

# amazing THAILAND

*Always Amazes You*

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## Happy New Year



**COME** early February, the Chinatowns of various provinces will light up for the Lunar New Year celebrations to usher in the Year of the Rabbit.

Most notable of the celebrations would be Yaowarat, as the Chinatown area in Bangkok is known.

Yaowarat covers an area of 2 sq km on the banks of the Chao Phraya River and the easiest way to reach the area is by underground train to the Hua Lam Phong station.

Across the road from the train station is Traimit Road where the famous Traimit Temple or Temple of the Golden Buddha stands. This wat houses a 3 meters high Buddha made of more than five tonnes of gold.

## Lunar New Year celebrations

The Golden Buddha is now in a new building with the Golden Buddha Museum on the second level and the Yaowarat Heritage Centre of the first level.

Yaowarat was the city's first commercial district and shop signs in both Thai and Chinese give the visitor a clear indication that he's in Chinatown.

Activities here lion dances, Chinese operas, floral floats with traditional Chinese ornaments, traditional Chinese lantern contest, Miss Chinatown Beauty Pageant and folk song contest through the 15 days.

During this period a wide array of deli-

cious Chinese and Thai delicacies could be found in restaurants and roadside stalls to delight both locals and tourists. In addition there would also be all kinds of souvenirs and handcraft items available at good bargains.

The other areas, apart from Bangkok, where the Lunar New Year is being celebrated includes Hat Yai, Suphanburi, Nakhon Sawan, Pattaya, Trang, Chachoengsao, Phuket and Chiang Mai.

If you happen to be in any of these areas, head on down to where the celebrations are held and join in the New Year revelry.

## Director's Message

Sawatdi khrap.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you and we hope 2010 had been kind to those in the tourism and travel industry as a whole.

We hope the year end holidays had allowed you to travel quite a bit and that Thailand was one of your destinations.

Being Malaysia's closest neighbour to the north, it is imperative that whatever happens in either country is going to affect the travelling plans of people in the other country.

Be that as it may, although the early part of 2010 had been a little turbulent in Thailand we are happy to note that things did pick up favourably towards the third and fourth quarter of the year.

Travellers to Thailand did increase by quite a bit and Malaysians certainly contributed a fair bit to the overall arrivals of tourists to Thailand.

We hope 2011 would be a successful year and as you might have noticed our new theme is Amazing Thailand Always Amazes You. You may also have noticed that we have added a QR code under the masthead of this newsletter. You can use your mobile phone to read the code and be transported to our website.

Early February is going to be a busy month with the Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations. Although not officially a public holiday in Thailand, the lunar new year is celebrated quite extensively among the Thais of Chinese descent, especially in Bangkok, Hat Yai, Phuket, Chiang Mai, Pattaya, Chachoengsao and Suphanburi. You may want to drop by and see how this festival is celebrated in Thailand.

On Valentine's Day, another event, probably the only one of its kind in the world that is organised on a wide scale will take place. This is the underwater wedding in Trang, south Thailand. So if you are planning to get married in a unique way, then this is certainly a great way to do it. Or maybe you would just like to drop by and have a look before making your plans.

Madame Tussauds had also opened in Bangkok, providing another attraction to the city. If that is not quite your cup of tea, head north to Chiang Mai. There is the annual flower festival as well as the Umbrella Fair in Bor Sang.

For those religiously-inclined, a merit making ceremony would be held at the Wat Mahathat in Nakhon Sri Thammarat to mark Makha Puja Day.

On your way back by road, please do not forget to stop by Hat Yai. Two attractions that you should not miss is the Lantern Festival and Ice Dome. Both are at the Hat Yai Municipal Park.

As you can see we have everything to suit whatever your tastes or inclinations may be. So please visit us soon in Amazing Thailand and let us continue to amaze you.

MR WIBOON NIMITRWANICH  
Director  
Malaysia & Brunei



## Flower Festivals in Chiang Rai & Chiang Mai

**IF** you are obsessed with beautiful flowers and decorative plants, this is the festival for you. Experience these beautiful flower-decorated floats and a magnificent tapestry of floral splendour that blankets the land.

There are also agricultural exhibitions, floral contents, and product sales by local groups of housewives.

A highlight of the festival is the grand parade that attracts sponsoring companies and organisations that beautify floats with elaborate flower decorations, presenting an eco-tourism message or just simply stealing the hearts of spectators with their vivid colours and beauty.

The parade leads up to the annual beauty competition to crown the city's flower queen, who represents the flower growers and exporters as an ambassador of good will. Entertainment, an opportunity to dine on tasty northern snacks and view cultural performances are clearly features that draw both visitors and locals to this annual event.

Home and garden lovers discover Chiang Mai is a February showcase for exotic orchids, flowering plants and blooms that thrive in the northern valley's temperate cool season. Particularly during the cool season months, mid-November through to February, this northern provinces justifies

its title "Rose of the North." But for flower lovers, who flock to this annual festival, 4 to 6 February in the town's Buak Hat Park, there is far more to the town's garden reputation than the impressive display of elegant roses.

Since 1977 when the annual festival was inaugurated, it has earned a reputation on par with similar events such as Japan Sakura Flower Festival and the Netherlands' flower parades. This was further enhanced by the successful flower expo in 2006.

Due to variations of climate and its mountain landscapes, the Chiang Mai Flower Festival presents a diversity of blooms and flowers. Many of them, originally imported from temperate climates such as carnations, chrysanthemum, tulips, are displayed side-by-side with tropical flowers including exotic orchids.

Meanwhile in Chiang Rai, there are contests of decorative plants, orchids and orchid farms, horticultural exhibitions, sales of agricultural produce, fruit trees, ornamental plants, tea and coffee, sales of OTOP products, beauty contest and Miss Teen Contest.

This year, the festival will include another interesting feature – a floral procession.

It is being held from Dec 25, 2010 to Jan 3, 2011. Open daily from noon to midnight.

## Underwater wedding in Trang



**GETTING** married in February? Fancy a wedding with a difference?

Every year the province of Trang plays host to the only underwater wedding in Thailand come Valentine's Day.

Join couples from all over the world and make your wedding vows several metres underwater.

# Makha Bucha Day

ALSO known as Sangha Day, Makha Puja Day is celebrated throughout Thailand and is observed on the full moon of the third lunar month. This year it falls on 12-18 February.

Sangha Day commemorates a day when 1,250 monks, all from different places and on their own initiative, spontaneously came to pay homage to the Buddha after going out to different parts of the country to preach.

In Pali, Makha is the name of the third lunar month, and Bucha means "to venerate". On this day, Thai Buddhists gather at sunset in their local temples to participate in candlelight processions called Wian Tian.

Ceremonies express appreciation for the order of monks founded by the Buddha and for the Three Jewels – the Buddha, the Dhamma (the teachings) and the Sangha (the order of monks).

In Nakhon Sri Thammarat, north of Hat Yai, devotees march with yellow cloth to Wat Mahathat. The cloth is draped around the foot of the pagoda.



## Front-liners visit Bangkok and surroundings

TRAVEL agents and journalists familiarised themselves with the various products that Bangkok and the surroundings have to offer when they went on an educational trip in November.

They attended a seminar organised especially for the front-liners of the travel agencies. Later they visited Madame Taussaud that had just opened in the Thai capital, featuring such legends as Bruce Lee and Michael Jackson.



## Recce trip for next year's grand finals

OFFICIALS from CSSB Events visited several golf clubs in Hua Hin, Cha-am and Bangkok to assess and select the clubs for the grand finals of the Cleveland Srixon CSSB Open next year.

Among the clubs visited included the Springfield Royal Country Club, Majestic Creek Country Club, Loch Palm Golf Club, Muang Kaew Golf Course and Lam Luk Ka Country Club.



## Loy Krathong celebrations

MALAYSIAN journalists were introduced to a festival that had been celebrated for more than 700 years in Hat Yai on the full moon night in November.

This year the Loy Krathong celebrations fell on the night of Nov 21 and celebrated throughout the country.

In Hat Yai it was held at the Hat Yai Municipal Park, where the journalists participated in this age-old tradition.

During the visit they also had a chance to visit the Ice Dome and Lantern Festival, which were also held at the park.

The Lantern Festival and Ice Dome, set up with the assistance of experts from China and opened last November, will be held until February and April respectively.

# Trang's many attractions



**TRANG**, in the south of Thailand is less well-known compared to Phuket and Krabi although it used to be a thriving port. It was the first city where rubber was planted. Phraya Ratsadanupradit Mahison Phakdi brought rubber from Perak and planted it here before anywhere else in southern Thailand in 1899.

Rubber is now considered an important commodity of Thailand. The important Trang River flows through the province from its origin in the Khao Luang mountain range and the Palian River from the Banthat mountain range.

The province is located on the coast of the Andaman Sea, and contains 46 islands and a long western coastline of about 119 kilometres.

Situated along the Andaman coast, Trang province is home to innumerable beautiful islands, while the mountainous eastern region is home to dramatic waterfalls, caves and pristine jungle. Between the mountains and the coast are extensive rubber plantations.

Trang was an important sea port of southern Thailand. According to legend, the ships always arrived in the morning, which lead to the name of the town – Trang derived from the Malay word for light (terang).

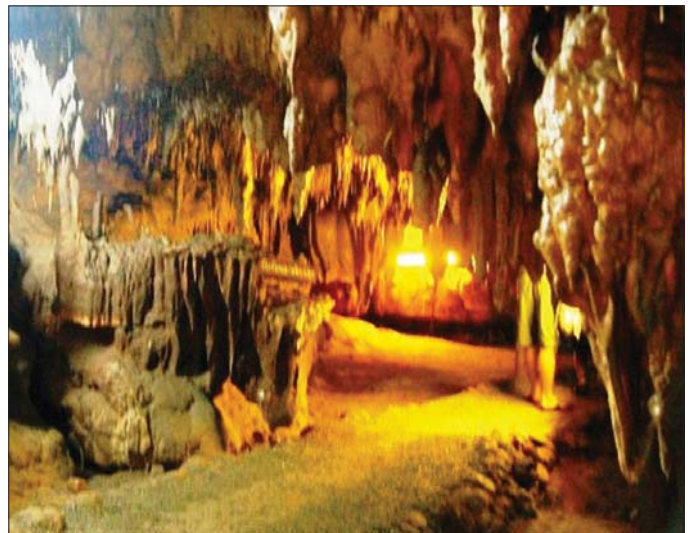
Trang has numerous attractions, among them being Koh Ngai, Koh Muk,



Emerald Cave, Yong Ling and San Beaches, Koh Chueak, Koh Waen, Koh Kradan, Pak Meng Beach, Ton Te Waterfall, Tham Le Khao Krob, Sai Rung Waterfall, Koh Lao Liang, and Koh Takiang.

While in Trang, visitors can also embark on a host of activities such as bird watching, golf, trekking at the numerous waterfalls or diving in its clear waters. As a result most visitors refer to Trang as a destination off the beaten track.

Trang also offers numerous local products which are popular as souvenirs, they are Suea Toei or Suea Panan (mats woven from screw pine), Muk (container for small things), ray leather products; namely, bags and shoes, basketry made of cattail stems, carved-wood products from Thep Tharo wood, para rubber toys and *Na Muen Si* local woven cloth. Products of local food include Trang roast pork, Trang's cake, 'Khao Chong coffee, 'Kapi' or shrimp paste, etc.



**THAILAND** has earned its stripes as the golf capital of the region. In less than 20 years, it has transformed itself into one of Asia's brightest stars on the golfing landscape.

Today, Thailand has more than 280 golf courses, which is more than any other country in Southeast Asia and reportedly has between 500,000 and 700,000 golfers. It had also produced some of the greatest names in Asian Golf – Boonchu Ruangkit, Thongchai Jaidee, Prayad Markseang and Thawon Wirachant to name a few.

Thailand is set to stage the following events in 2011.

1. **2011 Asian Golf Tourism Forum**  
July 24-30, 2011 at Centara Grand Hotel
2. **2011 Southeast Asia/India Golf Merchandise Show**  
March 18-20, 2011 at Centara Grand
3. **2011 PGA of Asia Conference**

## Thailand is off and running as **ASIA'S GOLF HUB**

March 18-20, 2011 at Centara Grand

### 4. **2011 Asia Pacific Golf Summit**

October, 2011

### 5. **2011 Asia Pacific Golf Industry Show**

(To be announced)

### 6. **2011 Golf Course Superintendents of Asia Summit**

(To be announced)

All of these events are being produced and staged by Asia Pacific Golf Group through its subsidiary, Asia Pacific Golf Development Conferences (APGDC).

"We have selected to headquarter all of our shows in Thailand based on very sound business reasons," explained Mike Sebastian, Chief Executive Officer of the Asia Pacific Golf Group.

"It is a nation that loves golf, enjoys a very strategic geographic location relative to all of Asia and is just a terrific venue for international conferences and exhibitions," he added.

Mr Sansern Ngaorungsi, TAT's deputy governor for International Marketing (Asia and South Pacific), says, "We view all of the events being staged by APGDC as being a very important part of our total effort to promote both the game of golf and golf tourism to Thailand in particular."

"Golf in Thailand is a very unique brand of the game – it is unhurried, very pleasurable, very affordable and the game can be played on a variety of locations – by the sea, by the mountains, by the rainforests and right in the heart of bustling Bangkok city."

# Bor Sang Umbrella Festival



21 - 23 January, 2011

**BOR SANG**, on highway 1006 heading east from Chiang Mai, appears to be a typical sleepy rural village. But hidden in the tiny lanes, villagers have perfected a craft that creates the country's most famous umbrellas.

For more than 100 years, the village has been associated with the production of umbrellas made from Saa paper derived from mulberry tree bark.

Using silk and cotton, weaved at neighbouring Sankampaeng, villagers produced umbrellas decorated with images of the north, its flowers and birds, all intricately hand-painted.

Today, Bor Sang village exports both Saa paper and silk umbrellas. They are seen at trade shows in a variety of sizes, from giant parasols that offer a shady canopy from the sun, to miniscule variations that adorn popular cocktail drinks.

To celebrate this success, the village hosts a three-day festival every January. Streets are illuminated by lanterns, while hundreds of umbrellas are hung from the rafters and beams of houses and shops. Bands play, while villagers compete to design the year's most attractive umbrella. Concerts, a food festival and beauty contest all compete for the attention of the audience, a mix of both tourists and residents, who gather here to celebrate Bor Sang's innovative handicraft skills.

Throughout the year, tourists visit the village, a short 6 km drive from Chiang Mai, to buy umbrellas and study the process and skills that go into making a handicraft entirely from natural products.

## Amazing Thailand Always Amazes You

CITY folks who commute by the light rail transit (LRT) or monorail would now be quite familiar with our promotion theme – Amazing Thailand Always Amazes You.

As of October, two LRTs on both the Putra and Star lines as well as the monorail circumnavigating Kuala Lumpur is wrapped with the various attractions that always amaze you.

In addition, buses on selected routes are also carrying the Amazing Thailand Always Amazes You message.





## Canoeing in Krabi

**JOURNALISTS** from various publications were introduced to the various attractions in Krabi in a familiarisation trip in November.

They had a chance to sample what Krabi had to offer in terms of eco-tourism with a visit to

Bor Tor in the Phangnga Bay and canoeing to the the caves and visited the Phee Hua Toe Cave.

Earlier, they were taken to the Waree Raksa Hotspring Hot spa to soothe tired muscles after the flight from Kuala Lumpur.



## Chiang Mai beckons

**AS** the northern region experiences a drop in temperature, the city of Chiang Mai beckons travel agents and journalists from all over the world to the Chiang Mai Tourism Forum (CTF) from December 1-4.

Already into its 6th year, the CTF was attended by more than 150 buyers and media from Malaysia, Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Chiang Mai attracted about two million tourists in 2009 and 1.5 million foreign arrivals. It is

served by seven airlines from Malaysia, Kunming, Luang Prabang, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei and Yangon. Chiang Mai International Airport was upgraded to receive eight million passengers a year up from 2.9 million at the present.

In 2011, Chiang Mai is promoting itself on several themes such as Adventure & Eco-Tourism, Golf, Wellness & Spa, and MICE City.

Apart from attending the CTF, the Malaysian delegation also had a chance to sample some of the attractions in and around Chiang Mai such as the flight of the gibbon and the Night Bazaar.



## The Royal Trophy in Hua Hin

**THE** 5th edition of the Royal Trophy is scheduled to be held at the Black Mountain Golf Club in Hua Hin from Jan 7-9, 2011. The tournament will pit the best of Europe against the best of Asia in a series of sixteen foursomes, four-ball and singles matches.

Europe prevailed in the first two editions of the Championship while Asia secured a most historic victory over the European masters of team match play in 2009.

Asian Team Captain Joe Ozaki has drafted Jeev Milkha Singh to complete his line-up comprising Asia's brightest young stars, Ryo Ishikawa, Noh Seung-yul, the

## Hansar Bangkok opens January

**FOLLOWING** the debut of its first property in Thailand in July; the 74 room Hansar Samui, the stunning 94-suite luxury hotel, Hansar Bangkok, will open its doors on 4 January, 2011.

Located in upmarket Rajdamri Road, the luxurious Hansar Bangkok is surrounded by high end properties, elegant shopping areas and the lush greenery of the Royal Bangkok Sports Club.

Comprising just 94 suites, Hansar Bangkok is small, enabling it to offer a boutique experience, yet rooms are extremely large.

Understanding the needs of its customers, Hansar places particular emphasis on value in its pricing structure, whether for accommodation, food and beverage, spa, meetings or events.

Hansar Bangkok is offering a promotional rate of Baht 4,500 per night for a Studio Suite, inclusive of breakfast for two, for a limited period.

Rates are subject to applicable service charge and government taxes.

For enquiries and bookings, please contact: gm@hansarbangkok.com.

Sales and Reservations :

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www.slh.com/hansarbangkok



new Asian No 1, Kim Kyung-Tae the newly crowned Japan Golf Tour Order of Merit champion, Yuta Ikeda, winner of four titles in 2010, Shunsuke Sonoda, Thongchai Jaidee, and Liang Wen-chong.

Included in Colin Montgomerie's Europe team are Italian prodigy Matteo Manassero, who has just been named European Tour's Rookie of the Year and Sweden's Henrik Stenson.

The event is organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Sports Authority of Thailand. Tickets are available via Total Reservations at 66(0) 2833 5555 or at www.TheRoyalTrophy.com.