of handicraft making.

## Workshop for frontliners

A GROUP of frontliners led by Director Mr Wiboon Nimitrwanich had a chance to visit Chiang Mai recently as part of an exercise to familiarise them with tourism products from the north of the country.

While there they had an opportunity to attend a seminar and workshop conducted by the TAT and listen to talks by speakers from the head office.

The trip culminated in the frontliners taking part in one of the most popular festivals celebrated in Thailand, the loy krathong festival.



## Pray for Thailand tournament raises over RM80,000

LOCAL event organisers, CSSB Events Sdn Bhd held a charity golf tournament to help victims of the recent flooding in Thailand.

The event, which attracted participation from the corporate sector and individuals managed to raise more than RM80,000 through green fees, sponsorships and auctions of various golf accessories and other items.

The cash was later presented to the Chai Pattana Foundation for disbursement to the flood victims. The Chai Pattana Foundation was set up by HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej to help the poor.



## Agents meet in Chiang Mai, Phuket

A TOTAL of 10 travel agents from Malaysia were able to meet up with their counterparts from the north and south recently.

From November 22-23, they were at the Chiang Mai & the Northern Tourism Forum in Chiang Mai where they took part in a buyer meet seller session with travel agents and members of the hospitality from the northern region.

During their visit, the group also had a chance to visit the Royal Flora Ratchaphruek, an international horticultural exhibition in the northern city.

Following that they travelled south to attend the Phuket Andaman Travel Trade from November 25-26.

In Phuket, they had a chance to attend another seller meet buyer session with their counterparts and members of the hospitality industry from Phuket, Trang, Phangnga and Chumphon.



# Asean Golf Tourism Forum

**THE** Tourism Authority of Thailand recently organised the Asean Golf Tourism Forum at the seaside resort of Pattaya attended by journalists and travel agents from the Asean region.

Malaysian delegates to the forum were privileged to hear many notable speakers including American tennis legend and former Wimbledon winner Jimmy Connors.

The group later took part in the Asean Golf Tournament at the Burapha Golf Club in Si Racha, Chonburi.



## Press visits Surin and Ubon

**THE** Malaysian press had a chance to visit one of the least known event locally - the annual Surin elephant round-up.

With more than 300 elephants involved, it was the single biggest jumbo gathering of its kind in the country.

The journalists were later taken for a visit of Hindu ruins in Phnom Rung, Buriram, and the Pha Tem National Park in Ubon Ratchatani.

## Beautiful Thailand press conference

**THE** Tourism Authority of Thailand recently held a press conference to brief the local media on the recent flooding in various parts of Thailand and inform them that the situation was back to normal.

The event, which was also attended

by travel agents and the various airlines, also served as a thank you party.

It was our way of showing our gratitude to everybody for the support and confidence in Thailand and helping it be the most popular tourism destination for Malaysians.



## Radio 988 visits Chiang Mai

**DISC** jockeys from Radio 988 had a chance to visit Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son recently.

They were accompanying a group of five contest winners organised by the radio station together with travel magazine, Travelmate.

In Mae Hong Son, the group visited the town of Pai, a once less visited part of the country which is slowly turning into a backpac-

kers paradise due to its cool temperature and natural attractions.

To reach Mae Hong Son from Chiang Mai, the group had negotiated a series of 1,864 turns uphill and downhill to reach the town which is located amid mountains and fogs. Visitors who successfully complete the journey could go to the TAT Mae Hong Son Office and obtain a certificate attesting to their feat.



# Ayutthaya welcomes visitors

**THE** Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) recently held the *Ayutthaya Cleaning Day* event as part of its *Beautiful Thailand* campaign to restore Thai tourism following the country's recent flood. The event, which took place on Sunday, December 4, 2011, also commemorated HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 84th birthday.

Thousands of volunteers visited Ayutthaya to lend a hand in cleaning up and landscaping the city, with strong support from both the public and private sectors in the tourism industry. Ayutthaya, Thailand's ancient capital, is known globally for its UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The *Ayutthaya Cleaning Day* was one of many initiatives to ensure the city is ready to welcome back visitors with a warm heart. Visitors can explore almost all of the World Heritage Site and the other ancient ruins spread throughout the city. All transportation is operating as per normal and most services and activities for tourists are available as per usual; such as bicycling, elephant rides, guided tours, restaurants and accommodation. Tourists from all over the world are now coming to the city to enjoy immersing themselves in Thailand's past.

According to the Ministry of Culture's Fine Arts Department, most of



Ayutthaya's ancient ruins remain strong and intact. The restoration of historical sites affected by the flood is underway under the guidance of UNESCO, which recommended slowly pumping water out of some of the ruins, such as, Wat Chai Wattanaram to preserve their structural integrity.

## Chunyun New Year celebration package



**THE** stunning new 30 suite 137 Pillars House, Chiang Mai which opens on 1 January 2012 is adjacent to the famous Wat Gate Khar Rham Temple and just minutes walk from up-market shopping boutiques and riverside restaurants.

In celebration of its first Chinese New Year, 137 Pillars House has created the Chunyun Celebration Package priced at Baht 34,310 (USD 1,137) and is available from 20th to 30th January 2012.

For more information and reservations, please contact:

Email : [info@137pillarshouse.com](mailto:info@137pillarshouse.com)

Website : [www.137pillarshouse.com](http://www.137pillarshouse.com) or [www.slh.com](http://www.slh.com)

Facebook : [www.facebook.com/137pillars-house.com](http://www.facebook.com/137pillars-house.com)

**THAILAND'S** Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) together with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), had announced that visitors to Thailand do not need to be concerned about health risks related to the recent flood.

"The flood, which has receded from most areas, poses no health risk to tourists. Only Thai residents who have been exposed to flood water for a long period of time have experienced a few

## No flood-related health risk

isolated health problems. Visitors to tourist attractions in central Bangkok or elsewhere throughout Thailand will not face any health problems relating to the recent flood," said TAT Governor Suraphon Svetasreni.

The MOPH also has an inspection team focu-

sed on ensuring sanitation at tourist attractions and destinations that were affected by the flood, especially in terms of food and water safety as well as hotel and lodging standards.

For further information, please go to: [www.ddc.moph.go.th](http://www.ddc.moph.go.th)

## Dead Sea salt and mud treatments

**CENTARA** Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of its latest Spa Cenvaree, set within the newly-opened Nova Hotel & Spa Pattaya, Centara Boutique Collection, and one of the first spas in Thailand to be based around the benefits of pure sea salt and mud harvested from the Dead Sea at depths over 420m below sea level.

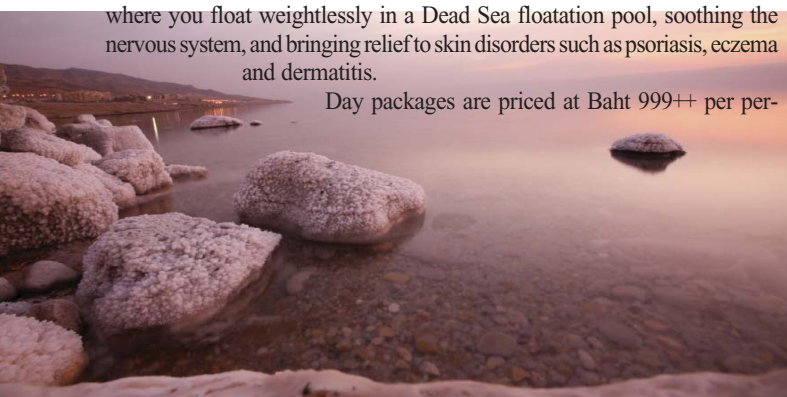
The spa is a highlight of the hotel, which soft-opened in November and is located in Central Pattaya within ten minutes stroll of the beach.

Each spa journey includes a relaxing soak with mineral-rich sea salts where you float weightlessly in a Dead Sea floatation pool, soothing the nervous system, and bringing relief to skin disorders such as psoriasis, eczema and dermatitis.

Day packages are priced at Baht 999++ per per-

son, which includes the use of the salt pool and any choice of one massage and one mud treatment. Other treatments include detoxification programmes incorporating Dead Sea mud wraps, and body polishes using local seaweed and herbs.

For reservations or more information, please contact Spa Cenvaree at Nova Hotel & Spa Pattaya, Centara Boutique Collection at (+66) 038-725-999 or visit [www.spacenvaree.com](http://www.spacenvaree.com), Facebook: [www.facebook.com/centarahotelsresorts](http://www.facebook.com/centarahotelsresorts), Twitter: [www.twitter.com/staycentara](http://www.twitter.com/staycentara).



# Calendar of Events



## Hat Yai Lantern Festival & Ice Dome

Date : January 1 – April 30  
Venue : Hat Yai Municipality Park

Spectacular lanterns would again be on display at the Hat Yai Municipality Park as in previous year. But this time the dates have been moved from January 1 to April 30.

Artists and workmen from China had again lent their hands toward the project. The lanterns will again be displayed according to various themes – from animals to fairy tales and the zodiac.

Next to the lanterns is the Hat Yai Ice Dome, which had been open since November.

## Chiang Mai Flower Festival

Date : February 4  
Venue : Chiang Mai City

The event is held on the first Saturday of February has turned into one of the most popular festivals in the Chiang Mai tourism calendar.



## Magha Puja Day

Venue : Nakhon Sri Thammarat  
Date : March 4 – 7



It marks the four auspicious occasions, which happened nine months after the Enlightenment of the Buddha when 1,250 Arahants ordained by the Buddha himself returned to see the master without any schedule. It was on the full-moon day of the third lunar month.

# Trang underwater wedding



**FEEL** like tying the knot this year? Or just to reaffirm your marriage vows? And do it with a difference?

Well, we have the answer for you. Why not head down to Trang, just a little over an hour's drive from Hat Yai.

## Hua Hin Fringe Festival

**HUA HIN** has its own Fringe Festival.

With artistes and performers from all over the world and of course Thailand, this year's programme is unique and has something for everyone's taste. The current Fringe Festival runs from November 12, 2011 – February 25, 2012.

The Fringe Festival 2011/12 is being held at the amazing venue, Vic Hua Hin, under the guidance of artistic director Patravadi Mejudhon. It is supported by the Office of Contemporary Arts and Culture at the Thai Ministry of Culture.

Returning to the Fringe Festival is Yael Rasooly and the Golden Delicious Theatre from Jerusalem. The show will feature three object theatre pieces in one evening, January 21, 2012.

Another Thai production will be presented on February 4, with B-Floor from Bangkok. *Taste of Curry* combines live music and a story about cooking with a shattering look at life in all kinds of languages: Thai, English, French, Gibberish; and of course physical movement

This is the venue for the annual Trang Underwater Wedding, held during Valentine's Day yearly for more than 10 years. The three-day event is held from February 10-12.

**Date** : November 12, 2011 – February 25, 2012  
**Venue** : Vic Hua Hin

and live music to present the full taste of life!

Our next guest travels from the UK to Thailand to perform his one-man piece *SPACE*. Timothy Mann is an actor, writer, musician and video editor who joined the theatre company Nose2Nose in 2006. He will ask the infinite question, "What is SPACE?"... and maybe also find an answer.

A co-production with the Festival La FOte, Bangkok, will be the final event of the Fringe Festival: *Pichet Klunchun and Myself*, performed by the French artist JTrime Bel and the Thai dancer Pichet Klunchun. We will see a combination of traditional Khon and modern Dance, to close the festival on February 25, 2012.

All performances of the Fringe Festival 2011/12 at Vic Hua Hin start at 7.30 pm.

For more information please check [www.vichuahin.com](http://www.vichuahin.com). Tickets for the events are available at Vic Hua Hin or call for reservations now: 032 827 814-5.

## Jet Ski safety tips

**JET** skis are very powerful water craft and can be dangerous. Inexperience and inattention can result in serious, even fatal, accidents.

It is important to be aware of the particular risks associated with the activity.

According to [www.Safety-Resource.org](http://www.Safety-Resource.org), the vast majority of jet ski accidents involve a collision with another vessel. Jet ski operators are often unaware of the limitations of their craft in terms of speed and stopping distance, or the relationship between power and steering.

Other potential outcomes include: collisions with swimmers, head injuries, drowning, broken bones and similar injuries related to improper handling of the vehicle.

In addition to medical expenses, having to pay for damage to rental equipment can be very costly.

Only rent from licensed jet ski rental companies. Jet skis available for rental should also be licensed. The license numbers should be prominently displayed on both sides of the bow. All jet skis must be insured.

For personal safety, only take to the water on a jet ski when seas are calm.

If you see a red flag, this indicates that it is not safe to swim. The red flag also signals that it is also not a good time to venture out on a jet ski.

Wear a life vest when riding a jet ski. Check to see that the life vest has a whistle securely fastened by a line to the front of the jacket.

Jet skis are not permitted in areas designated for swimming only. These areas are marked by floats and roped off.

Jet skis operators are also required to stay within 500 metres of the coastline.

Do not mix alcohol and water sports.

The best advice for jet ski rental is to abide by the rules which reflect best practices and use good judgement.

If in doubt, please call the Tourist Police Hotline: 1155.

For emergencies, call 1669.