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I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Nakhon Phanom Province and the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office for organizing the Mekong Tourism Forum 2018, under the theme of “Transforming Travel - Transforming Lives”.

Thailand is proud to be this year’s host of the 21st Mekong Tourism Forum, or MTF, and it is also a fitting opportunity for the governments of member countries to meet to discuss the further development of our beloved tourism industry and our people, thus we are also organizing the 41st Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Working Group as a sideline meeting. The six member countries, consisting of Cambodia, PR China (Yunnan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, are coming together to discuss further cooperation on sustainable tourism development, and marketing of the Greater Mekong Subregion. MTF 2018 offers positive opportunities to encourage the participation of the public and private sectors.

We have chosen Nakhon Phanom as the host province for MTF 2018 because we at the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand believe that Nakhon Phanom is prominently located to serve as a hub of Tourism in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Though currently considered as a secondary tourism destination, focused primarily on domestic tourism, the city and surrounding region of northeastern Thailand has great potential for sustainable tourism growth, delivering experiences from food tourism, adventure tourism, and religious tourism.

As such Nakhon Phanom is also the perfect venue for Thailand to commence with a proactive initiative to bring together ASEAN and South Asian nations in an effort to showcase common elements of Buddhist Tourism. Thailand is well positioned to be a hub of Buddhist Tourism due to its location as well as Buddhist culture and heritage. Nakhon Phanom, being home of some of the most important Buddhist landmarks in Thailand, an ideal destination to kick off this exciting project.

Friends of tourism, I warmly welcome you to "Amazing Thailand", and I hope you will enjoy your stay in Nakhon Phanom province. Enjoy the diverse food with Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese influence, and the beautiful scenery overlooking the Mekong River.

I thank all delegates for taking the time to actively participate and contribute in this forum and be part of the transformation of this diverse region into one of the most dynamic and prosperous economic regions in the world.

My best wishes to a successful Mekong Tourism Forum.

HE Mr Weerasak Kowsurat
Minister of Tourism and Sports Thailand
WELCOME TO NAKHON PHANOM

It is our honor to organize this significant event in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO).

On behalf of the people of the province of Nakhon Phanom, I have the tremendous pleasure to welcome all representatives of the GMS member countries, delegates from the public and private sectors, and representatives of the media and international organizations to Nakhon Phanom to attend the 2018 Mekong Tourism Forum.

We are proud to be chosen as the host destination by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand due to our location right at the Mekong River, bordering to Laos, with close proximity to Viet Nam. This cross road makes Nakhon Phanom unique as it integrates eight different ethnic tribes in its territory, including a large group of Vietnamese and Laotians. Nakhon Phanom is one of the oldest cities along the Mekong River in Thailand and used to be an independent kingdom. Today, our charming city of 300,000 inhabitants is considered a major gateway to the upper Northeast Mekong area.

Being one of the most important destinations for Buddhist Tourism in Thailand, we are excited to support the Ministry of Tourism and Sports in its pursuit to position the country as a hub for Buddhist Tourism.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite all delegates to visit our attractions, especially to taste our unique culinary delicacies, with Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese influences.

I wish everybody a successful MTF 2018, and a nice stay in Nakhon Phanom.

HE Mr Somchai Vitdamrong
Governor, Nakhon Phanom Province
Dear MTF 2018 Delegates:

On behalf of the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office, we welcome you to the 2018 edition of the Mekong Tourism Forum in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, organized under the theme Transforming Travel – Transforming Lives.

Tourism can be an important catalyst in changing people’s lives for the better through mutual understanding. Transformative Travel can also drive change in the way we behave in combatting serious issues, such as overtourism, inclusive growth, and plastic pollution, amongst others.

For the second year after MTF 2017, we are banning single-use plastic from the event, and by giving every delegate a limited edition refillable water bottle, as well as bamboo straws, we help to reduce the amount of plastic waste produced in the GMS. In addition, this year at MTF 2018 we devoted an entire session on highlighting the plastic pollution issue. A single aluminum bottle can replace as many as 4,000 plastic bottles. We believe that we will be able to save around 5,000 bottles during Mekong Tourism Forum 2018 alone.

Refill your own limited edition MTF 2018 water bottle at Nakhon Phanom University and the official hotels. It is our gift to you, courtesy of TEATA (Thai eco-tourism and adventure-travel Association) and Win Win Smile Nakhon Phanom.

Collaboration has been our focus while building the Mekong Tourism industry platform over the past four years – online and offline. While last year in Luang Prabang, we matched sixteen relevant small businesses as venues with sixteen topical sessions, this year we will produce eight thematic strategic workshops in eight community villages around Nakhon Phanom. A first when it comes to travel and tourism conferences globally, we are creating an immersive environment where delegates and villages can learn from each other.

For the second time, we are integrating MIST, our Mekong Innovative Startup Tourism Program into MTF. MIST is a joint initiative between the Mekong Business Initiative of the Asian Development Bank and the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office, with funding from Australian Aid.

It is critically important for the travel industry to embrace innovation and integrate new startups into the tourism ecosystem by embracing passionate young entrepreneurs. We believe that we are one of the world’s few tourism boards that are connecting promising startups with the travel and tourism industry via a pitch competition and mentoring program.

The Mekong region is well positioned to take advantage of the potential tourism brings for poverty alleviation and inclusive growth. Nevertheless, we need to prepare ourselves to meet the demands of a changing consumer landscape taking into account the importance of the internet and social media, the sharing economy and the rising demand for authentically local experiences. Increased air and land connectivity, visa openness, and increased tourist arrivals to
destinations that were hardly accessible make the GMS ever more attractive for international mainstream tourists. As we witness continued tourism demand, we also need to put measures in place for a responsible growth. A long-term sustainable framework that takes into account the 17 Sustainable Development Goals has to be aligned with our objectives.

We believe that the real stars of the Mekong region are the small businesses creating unique and memorable experiences. We have created two initiatives, operated by public-private partnership framework Destination Mekong: One being the Experience Mekong Collection, curating responsible small businesses in categories Sleep, Taste, Do, Shop, and Cruise. In partnership with Mahidol University International College, we showcase innovative businesses from the Experience Mekong Collection through case studies to build capacity and to inspire other businesses to learn. The second initiative is the Mekong Moments collaborative campaign and social commerce platform. MekongMoments.com offers any business regardless of type or size a web presence powered by the innovative social commerce management system Enwoke in return for encouraging their customers and staff to share their experiences on their own social media by tagging #MekongMoments as well as the business. Not only will the platform help to collaboratively promote the region and build marketing capacity for small businesses, but it also increases exposure and drives sales directly to the actively participating businesses.

Our first regional marketing campaign, the Mekong Mini Movie Festival, runs on the Mekong Moments platform and encourages people to share their Mekong experiences in a minute or less. In the first four months, the successful campaign was able to aggregate over 300 shared mini movies to MekongMinis.com, and reach over 6 million people worldwide. The power of visual storytelling via user-generated content cannot only promote the Mekong Region as an experiential tourism destination, but can also drive positive change. In partnership with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) we have chosen the endangered Mekong (or Irrawaddy) Dolphin as the mascot of the Mekong Mini Movie Festival to raise awareness of conservation.

For the first time, we are hosting the 1st Asia Film Destination Conference, exploring the power of movie productions and user-generated videos and how they can be integrated into destination marketing. Recent research suggests that movies can have a strong influence on tourist decision-making and that films do not only provide short-term tourism revenue but can build long-term prosperity for a destination. Numerous films have inspired millions to visit destinations. Especially in recent years, there has been a growing phenomenon that tourists visit destinations featured in films and user-generated social media clips. Finally, I would personally like to thank this year’s hosts, the Nakhon Phanom Provincial Government, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand. I also sincerely thank the generous public and private sponsors, venues, speakers, tour operators, media partners, and all other supporters that made this event possible. Last but not least, I would like to thank you, the delegates, for taking time out of your busy schedules to join us here at Mekong Tourism Forum. Without the engagement of the travel and tourism industry, we would not be able to collaboratively develop tourism in the region in a responsible way and promote the Mekong region as a competitive, inclusive, and sustainable tourism destination.

I wish you a productive and memorable MTF 2018. Please get engaged and join our Mekong Tourism Contributor Program. Become part of shaping responsible tourism development in the GMS.

And don’t forget to share your inspirational moments on Social Media by tagging #MekongMoments to inspire the world to come and experience the region in all its magic and diversity. If you are a business, please register your experiences for free on MekongMoments.info.

Thank you.
GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION
ABOUT NAKHON PHANOM

Nakhon Phanom province was once a glorious Kingdom in the past, which established its unique and interesting cultures and traditions. It is located on the banks of the Mekong River and a gateway between Thailand and Lao PDR.

The region offers a wide diversity of cultures and natural experiences. Throughout the history of Nakhon Phanom, Laotians and people from smaller ethnic minority groups migrated across the Mekong River giving modern Nakhon Phanom a distinctive cultural fusion that is apparent in the local language, customs, and cuisine.

Nakhon Phanom is famous for its centuries-old temples and beautiful landscape. The surrounding villages have many tribal cultures unique to Isaan and Laos. The region is famous for its silk fabric and silver ornaments. The silk is crafted on handmade looms in local villages in traditional Lao-style. The silver is manufactured and crafted both within Isaan and Laos.

In addition to its rich culture, Nakhon Phanom, which literally means “city of hills” is an area with great natural beauty and which features a number of opportunities for visitors to participate in outdoor activities.
NAKHON PHANOM, THAILAND
The annual Mekong Tourism Forum is a unique conference in many ways. Bringing together the six countries that this great river flows through to discuss tourism in the region, it combines global relevance with local specificity. Each year, it is held in a different country and a new host city, increasing and shifting the specifics of its focus year on year. Moreover, each year the conference takes on a theme that reflects developments in the industry as whole.

For 2018, the conference came to Nakhon Phanom, capital of Thailand’s Isan province, and located on the banks of the Mekong, looking directly across to Laos on the other side. The theme of the conference this year was ‘Transforming Travel - Transforming Lives’, which a rich variety of speakers, both from the greater subregion and beyond explored in many ways. Perhaps the most unique aspect to the Forum - all the more so in light of 2018’s central theme - is its commitment to being more than a talking
shop about issues. This is a conference that really seeks to embody the values it espouses, and the solutions to the issues it addresses. As the Forum’s organiser and Executive Director of Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO) Jens Thraenhart explained: “There are components built into this conference that mean it is not just a theme on the wall, rather we are trying to live it as well.”

This year’s report looks to carry this on - collecting together the diversity of voices heard throughout the three days; and going beyond just being a summary of proceedings and aiming to actually provide useful ideas for action - all as heard at Mekong Travel Forum 2018.
Event summary

This year the Mekong Tourism Forum came to Thailand’s Isan province, to the charming city of Nakhon Phanom. Although little known by international visitors, the city is served by regular daily flights from Bangkok, and thanks to the opening of the Third Friendship Bridge, provides an excellent point of entry to Laos.

As well as being well connected, it’s a friendly, laid back place, exemplified by the boardwalk that stretches along its riverfront, and provides an excellent track for walkers, cyclists or just to sit in and soak up the atmosphere. A local saying is that while their Laos neighbours may have all the hills, this means the people of Nakhon Phanom get the view.

Much of the pleasure of being here is the authenticity, of a place not overly modified to respond to tourist demands. There are, however, some specific attractions - this was the home of Ho Chi Minh for a while, and his house can be visited. There are also some splendid Buddhist Stupa, such as the beautiful Wat Phra That Phanom, known for keeping the Buddha breast bone relic in the chedi.

Meanwhile, as a meeting point of Laos, Thai and Vietnamese cultures, the cuisine is splendid and varied.

It’s a great location for a tourism conference too. It is compact enough that it is easy to spread attendees across a range of hotels, yet for everyone to gather easily too. With the Thai Government currently engaging in a strategy of promoting secondary destinations so as to relieve the pressures of overtourism on Bangkok and a few other key hotspots, bringing the Forum here - with its focus on transforming travel - makes perfect sense.
Snapshot on the region

Facts and figures about the Mekong and SE Asia learned from this year’s Forum

Of the world’s 20 most visited cities of 2017, 11 are in Asia-Pacific (APAC). Of those two are in Thailand, but none in rest of the Mekong Subregion.

Per visitor spending in Thailand is double what it is in other countries of the Mekong region.

Technology is developing, but with a long way to go. 89% of bookings in APAC are still made offline.

Likewise, while 90% of properties in the USA are using online channel managers in US, in SE Asia the figure is less than 30%.

On average, hotels in South East Asia are listed on only 1.6 Online Travel Agents. Yet there are 100s out there, with the potential to reach specific target markets whether they might be Pet Friendly, Gay Friendly or Family Friendly, for example.

Almost 50% of Airbnb travelers in the Mekong region in 2017 began their trips in Thailand. However, more than 60,000 of these travelled to more than 2 countries in the region.
Showcasing the undiscovered

“A wonderful opportunity for this region to be really “branded” as a travel destination.”

Rob Holmes, CEO, GLP Films, USA

“It was amazing, because they put a lot of effort into showing us the diversity of this region.”

Vincent Sung, Writer/Editor & Content Producer, South Korea

“Nakhon Phanom was a great choice because not only is this destination beautiful, quaint and relatively undeveloped, it is a gateway to the rest of Mekong region... The city and countryside of Nakhon Phanom are simply so charming. It’s as if the city mimics the river – serene, peaceful and slow-moving. A place you go to fill your soul and live the slow life.”

Shayan and Kanika, bloggers, Dose of Life, Thailand

“An opportunity for me to collect a lifelong unforgettable experience in the tranquility of Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. The breathtaking landscape of the rice fields and the ever-flowing Mekong River view were really amazing. The craftsmanship of the local villagers inherited from the ancestors also left me with a very very deep impression.”

Zhu Jinsheng, professor, Guilin Tourism University, China

“The coordinators did an amazing job of balancing useful and informative sessions led by knowledgeable industry professionals whilst orchestrating cultural events to showcase the amazing people, food, and sights of the charming city of Nakhon Phanom. It was a great opportunity to network with fellow travel and food enthusiasts as well as discover a city which is rarely traveled to by foreign tourists.”

Paul Moore, blogger, Chowtraveller.com, Thailand
The Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Kingdom of Thailand is hosting the 41st Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Working Group Meeting (TWG-41), and the 2018 Mekong Tourism Forum (MTF 2018) at Nakhon Phanom University, Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, from 25th - 29th June 2018.

### Monday, 25 June 2018

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Event</th>
<th>Venue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00</td>
<td>41st GMS TWG Meeting &amp; GMS Tourism Infrastructure for Inclusive Growth Project Meeting</td>
<td>Mekong Market Place</td>
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<td>09:00</td>
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<td>12:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00</td>
<td>41st GMS TWG Meeting &amp; GMS Tourism Infrastructure for Inclusive Growth Project Meeting</td>
<td>MIST Workshop FOR MIST STARTUPS &amp; ALUMNI RAMA RAJ (1st Floor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>19:00</td>
<td>GMS TWG Dinner</td>
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### Tuesday, 26 June 2018

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:30</td>
<td>MTF 2018 Registration &amp; Hospitality Desk Opens</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 - 11:30</td>
<td>MTCO Board Meeting</td>
<td>RAMA RAJ (1st Floor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 - 12:00</td>
<td>CLOSED DOOR MIST Travel Startup Conference</td>
<td>RAMA RAJ (1st Floor)</td>
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<td>12:00 - 13:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:30 - 18:00</td>
<td>Mekong Mini Movie Festival Film &amp; Destination Marketing Conference</td>
<td>SRIKOTRABOON CONFERENCE CENTRE (3rd Floor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>18:00 - 18:30</td>
<td>Networking Break</td>
<td>MEKONG MARKETPLACE</td>
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<tr>
<td>18:30 - 19:30</td>
<td>Mekong Mini Movie Festival Film Screening &amp; Awards Ceremony</td>
<td>SRIKOTRABOON CONFERENCE CENTRE (3rd Floor)</td>
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<td>20:00 - 22:00</td>
<td>Mekong Mini Movie Festival Cocktail Reception</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 - 12:00</td>
<td>MIST Travel Startup Pitches</td>
<td>RAMA RAJ (1st Floor)</td>
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<td>12:00 - 13:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:30 - 15:30</td>
<td>Mekong Tourism Forum Official Opening Ceremony</td>
<td>SRIKOTRABOON CONFERENCE CENTRE (3rd Floor)</td>
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<td>15:30 - 16:00</td>
<td>Networking Reception</td>
<td>MEKONG MARKETPLACE</td>
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<td>Press Conference</td>
<td>NAGA RAJ (1st Floor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:00 - 18:00</td>
<td>Mekong Tourism Forum Transforming Travel</td>
<td>SRIKOTRABOON CONFERENCE CENTRE (3rd Floor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>19:00 - 21:30</td>
<td>Mekong Tourism Forum Gala Awards Dinner</td>
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**Wednesday, 27 June 2018**
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<tr>
<td>08:30 - 12:00</td>
<td>Mekong Tourism Forum Plenary Keynote Sessions</td>
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<td>Mini Keynote Presentations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ms. Mich Goh Head of Public Policy SEA AirBnB</td>
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<td>Ms. Yin Myo Su CEO Inle Heritage</td>
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<td>12:00 - 17:00</td>
<td>Mekong Opportunities &amp; Threats - Plastic Pollution</td>
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<td>Moderated by Khiri Reach</td>
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<tr>
<td>19:00 - 21:30</td>
<td>Mekong Tourism Forum Farewell Food Festival</td>
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<td>BLU HOTEL</td>
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### Optional Post Tours


For more info. [Please see page 42]

- **Nakhon Phanom City Tour**
  08:00-11:00 / 14:00-17:00

- **Phra That Phanom Tour**
  08:00-16:00

- **Bike Tour along Mekong River**
  Friday, June 29: 06:00-10:00
  Saturday, June 30: 06:00-10:00

- **Thai-Vietnamese village Experience**
  08:00-11:00 / 14:00-17:00

- **Fishery village Experience**
  08:00-16:00

### Mekong Tourism Advisory Group

**METAG Meeting**

R PHOTO HOTEL
The dream of going on holiday captures everyone’s imagination. It takes us out of our daily routines and shows us visions of other places and realities, of other ways of living. Nothing else gives us the same chance to experiment with being someone else, somewhere else. As the environmental writer Bill McKibben says, this “may be the most useful thing about travel.”

The trouble is most people associate words like responsible and sustainable with someone trying to impose restrictions on their freedoms, or placing limits on their behaviour. Campaigns to drink alcohol responsibly really mean drink less. Concepts such as responsible tourism or sustainable tourism struggle to excite tourists because they are seen as simultaneously trying to promote freedom and put restrictions upon it. No one wants a holiday that sounds less fun.

Transformation, however is different. Transformation means change, and everyone goes on holiday for a change. It might just be a change of scene, or a chance to spend more time doing the things you love, and less time on the things you don’t. But it is always a change. We want our holidays to have an impact upon us - to create memories, share experiences, even just to give us a good tan.
Of course the process of transforming tourism - creating a transformative travel industry - is about much more than this. It is about creating an industry where the way it operates leaves a positive impact. Tourism designed and operated this way would ensure that societies and environments benefit from its presence, which could go a long way to addressing the increasing resistance to our industry in those places most threatened by its excesses.

What if we could build a tourism industry that celebrates the beauty we see around us, without ignoring whatever it took to create it? Could we go even further, and reimagine this industry as one that revives us when we travel, and does so through restoring the world we visit? Warning people of the risks of our current way of living has failed to produce change. Might giving them the opportunity to experience new ways of living together have more chance of success?

That’s the concept behind my new book, Transforming Travel. It draws together hundreds of inspiring stories of where tourism that has been designed for positive impact is already doing this. There’s the hotel that produces more energy than it consumes. The safari where the local people are rewarded depending on how many animals are seen. There’s tours led by refugees, or by people who live on the city’s streets. And an island where every tourist is teamed up with a resident who becomes their guide.

It is a book about the best that tourism can be. It is not filled with terrible statistics about what we are doing wrong, but inspiring examples of where and how we are getting it right. The people whose stories I share sometimes win awards, and occasionally they get written about. But they are mostly presented as exceptions. Transforming Travel explores what our industry might look like if we treated them as role models, and developed to follow the approaches and actions of these innovators and pioneers instead. It offers a realistic and achievable vision of a travel industry that really does transform lives, be they our guests, the people we work with, or the communities we operate among.

I hope you enjoy it.

“Transforming Travel - Realising the potential of sustainable tourism” by Jeremy Smith can be ordered on cabi.org - Enter code "MTF2018" to get 30% discount, exclusively for all MTF 2018 delegates.
Good Afternoon to all of you.

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, I am most honoured and privileged to welcome you all to the Mekong Tourism Forum 2018 or MTF 2018 in this beautiful city of Nakorn Phanom.

The Thailand Ministry of Tourism & Sports and the Provincial Government of Nakhon Phanom, in collaboration with the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO) will be the host of the 2018 Mekong Tourism Forum from June 26-29, at Nakhon Phanom with this year’s theme is “Transforming Travel – Transforming Lives” which relate to tourism can be an important catalyst in changing people’s lives for the better through mutual understanding and acting more responsibly.

It’s been six years since Thailand last hosted the MTF 2012 in Chiang Rai, Thailand and these past many years saw GMS member countries constantly moving ever forward to achieve sensational growth. For Thailand, Tourism plays an important role in generating Thailand economy. Last year, Thailand welcomed approximately 35.38 million international tourists which contribute the tourism receipt around 53,743 million USD. Thailand also gained the domestic tourism receipt 27,534 million USD. Moreover, tourism created around 4.33 million jobs in Tourism industry as well. From the past until now, we can say that Thailand tourism revenue and tourist number are keep increasing year by year. International tourism arrivals in Thailand increased from 19.23 million in 2012 to 35.38 million in 2017, representing an average annual growth rate about 10.7%, consistent with the growth of tourist receipts, it has been even more spectacular, rising from 22,870 million USD in 2012 to 53,743 million USD in 2017 with an annual growth rate about 15.30%

Many GMS’s secondary cities will, meanwhile, offer more and diverse attractions, meeting venues, and dining options to enhance the new experiences, creating travel business for greater income and fair distribution to the communities regionwide.

Looking to the future, we will still focus on the 2016-2025 Mekong Tourism Strategy, officially released at the Luang Prabang MTF 2017 vision for GMS tourism is “Tourism in the Greater Mekong
Subregion an integrated, prosperous, and equitable, and resilient, with effective partnerships and knowledge management.”

To enjoy the continuous growth of the tourism industry in the region, we need to work closer together among GMS partners. The annual Mekong Tourism Forum is a practical platform for the GMS member state and other key players in the tourism industry, to come together and discuss ways to further stimulate tourism growth. We look forward to having progressive and profitable cooperation and active engagement.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, The Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Kingdom of Thailand is proud to host this important event and I wish all of you a fruitful meeting and success in our joint efforts to enhance and to strengthen the tourism industry as a key force for the Greater Mekong Subregion cohesiveness and peace, and prosperity.

Now, I would like to declare the Mekong Tourism Forum 2018 open.

Thank you, and Khobkhun Krab
On behalf of the Asian Development Bank, we are delighted to join the 2018 Mekong Tourism Forum, here in the charming, historic Mekong riverside city Nakhon Phanom. We sincerely thank the Nakhon Phanom provincial government for hosting the Forum; and thank Thailand’s Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office for the excellent arrangements. The theme of this year’s event Transforming Travel, Transforming Lives genuinely reflects some of main opportunities and challenges we face in our shared mission to develop a more sustainable, balanced, and competitive tourism industry in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

We all take pride knowing that the Mekong subregion is one of the world’s most attractive, diverse, and dynamic tourism destinations, with more than 60 million international visitors last year and hundreds of millions of domestic trips.

But we also know that tourism’s benefits are spread unevenly, that improperly managed tourism causes pollution and other negative impacts, and that we need to invest more in people, infrastructure, and appropriate technology to stay competitive and better harness tourism’s potential to positively transform people’s lives.

With that in mind, it’s great to see that the Forum’s engaging program is designed to showcase solutions especially what we can do in our roles as officials, business leaders, policy makers, development partners, teachers, students, and the media to ensure that tourism mutually benefits visitors and hosts.

By selecting Nakhon Phanom University as the venue, and holding thematic workshops in surrounding communities, the Forum tangibly demonstrates how meetings and events, authentic experiences, and engaging storytelling are effective ways to promote secondary destinations.
Nakhon Phanom, home to Wat Prathat Phanom one of northeast Thailand’s most sacred places and part of a multi-country circuit of Buddhist monuments that attract millions of pilgrims each year is an ideal place to host this afternoon’s sessions on Buddhist tourism. We should also take time reflect on how the Lord Buddha’s teachings on moderation, compassion, and sustainable consumption are well-suited to help us overcome the growing problem of “over tourism” and sadly, the filling of our rivers and oceans with plastic.

Every year more than 8 million tons of plastic ends up in the ocean the Ocean Conservancy estimates that by 2050, our oceans will have more plastic than fish if nothing changes. Already, there are more pieces of microplastic in the oceans than stars in our galaxy. This is an environmental catastrophe that is destroying wildlife, threatens food security, and harms people’s livelihoods. Rivers, like the Mekong, are the main routes by which plastic reaches the ocean.

Take a moment to think about that this happened in our lifetime, on our watch, and is also something that can be solved in our lifetime. So, the pledge to make the Forum a single-use plastic free conference is an encouraging step, but we also need stronger policy measures, behavior change, and better waste management systems to tackle the problem.

As I mentioned earlier, technology and innovation can help drive secondary destination tourism growth and boost sustainability. In this context ADB, together with the Government of Australia and Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office, is proud to be supporting the 2018 Mekong Innovative Startups in Tourism (or MIST) accelerator and market access programs. We are sure the business cases presented by MIST entrepreneurs, ranging from Bamboo drinking straws to community-based tourism booking engines, will benefit from the increased visibility and networking opportunities the Forum offers.

In conclusion, on behalf of ADB, we congratulate the Royal Thai Government’s Ministry of Tourism and Sports and Nakhon Phanom provincial government for hosting and organizing the 2018 Mekong Tourism Forum which I am sure will be a memorable experience for all. ADB values our active partnership with all Greater Mekong Subregion countries and collaboration with other development partners, the private sector, and civil society to create a sustainable, integrated, and prosperous subregion. We look forward to continuing our partnership and collaboration, for the benefit the subregion’s people and our shared planet.

Thank you.
WHO WAS THERE?

SPEAKER

MEDIA

BLOGGERS & CONTENT CREATORS
Speakers
South African born mother of 2, I have made my way across various countries including Israel and England before settling in Thailand 15 years ago.

With a varied background including many years in F&B, scuba diving, environmental conservation, fund raising for charities and an assortment of music, festivals and corporate events, I joined Khiri Travel with the intention of bringing a fresh perspective and lots of new energy to my position as Sustainability Manager for Khiri Travel and Executive Director of Khiri Reach.

From a young age I have had a real passion for conservation and a strong belief in ‘Leading Change’ – it starts with YOU!

My personal belief is that it is our responsibility to start with small, simple everyday actions that eventually become 2nd nature, making it easy to add another level as we progress forward and upwards. If we each make a minor effort to improve our immediate surroundings everything would be better for everyone. Hence, sustainability must start with us; both as individuals and as accountable companies of any size, rather than only expecting governments to instrument the changes that we see are called for daily. By working closely together with the communities we live in and the places we visit, we can set up schemes that motivate and inspire, whilst demonstrating that there are alternative ways to provide...
income, security and local job prospects. It is imperative to do so in a manner that has long term foresight but that can begin today, as this is the only maintainable possibility if we wish to protect and save our planet and oceans and all life both on it and in it. This also helps others see the benefits of implementing smart changes and that Environmental Economics really do work, through knowledge, conservation, equal opportunity and social development.

Hence, I am so proud to now be working for a company that does all that and much more....

Khiri Travel prides itself in authentic connections, adaptability, and innovation and offers intimate, personalized travel experiences. We really focus on responsible and sustainable travel through the golden lands of Angkor and Bagan, of Bangkok and Vientiane. For centuries, Southeast Asian names alone have induced an irresistible romance amongst the susceptible: Saigon, Mandalay, Phnom Penh, Rangoon, the mighty meandering Mekong. Khiri caters to any desire at any budget, from Family Travel and Regional Highlights to Community-based Tourism and Discovery Excursions (and everything in between).

It is part of my mission to assist Khiri Travel to be the leading brand in sustainable, responsible tourism in Asia — and to adhere to the company’s philosophy to be champion of the triple bottom line: people, planet, profit.

Khiri’s vision of “Sharing our Passion for Discovery” encompasses the company’s collective inspiration, outlook, and culture, whilst being a big supporter of people and planet ventures through its dedicated Khiri Reach non-profit arm.

Victor was formally the Vice President of Investments for Gobi Partners and managed two Southeast Asia focused early stage funds. Some of his notable investments include Carsome (Malaysia), Triip.me (Vietnam) and Travelio (Indonesia).

Prior to that he was the largest venture capital fund of Malaysia, MAVCAP and was involved with direct and indirect investments. His earlier days was with Willis Towers Watson, advising corporate, pension and sovereign wealth funds on investment strategies. He was an honoree of the Forbes Asia 30 under 30 in 2017, the Honorary Secretary of the Malaysia Venture Capital Association (MVCA) as well as a CFA charterholder and a Mensa member.
A French national, Luc Citrinot has been busy as a freelance journalist and consultant in tourism and air transport for over 20 years in Paris. He works for various travel and air transport trade publications based in both Europe and Asia and has been writing tourism and air transport reports and studies for MINTEL, which acquired Travel and Tourism Intelligence from the Economist Group in 2000. He has regularly worked with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) to produce reports and studies on air transport issues linked to tourism development. He also helped editing press kits and newsletter for Indonesia Ministry of Culture and Tourism from 2005 to 2011 and worked on a regular basis with the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office to produce stories and releases. He is since 1989 aviation editor for France’s leading business travel publication Voyages d’Affaires and is now Chief Editor for the online web magazine ASEAN.travel. He also reports regularly on Asian destinations for other publications such as Bangkok 101 or PATA publications. He is increasingly involved into culture, heritage and architecture. In 2013 and 2014, he worked with the European Union in Thailand and the Association of European Cultural Institutions to the release of a map and mobile application over European Heritage in Thailand. Over the last two decades, he has been editing an official daily newsletter for foreign media at the ITB Berlin the world’s largest trade show on tourism. From 2005 to 2008, he also worked with the editing team of Travel Business Analyst for a daily newsletter at World Travel Market in London, another leading travel show in Europe. His interest for Asia dates back from the early nineties and he has already visited most of the countries located in Northeast and Southeast Asia. He moved to Asia in 2003, working during two years (2003–2005) as a Business Development Consultant with the low fare airline AirAsia and its Thailand’s subsidiary, Thai AirAsia. Following its airline experience, he reversed back to his previous position as a travel writer and journalist in tourism, air transport and increasingly in culture/architecture and heritage, commuting between Europe and Asia reporting extensively on Asian development in both French and English around the world from his Asian base in Bangkok.

After earning an MA in Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California at Berkeley, Joe Cummings became one of Lonely Planet’s first guidebook authors, creating the seminal Lonely Planet’s Thailand guide, followed by titles on Bangkok, Thailand’s Islands & Beaches, Northern Thailand and Laos. In a review of Lonely Planet Thailand, the American Geographical Society wrote “One of those rare travel guides written with such care and insight it deserves listing as literature.”

Joe spent three years as deputy editor of Bangkok Post’s TheMagazine, and is now editor at large for Talisman Media Group, which publishes Bangkok 101 magazine. Illustrated reference books Joe has written
Joe Cummings (Con.)

include World Food Thailand; Buddhist Temples of Thailand; Sacred Tattoos of Thailand, Burmese Art, Design & Architecture; Muay Thai; Chiang Mai Style. Lanna Renaissance.

He has consulted on tourism for UNESCO and Thailand’s Ministry of Tourism, and carries out location scouting for numerous TV and film productions.

Nick Day
Marketing Communications Manager
- GOCO Hospitality
gocohospitality.com

Nick is a passionate marketing expert with extensive experience creating and implementing effective communications strategies across a broad range of industries. Formerly a magazine editor, Nick transitioned into marketing, working for an international architecture and interior design firm and then a specialist travel and hospitality branding agency before joining GOCO Hospitality, a global leader in spa and wellness consulting and management.

As Marketing Communications Manager at GOCO Hospitality, Nick is constantly working on ways to promote the company’s spa and wellness brands. Whether producing engaging social media content, developing promotional brochures, liaising with media contacts or delving into the ever-evolving world of digital marketing, Nick is comfortable handling all areas of marketing. Nick is also a key part of GOCO Hospitality's concept development and pre-opening team, working with some of the biggest brands in international hospitality.

Lim Kooi Fong
Founder - Buddhist Travel
buddhistravel.com

Mr. Lim Kooi Fong is the founder and owner of the Buddhist Travel site, http://buddhistravel.com. It was and probably still is the world’s first “Buddhist Travel” site, setup in 2007.

Buddhist Travel is the travel companion of the Buddhist Channel (http://buddhistchannel.tv/), one of the world’s premier sites for Buddhist Related news and events, which he is also the founder and Managing Editor. Helping the news team based here in Kuala Lumpur is our International Advisory Panel (IAP) from the United States, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, England and South Korea.

Apart from Buddhist related news and travel activities, he is also involved in developing Malaysia's eco-tourism sector by closely working with Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Malaysia (https://www.ecomy.org/). Together with ECOMY, they have embarked on creating electronic guides in terms of nature apps which are being used along selected nature trails in Malaysia. His company and ECOMY collaborated successfully with Tourism Malaysia to develop the country’s first birding tour app, http://birdsmalaysia.my/.
Lim Kooi Fong  
(Con.)

The E-Guide initiative has great public sector support, and has been working with Khazanah Nasional, (the strategic investment fund of the Government of Malaysia) through its foundation Yayasan Hasanah (https://yayasanhasanah.org/) to bring back the country’s natural history heritage in digital format from the Natural History Museum, London.

Matt Gibson is the Outbound President of the Professional Travel Bloggers Association, a nonprofit organization that works to help travel industry and brands meet and work together. He’s also an adventure travel writer and photographer, award winning blogger, and CEO of UpThink, an agency that helps travel companies develop their blogging and social media marketing strategies and work with travel bloggers.

Matt regularly gives seminars and moderates panels about blogging, social media, and inbound marketing for organizations such as ITB Berlin, ITB Asia, Arabian Travel Mart, HSMAI, and others. UpThink as been featured by publications like Business Insider and Yahoo and Matt’s writings on blogging and social media marketing have been published by the Adventure Travel Trade Association, Arabian Travel Market, and the Singapore Straits Times.

Matt’s travel writing and photography have been seen in publications such as AFAR, En Voyage, Action Asia, and The Huffington Post, and many more.

Mich Goh is the Head of Public Policy for Airbnb in the Southeast Asia region. She engages with government, elected officials, associations and other relevant third parties across Southeast Asia in support of a fair and progressive regulatory framework that embraces the potential of home sharing and the sharing economy. She was previously a consultant who led teams advising multinational companies in the Technology and Consumer sectors on government relations and public affairs strategies across Asia Pacific. She holds a business management degree from the Singapore Management University. Mich is the Vice President of the Sharing Economy Association (Singapore).

Mich Goh
Head of Public Policy, Southeast Asia - Airbnb
airbnb.com

Matt Gibson
CEO - UpThink
upthinkisgood.com

Head of Public Policy, Southeast Asia - Airbnb
airbnb.com
Rob Holmes is the Founder & Chief Strategist of GLP Films, an award-winning content marketing agency dedicated to authentic storytelling and ROI-based content marketing campaigns for the travel industry. Rob has a diverse background in multimedia production, storytelling, sustainable tourism, conservation, marketing, and entrepreneurship. In his work with GLP Films, Rob has spearheaded partnerships with global travel brands, including international and domestic tourism boards, leading media, global organizations, travel and outdoor brands, and numerous NGO and international partners. Rob currently serves as board member for the Global Ecotourism Network (GEN) and Maine Huts and Trails. In-line with his passion for sustainable tourism, Rob is a proponent for wildlife conservation, with a BA in Wildlife Management and Conservation Biology from Hobart College. Rob also holds an MBA from the University of Washington in International Business, Marketing and Environmental Management. Rob lives in Kennebunkport, Maine and is the proud father of two children.

Momoko is Sales Manager at Phare, The Cambodian Circus, operated by Phare Performing Social Enterprise.

She has watched Phare’s circus show for the very first time in her home province, Fukuoka in Japan, and that inspired and motivated her to move to Cambodia in 2012, in order for her to explore Cambodian life and culture.

Since the establishment of the enterprise in 2013, she has been working to bring international audience to its nightly show, as well as selling private shows domestically, with understanding needs of each different market in tourism in Siem Reap, or Cambodia.

Mr. Zhu Jinsheng (Jason), currently the deputy party secretary of School of International Education and Exchange, Guilin Tourism University. Graduated from the English major as a bachelor's degree from Guangxi University in Nanning, Guangxi, China and continued to perused from Guilin Normal University and got my Certificate of Graduation for a Master of Teaching Technology in 2009.

The research focuses of Mr. Zhu Jinsheng was on Cultural Anthropology, Heritage Tourism, and Tourism Marketing Practice. In recent years, Several papers published on academic journals internationally and domestically. In 2016, as a co-author, an English paper The Heritage of Chinese Cities as seen through the gaze of zhonghua wenhua (Chinese Common Knowledge) Guilin as an exemplar was published in Journal of Heritage Tourism in the United States of America. In 2014 my thesis The Establishment of Tourist Destination Image and its practical promotion was
Zhu Jinsheng
(Con.)

published in Journal of Nanning Polytechnic. The thesis An Exploration of U.S.Tourist Destination Slogan analysis and Practical Publicity was published in the 2013 China Tourism Review, and was nominated as top 6 national thesis of China Tourism Forum in 2013. The research paper Research on Guangxi – ASEAN Development Strategy of International Cooperation on Tourism Cultural Education was published in the Journal of Suihua Normal College in 2016. The thesis Comparative Development and Marketing Analysis of Longji Terraced Fields of China and Doi Tung Project of Thailand was published in Gui Hai Lun Cong in China, a regional journal of Guangxi, to name a few. Also I have taken part in some research projects at the national and provincial level and edited two textbooks with professional characteristics. Currently, I am pursuing my Ph.D. at Chiang Mai University in Thailand.

Mr.Kiriella is a multi-disciplinary expert having over thirty two years of professional work experience in travel and tourism industry by working in both public and private sectors in Sri Lanka. He has worked in different capacities in senior management level positions in national tourism administration, in the areas of research and planning, tourism destination management, marketing and promotions, compliance and standardization, international relations and sustainable development.

He held positions as the Director General of Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (2015- 2018) and also as the Managing Director of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (2010- 2011). Furthermore he worked as the Director Research and International Relations, Director Standards and Quality Assurance and Director Marketing of the National Tourism Organization of Sri Lanka. He was instrumental in executing innovative techniques to build up the general tourism product with a specific end goal to draw in perceiving travelers to Sri Lanka. Prior to joining Sri Lanka Tourism, he worked at Sri Lankan Airlines.

Gerrit Kruger has over 15 years of experience in marketing and customer relationship management in the services and hospitality industry. After gaining his bachelor in international management, marketing and tourism at the International University in Germany and studying at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, he started his career at the Singapore Tourism Board after which he gained experience through various marketing and business development roles in the hospitality industry before starting his company C&O to consult companies in Germany and Asia on Marketing and loyalty programmes. Since then, C&O has created the digital presence of various providers in the hospitality, services and online retail sector.

Malraj Kiriella
Former Director General
- Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority
srilanka.travel

Gerrit Kruger
Partner and Managing Director
Chameleon Strategies
chameleonstrategies.com
Gerrit Kruger
(Con.)

He was head of Branding and Loyalty Marketing for Dusit Hotels & Resorts where he re-launched all loyalty programmes and directed the photographic and brand standards before joining Chameleon Strategies as Managing Director.

Political Experience:

- Advisor to Deputy Minister of Transport
- Advisor to Deputy Minister of Interior
- Assistant Member of Representatives, Chonburi
- The Extraordinary committee of the draft amendment bill to the revenue code (International transport and non-life insurance)
- The Extraordinary committee to considered draft bill on diplomatic consular protection
- The Extraordinary committee to considered of the draft constitution bill of the office of the constitutional court
- The Extraordinary committee to considered of the draft amendment bill to the civil procedure rule (Enforcement of judgments)
- The Extraordinary committee consider the draft amendment bill to the Narcotics Act
- Advisor to the Deputy Minister of Commerce
- The committee to considered the draft amendment bill to the prevent the use of volatile.
- The committee to considered the draft amendment bill to adjust ministry bureaucracy, department.
- The Extraordinary committee to considered the draft amendment bill to the Minerals Act.
- The Extraordinary committee to considered the draft amendment bill to the Railway Act of Thailand.
- The Extraordinary committee to considered the draft amendment bill to the Criminal Procedure Code (No ...) BE … ….. The House of Representatives
- Advisor to the Minister of Science, Technology and Environment
- The Financial and Accounting committee, Banking and Financial Institutions, House of Representatives
- Joint Government Coordination Committee
- Member of the Chonburi House of Representatives, Constituency 5th (2001-2004)
- The Extraordinary committee for the Draft Budget bill of 2004
- Deputy Spokesman of Ministry of Tourism and Sports
- Pattaya City Mayor
Working experiences in recent 6 years:

2012 July – 2013 July:
Yunnan Provincial Tourism Development Committee, Vice director of HRD Department

May -2014.7 May:
China National Tourism Administration, vice director of Promotion Division of Tourism Promotion and International Liaison Department

2014 June – 2015 Dec:
Yunnan Provincial Tourism Development Committee, Vice director of HRD Department

Dec to the present:
Yunnan Provincial Tourism Development Committee, researcher of Market and Promotion department.

Erina Loo is a thoughtful traveller, a tireless spirited facilitator of learning and a mindful entrepreneur.

Her journey begun since her early age of twelve as influenced by the family and later on inspired her to pick up a career as a tourist guide in 1994. Erina have gone through several transformations.

In 2002, she became a National Trainer for Tourist guide in Malaysia, became the founder of Malaysian Women Tourist guide Association in 2006 and still currently serving as its chairperson.

In 2010, she founded Be Tourist Malaysia, a licensed inbound tour operator dedicated to promote Heritage tourism. This is part of her mission to make the community aware on the important role of the intangible and tangible heritage, to respect and protect the values of multi-culture which are the true assets of the nation.

As a tourism product developer, she initiated the Malaysia heritage products series called “Eat, Pray, Walk and Love” which have successfully got the attention of 167 nationalities to experience the heritage walk since it was launched.

In 2015, supporting the vision of our ASEAN leaders, she embarked on a Purposeful Sensory Journey in Southeast Asia with actively advocating for SEATGA (Southeast Asia Tourist guide Association) as support to the Asean Integration. Through various collaborations, she was able to produce the Old town religion cross boarder trail for ASEAN cultural and heritage tourism travel pattern guidelines which was published by Indonesia.
Erina Loo (Con.)

In 2017 she became the Asean Tourism master trainer under the Tour Operation division. Her new role empowers her to initiate capacity building activities which empowers the local community and encourages entrepreneurs to get involve in heritage tourism throughout Southeast Asia.

Today, Be Tourist have extended to Indonesia Heritage, Laos Heritage and Singapore Heritage through cross-border partnerships.

She strongly believes in the spiritual connection as one of the best learning experience in practicing responsible and sustainable tourism.

Supporting the UNWTO call for quality tourism #TravelEnjoyRespect, Erina is utilising her skilful leadership in heritage tourism to influence tourists to be mindful and responsible co-creators for a peaceful and sustainable community.

Jason Lusk is a career marketer and founder of the tourism and hospitality marketing agency Clickable Vietnam. Through Clickable, he advises leading tour companies on marketing strategy, brand and messaging, content development and digital marketing. He also publishes the Dulichable B2B tourism marketing and management magazine. Jason previously served as Microsoft Vietnam’s digital marketing lead and was vice president of the American advertising agency Cramer-Krasselt.

Educated at New York University with a M.A. in Communication Arts, Ms. Titiporn Manenate started her career at the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in 1992 in the Planning and Cooperate Relations Division. Her tenure included positions as Assistant Director in the TAT Office in Paris and Director in the TAT Office in Hong Kong. As international communications and public relations expert, she was Chief of the International News Division, as well as Director of the International Public Relations Department. Ms. Manenate currently holds the position of Director of International Advertising Publicity Division.

Titiporn Manenate
Director International Advertising - Tourism Authority of Thailand amazingthailand.com
Alberto Moreno studied Computer Systems and IT Engineering in Madrid, Spain. In 2007-2008 he worked as Information Technology Manager at the Economic and Commercial Office of the Embassy of Spain in Vietnam. In 2010, he was granted the Monbukagakusho scholarship by the Japanese government for a three-years research position at the University of Tsukuba. During his tenure, he completed a Master’s degree program in Risk Engineering. In 2013, he graduated and returned to Vietnam to build Baolau, a multi-transport travel search engine for the Mekong Region. Baolau is based on Japanese standards for information technology applied to public transport and interconnects cities by calculating travel distances in real time, comparing routes and facilitating ticket booking for flights, trains, buses and ferries. In 2017, Baolau was selected as one of the finalists for the Market Access program of MIST: Mekong Innovative Startup Tourism accelerator.

Arrut Navaraj is Managing Director of Sampran Riverside, an ‘eco-cultural destination’ and well-known conference facility near Bangkok, Thailand.

Arrut graduated with a Master Degree in Chemical Engineering from England. However, in his career he has completely shunned the use of chemicals and instead has dedicated himself to organic farming and making our food system sustainable.

For the past seven years, he has been working with local farmers, Universities, Government Agencies and Private Enterprises to promote organic agriculture under the ‘Sampran Model’ a sustainable business model based on fair trade and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. The successful model has inspired a growing number of new business and community partnerships.

Imtiaz Muqbil is one of the longest serving travel-trade journalists in the Asia Pacific. He is currently the Executive Editor of Travel Impact Newswire.

Imtiaz’s career started in Kuwait with local English-language newspapers Kuwait Times, Arab Times and Daily News. Simultaneously, he did freelance work as a stringer for Middle East Economic Digest, Reuters, Newsweek, McGraw-Hill World News, and PetroMoney Report (a Financial Times newsletter). Imtiaz moved to Bangkok in November 1978, and joined the Bangkok Post. He has covered Asia-Pacific travel & tourism industry full-time for Travel Trade Gazette Asia since 1981. Imtiaz has worked as Thailand Bureau Chief and Chief Correspondent, TTG Asia, PATA Travel News and associated publications. Edited Issues & Trends, the monthly publication of the Strategic Intelligence Centre, PATA. He wrote a weekly
column, “Travel Monitor”, in the Bangkok Post. He has covered dozens of travel industry summits, annual general meetings and conferences.

Imtiaz has been awarded the PATA award for “Outstanding Reporting on the travel industry” in 1997 and the PATA Journalism award for coverage of the tsunami disaster in 2005.

Imtiaz is fluent in English, Urdu and Hindi and conversant to various levels in Thai and some Arabic.

Mr. Deepak Ohri is the Chief Executive Officer of lebua Hotels and Resorts, an international luxury hospitality company. With a collection of 5-Star hotels and fine restaurants in Thailand, New Zealand and India, Mr. Ohri is now focusing on expanding the lebua brand globally.

Joining the organization as its first employee, Mr. Ohri created Bangkok’s best culinary destination – The Dome at lebua in 2004. The Dome houses a collection of stunningly beautiful restaurants & Bars such as Sirocco, Mezzaluna, Breeze, Distil and Sky Bar which are of international culinary acclaim and have won countless awards.

After the success of The Dome, Mr. Ohri rechristened the Meritus hotel as lebua, an all-suite luxury hotel in 2006. Then, he launched lebua Hotels and Resorts as a luxury hotel chain that includes exclusive properties in Thailand, an ultra-luxury lodge in New Zealand and India. He launched a new level of luxury hotel, Tower Club at lebua in 2008. The suites are located on the top floors (51st to 59th) featuring exclusive privileges; such as complimentary soft drinks and high speed Internet, Acca Kappa amenities as well as access to Tower Club Lounge.

With Mr Ohri’s leadership, lebua & The Dome have won over 60 world awards including World’s Leading All-Suite Hotel Award by World Travel Award, Signature Luxury Hotel’s Award by The Hospitality Asia Platinum Awards (HAPA), Top 25 Luxury Hotels in Thailand by TripAdvisor, Overall Best Hotel in Asia by CNBC and Business Asia and Restaurant of the Year by The Hospitality Asia Platinum Awards 2011-2013.

Drawing on a career that includes operational and executive roles with companies such as Kempinski and Taj Hotels, Mr. Ohri has many years of experience in the international hospitality industry and brings an entrepreneur’s innovative spirit to his role as CEO. His professionalism has repeatedly earned him recognition as one of the leaders in the hospitality industry. Mr. Ohri’s ongoing admiration has led him to be honored with many industry awards from prestigious organizations worldwide.
Gopinath Parayil (Gopi) is the founder and Chief Executive of The Blue Yonder. Gopi set up Nila Foundation in Kerala during 2004 out of the passion for the region he comes from and a concern for a unique river civilization. While exploring a sustainable financial support for the foundation, he came up with the idea of The Blue Yonder (TBY), which is now one of the most innovative responsible travel companies in the world. In 2009 December Outlook Business Magazine has featured Gopi amongst the 50 Social Entrepreneurs in India. An official Responsible Tourism Partner for ITB Berlin and ITB Asia, The Blue Yonder has won multiple international awards and recognitions for their responsible tourism initiatives including Conde Nast Traveler World Saver’s Awards, First Choice Responsible Tourism Awards at WTM and Conde Nast Traveler’s ‘8 Great Trips that give back to communities’ among others. Gopi co-founded Responsible Tourism Networking that brings together Responsible Tourism practitioners from around the world during larger trade shows like ITB Berlin and WTM. He is the ‘Ideator’ at The Blue Yonder Associates, the consulting arm of The Blue Yonder group based out of Berlin, Germany and Bangalore in India. He is currently working on a food security project in Kerala supported through Sustainable Tourism. The Blue Yonder was recently chosen by India’s first Biennale in Kochi as its official tour partner and won the prestigious TODO! 2012 awards for Socially Responsible Tourism at ITB Berlin.

Dr. Kanokrot Phalakornkul is a senior member of Knowing Buddha Organization Foundation (KBO) founded and presided over by Ms. Acharavadee Wongsakol. Knowing Buddha Organization proactively promotes correct understanding about Buddha and Buddhism among tourists and publishes the most modern Travel/Life style/Buddhism magazine known as “5000S Magazine”. She devotes her time both in the background and at the frontline with tourists in Thailand as well as non-Thai speakers around the world to have more accurate and respectful views of Buddhism lifestyle and Buddha teachings.

Dr. Kanokrot Phalakornkul is serious Buddhism practitioner who has spent half of her life living abroad of Thailand and has travelled over about 40 countries around the world. She is well recognized for innovation in Thailand, has won 30+ institutional, national and international innovation awards and has been a key leader in the transformation of organizations in Thailand towards innovation. She is a full time Vice President at a Thailand’s energy state enterprise. She holds a PhD in Chemical Engineering from Stanford University, USA, with master and bachelor degrees in engineering from MIT and Princeton University. She has MBA and extensive management trainings from the world renowned institutes including INSEAD, Harvard U., U. of Pennsylvania, Columbia U., and Emory U.
Steven Schipani is the Senior Portfolio Management Specialist at ADB’s Lao PDR Resident Mission. He manages a portfolio of around USD800 million that covers public investments in agriculture and natural resources, education, energy, health, industry and trade, transport; and water supply and other municipal infrastructure and services.

Steven is also ADB’s tourism sector focal for the Greater Mekong Subregion. He leads the design and administration of investment projects and technical assistance to improve tourism competitiveness and boost subregional cooperation. A United States national, Mr. Schipani has lived and worked in Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam since 1994. He started his career as a US Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand.

Teak Seng is Country Director of WWF-Cambodia, a position he assumed in 1st July 2017. Prior to this, Teak was Regional Conservation Director of WWF-Greater Mekong (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam) and before that Regional Director of the Western Pacific, WWF-Australia, where he oversaw two WWF Country Offices, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

Teak has 20 years of experience in field of environment and conservation in the Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific regions. Over the past 15 years, he has been in managing stream and have worked at both country and regional levels and in both capacities as Country Directors and Regional Directors. His major skills and areas of expertise comprise: leading management change, managing multi-cultural and interdisciplinary teams, formulating strategic planning and execution, and building partnerships and engaging stakeholders.

In addition, 2010-2014, Teak served as a member of WWF International’s Conservation Committee, a WWF global network decision-making body for global conservation programs.

Teak holds a Master Degree in Environment Management, from Yale University, USA. He has awarded as one of the Russell E. Train Conservation Leaders in 2002.
Phitsamai Sipaza (Bam) is the Assistant Manager of the Ock Pop Tok Living Crafts Centre. Bam has worked for Ock Pop Tok since 2014 and is responsible for managing the class bookings, reception and Mekong Villa guests. She holds two university degrees, in General Management and English, from the Luang Prabang University. Bam loves taking care of people and ensuring that all groups and visitors are catered to. She is also passionate about taking care of the environment and ensuring that the business practices at the Living Crafts Centre minimize Ock Pop Tok’s impact on the environment, like promoting the sales of the bamboo straw collection and helping eliminate the sale of single-use plastics in the restaurants, all of which help set an example for responsible tourism.

Jeremy Smith is co-founder and editor of the sustainable tourism news site Travindy.com. His new book –Transforming Travel – realizing the potential of sustainable tourism (CABI, December 2017) – explores how and why should tourism adopt the principles of the circular economy.

He is co-author of the award-winning guide to the best in sustainable tourism – Clean Breaks – 500 New Ways to See the World, writes a fortnightly blog for World Travel Market, and WTTC’s monthly Tourism for Tomorrow newsletter. He provides copywriting and other communications consultancy to a range of organisations – recent clients include Visit Finland, Tui, the Travel Foundation, South Downs National Park, PATA, and several independent lodges and tour companies.

Yin Myo Su, born and raised at Inle Lake, Myanmar, and often referred to as the “Lady of the Lake,” is the managing director of the Inle Princess Group, and founder of the Inle Heritage Foundation.

Yin Myo Su’s remarkable combination of passions including women’s empowerment, economic development, heritage and environmental preservation, art, culture and citizen engagement establishes her as a modern Myanmar Renaissance woman.

With over two decades of experience in the hospitality industry, she has become a strong advocate for sustainable and responsible development practices that brings both social and economic benefit to local communities and insures the preservation of the creative, but fragile, cultural heritage of Inle Lake and Shan State.
Yin Myo Su, born and raised at Inle Lake, Myanmar, and often referred to as the “Lady of the Lake,” is the managing director of the Inle Princess Group, and founder of the Inle Heritage Foundation.

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As an environmental advocate, she has taken a leading role in reintroducing the Burmese Cat back to Myanmar and, at Inle Heritage, houses a private lake-side aquarium to draw attention to the unique and at-risk marine life nearby.

To pass on her knowledge, Yin Myo Su is Chairperson of the Inle Heritage Hospitality Vocational Training Center that equips aspiring hospitality workers from Shan State develop the necessary technical and human service skills to fully participate in the tourism and trade potential of emerging Shan State.

Yin Myo Su, is an active public speaker on subjects dear to her heart and recipient of several local and international awards in recognition of her work in hospitality, heritage preservation, women’s empowerment and leadership.

Vincent Sung, a Korean Belgian adoptee, moved from Seoul to Bangkok in 2010. He first worked for several years as a fashion and advertising photographer before getting a taste of travel and lifestyle writing and photography after relocating to South-East Asia. Based in Bangkok, he travels often and contributes regularly to Conde Nast Traveler, Lonely Planet Traveler Thailand, 5000s magazine and World Travel magazine. He is a fervent lover of the Mekong region and travels as often as possible to Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia either to discover new artisans or to photographs the rich culture and beautiful landscapes. Last year he did a ten-day boat cruise along the Mekong from Cambodia to Vietnam with Compagnie Fluviale du Mekong.
James Sutherland of Friends-International in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, leads the communications efforts of the NGO, focused on child safety and protection in Southeast Asia.

Friends-International was born on the streets of Phnom Penh in August 1994. FI initially provided services to the street kids found in the Cambodian capital in the aftermath of years of genocide and conflict in the country. The original Friends project, Mith Samlanh (which means ‘Friends’ in Khmer – all programs use a local language version of ‘Friends’ in their name) became a local NGO in 1999, and then went on to expand both programs and partnerships in the following years, developing social business and child protection elements to ensure comprehensive and creative solutions and services for all the marginalized youth and communities we now work with. The 17 children whose lives FI changed in 1994 have grown to over 130,000 in the ensuing decades, thanks to our innovative partnership model of ‘Together, building futures’.

Worateera Suvarnsorn, Director of Thailand Film Office, Department of Tourism and Sport. Worateera Suvarnsorn currently holds a position as a Director at the Thailand Film Office. She earned a Bachelor of Communication Arts, Bangkok University, Thailand in 1993. And earned Master of Business Administration (Marketing) from National University, USA in 1996. She has worked in various positions in film industry. started from 2007-2014 she worked as a chief of film business promotion section. and before becoming a Director of Thailand Film Office She was serve as a chief of academic and Tourism Business Protection Fund Section, Bureau of Tourism Business and Guide Registration, Department of Tourism.
Mr. Pongpanu Svetarundra is the Permanent Secretary of Thailand Ministry of Tourism & Sports, a Chairman at Megachem (Thailand) Public Co. Ltd., an Independent Director at Crown Seal Public Co., Ltd., a Director General of The Comptroller General’s Department.

He is on the Board of Directors at TMB Bank Public Co., Ltd., Crown Seal Public Co., Ltd. and Thaisri Insurance Public Co. Ltd. Mr. Svetarundra was previously employed as a Chairman by Erawan Hotel PCL, a Deputy Secretary by Thailand Ministry of Finance, a Chairman by Small & Medium Enterprise Development Bank of Thailand, and a Director General by Public Debt Management Office.

He also served on the board at PEA ENCOM International Co. Ltd., Bangkok Metro Public Co. Ltd., Mass Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand, TOT Public Co. Ltd., Cathay Leaseplan Public Co. Ltd. and Thai Airways International Public Co. Ltd.

He received his undergraduate degree from Auckland University and a graduate degree from Northwestern University.

Art’s journey has started from being a youth representative in several cultural exchange programs and music performances, leading him through 35 countries in 4 continents. The former scholar of ASEAN-Japan YouthShip Program, Korean Government Youth Exchange, and IAESTE France has worked in the world’s best place to work like Google where he had an opportunity to explore innovations from Google and YouTube offices around the globe. Furthermore, Art is a leading singer of SING OUT ASIA band, a group of Asian artists who tour around Asia to promote international understanding through music. Art has written songs from his travel experiences.

Awarded first prize of Chulalongkorn Singing Competition, Art later was selected to create and perform the song “Watashi no Tomodachi (My Friend)” to commemorate the 120th Anniversary of Japan-Thailand Diplomatic relations, in which NHK interviewed him twice. Art then was selected by Tourism Authority of Thailand to create and perform the song “Miracle Thailand” to promote Thailand to the world. The song’s music video was officially launched in World Travel Mart in London, UK. Art also performed in Thai Festivals in Japan and Vietnam.

Art has been dedicated in creating YouTube program to encourage people from around the world to travel to ASEAN (Southeast Asia) and experience local way of living. He has collaborated with governments from 6 ASEAN countries and has created over 150 Episodes from 30 destinations.
Jens Thraenhart was appointed by the six tourism ministries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam, and China (Yunnan and Guanxi Provinces) to head the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO) as its Executive Director. The Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO) is an inter-governmental body to promote the Mekong region as a single tourism destination, and foster responsible tourism development in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). In his tenure, he digitized the organization, and as a result the website MekongTourism.org was recognised with three prestigious awards for innovation and design. He created the public-private partnership framework Destination Mekong, which operates various initiatives, including the collaborative social commerce platform Mekong Moments, the Experience Mekong Collection curating responsible travel experiences, and the Mekong Innovative Startups in Tourism (MIST) accelerator program.

In 2009, he co-founded award-winning China digital marketing and social media agency Dragon Trail, based in Beijing/PR China, helping companies all over the world to reach affluent Chinese consumers. Prior he has led marketing, CRM, and digital strategy teams at the Canadian Tourism Commission based in Vancouver/Canada, and at Fairmont Hotels & Resorts based in Toronto/Canada.

In 1999, he founded his consulting firm Chameleon Strategies based in Hong Kong and Vancouver, a UNWTO Affiliate Member, where he has personally assisted many global companies. In 2016, Chameleon Strategies moved its main office to Bangkok/Thailand, offering services from strategic consulting, social technology development, and creative design.

Educated at Cornell University with a Masters of Management in Hospitality, Mr. Thraenhart was recognized as one of the travel industry’s top 100 rising stars by Travel Agent Magazine in 2003, was listed as one of HSMAI’s 25 Most Extraordinary Sales and Marketing Minds in Hospitality and Travel in 2004 and 2005, and named as one of the Top 20 Extraordinary Minds in European Travel and Hospitality in 2014. A member of the UNWTO Global Panel of Experts, and PATA Board Member, he also served as past executive global board member of HSMAI (Hospitality Sales Marketing Association International), and past Chair of PATA China.

A dual citizen of Germany and Canada, he now lives in Bangkok/Thailand.
Sirinart Theenanondh is on a mission to promote Thailand as a film-friendly Destination. She is currently holds a position as a Chief of Film Business Promotion Section under the Thailand Film Office, Department of Tourism, Ministry of and Sports. She earned a Bachelor of Social Work, Thammasat University, Thailand in 1989. Earned Post Graduate Diploma in population and Sustainable Development, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana in 1997. And earned Master of Commerce and Management (MCM) in Public Policy and Management, Lincoln University, New Zealand in 2005. Prior to this position, Sirinart was a Chief of Shooting Permit Consideration Section, Thailand Film Office, which has given her opportunity to work with foreign filmmakers who come to shoot in Thailand and realize what they expect when they come to Thailand both as filmmaker and tourists.

Vincent Vichit-Vadakan gave up a career in Paris publishing to cook, eat and travel. He writes articles and books on food, travel and culture in both English and French for publications around the world. He is a correspondent for the Guides Géo in Thailand and is based in Bangkok. He also speaks fluent Italian, and just enough Thai and Cantonese to confuse people. He is always thinking about his next meal. A selection of his recent work can be found on www.facebook.com/vvviaggio

Somchai Vitdamrong has worked as Provincial Governor at Nakhon Phanom province in Thailand. Previously, he was involved and working with Nakhon Phanom province for 6 years in the provincial office in Nakhon Phanom as Deputy Provincial Governor, leading various projects including the strategic planning and special economic area development project for Nakhon Phanom.

Highly educated, Mr. Somchai Vitdamrong received his both Bachelor and Master Degree in Political Science from Thammasart University, Thailand.
Walanchalee Wattanacharoensil is currently an Assistant Professor in the Tourism and Hospitality Management Division, Mahidol University International College, Thailand. She had years of professional experience in the aviation industry before joining academia and conducted her doctoral studies on airport experience and its connection to the tourism experience at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong.

She has expanded her academic interests and contributed to research (in different forms of journal articles, books, book chapters, conference proceedings) and consultancy projects relating to destination development, service experience in aviation, travel and tourism contexts. Walanchalee is also now a project lead of the educational quality assurance development of the Tourism and Hospitality Management Division and serves as a research committee for Mahidol University International College, Thailand.

Dr. Jutamas Wisansing
Executive Consultant – Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration / Perfect Link Consulting Group
perfectlink.co.th

Dr. Jutamas holds her PhD from Lincoln University, New Zealand. She has now been a tourism lecturer/consultant for over 15 years. She has published her works in a number of international tourism journals. She was also selected to represent Thailand at the Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning, presenting her research and critical analysis of tourism and hospitality education in Asia. She has been invited by a number of tourism related organizations to share her views and knowledge in her specialized field of tourism management.

She has trained a number of participants in Asia. These include planning for MICE and MICE marketing in Taiwan, MICE for educators in Asia, Tourism Management a Regional Approach to the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) countries (6 members – Lao PDR, Cambodia, China, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Thailand), Tourism Education and Management for China, Hospitality and Tourism Management Essentials for Vietnam, Kiwi Specialists in Thailand.
Wong founded BeMyGuest in 2012, and has since not taken a step out of place. It secured S$500,000 (US$385,356) in angel funding last year and purchased Indiescapes early in 2014, before bagging a further S$1 million in funding when it won Channel NewsAsia’s Start-up Asia Competition.

Clement has worked with the top travel companies in the world, airlines, hotels, online travel agencies, tour operators, car rental companies, helping them with their strategies and market research.

He has also advised blue chip banks and venture capital firms on their acquisitions in the travel space.

Before starting BeMyGuest, he was heading up research for Phocuswright in Europe.

Prior to that, he was the Lead Analyst for Non-Air Distribution at Travelport, and also headed up travel and tourism research for Euromonitor in the EMEA region.

Dedication to sustainable tourism is what I aim to do in our tourism industry. Having brought all long time travel experiences in most rare destinations more than half of the world, I decided to join TEATA committee members to contribute what I can do to promote the eco-tourism segment in Thailand. Beside my travel agent and tour operator business, I am also running a green boutique property named “Phunacome Resort”, where we simplify our life in self-economy sufficient way of living from our greatest King Bhumipol. Here, we believe in the harmony of living with nature and community with our highest respectful manner. We are also proud to have won many awards, such as an Asean Green Hotel Award 2012-2014, Thailand Energy Awards 2014, Thailand Tourism Awards 2013, Green Leaf Awards Program 2012.

Clement Wong
CEO & Founder - BeMyGuest
bemyguest.com.sg

Neeracha Wongmasa
President - Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association (TEATA)
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Luc Citrinot
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Joe Cummings
Editor at Large Bangkok101
Bangkok, Thailand

Ron Gluckman
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Bangkok, Thailand

Natalie Gütermann
Editor Chief, Thaizzeit.de
Switzerland

Sien Yong Hooi
Writer, Siennylovedrawing
Malaysia

Steven Howard
CEO & Founder,
Travel News Asia
USA

Chanramsey Koam
Phnom Penh Post
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Theodore Koumelis
Co-Founder & Managing Director, TravelDailyNews
Bangkok, Thailand

Maxwell Llewelyn
Holiday and Travel Magazine,
Australia

Bernard Metzger
Publisher, Travel Index
Bangkok, Thailand

Stephen Morton
CEO / Publisher Global Travel Media
Bangkok, Thailand

Imtiaz Muqbil
Executive Editor,
Travel Impact Newswire
Bangkok, Thailand

Don Ross
Editor, TTR Weekly
Chiang Rai, Thailand

Bruce Scott
Freelance, 24 life magazine
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Co-Founder & Editor,
Travindy.com
UK

Kerim Suat Tore
Focus on Travel News
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Bangkok, Thailand

Vincent Vorachit Vichit-Vadakan
Freelance Food Writer
Bangkok, Thailand

Pichai Visutriratana
Travel writer,
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ETB Travel News
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Zhou Yang
Correspondent, Xinhua
China

Natalie Gütermann
Editor Chief, Thaizzeit.de
Switzerland

Vincent Verstraeten
Freelance photographer, Writer
Bangkok, Thailand

Kerim Suat Tore
Focus on Travel News
Istanbul, Turkey

THE MEDIA
Bloggers & Content Creators
Mike Aquino

Mike Aquino is a long-time Southeast Asia travel correspondent, having spent the last 11 years writing about the region for Tripsavvy.com and Cebu Pacific Smile magazine. He’s also a recent contributor to ASEAN Tourism’s website, contributing travel content for the past 3 years and his new personal site, Southeast Asia Time Traveler.

Tamsyn Elizabeth

Peaches and Bear is a travel and food blog run by Tamsyn Elizabeth, in South West U.K. An avid foodie and explorer with a passion for photography and wildlife conservation, content inspired by her passions. Peaches and Bear is a place to discover exciting content such as days out and destination guides, restaurant reviews, home cooked recipes and much more.

Ketki Gadre

I am Ketki, a traveler, amateur photographer, explorer, learner and nature lover. An environmentalist by profession which takes me to places around the world, that I explore in my own way.

Matt Gibson

Matt’s travel writing and photography have been seen in publications such as AFAR, En Voyage, Action Asia, and The Huffington Post, and many more. He is the Outbound President of the Professional Travel Bloggers Association and CEO of UpThink, an agency that helps travel companies develop their blogging and social media marketing strategies and work with travel bloggers.

Marky Go

Marky Ramone Go is a travel-junkie, writer and photographer based in the Philippines. Aside from contributing articles to various publications and websites, he narrates his experiences wandering the tropical paradise of the Philippines, the culturally rich regions of South East Asia, Sri Lanka and India on his travel blog Nomadic Experiences.

Jen Joslin

Jen Joslin is one half of Two Can Travel, a blog about travel and expat life in Cambodia and around Asia. Two Can Travel aims to inspire couples who want to live, work and travel in Asia, helping them find the information they need to make their dreams a reality.
**Tanya Korteling**  
**UK**  
Focusing on nature, wildlife and conservation, culture, hotels and restaurants and must-do activities, Tanya Korteling and her husband Andy love anything ‘off the beaten track’ or unusual that visitors don’t normally do. They always endeavour to practice and promote responsible, sustainable and ethical travel.

**Diane Lee**  
**AUSTRALIA**  
Diane Lee has written for an expat magazine, several national (Vietnamese) travel companies, a multi-national hotel and a social enterprise. She has recently been appointed the managing editor for a new Australian magazine slated for distribution in Vietnam in the second half of 2018.

**Charlie Louis & Lauren Cliffe**  
**UK**  
After growing up in a small town, we soon came to realise that we were not made to stay in one place. We were made to wander! So now, we combine our sense of humour, love of travel and passion for life to explore the world.

**Tim Mcmahon**  
**NEW ZEALAND**  
I have lived, worked and studied in Australia, Bali, Ecuador, India, Spain, Vietnam and now Thailand (Chiang Mai). I am now working on the sequel to my first book (CHRONICLES of a CORPORATE HIPPY), The Detox Diaries ‘Unplugging from the System’ along with a new BookSeries THE LITTLE HUMAN HANDBOOK, and a contributor to Luxury Chiang Mai.

**Paul Moore**  
**USA**  
Paul Moore is a full time food and travel blogger based in Bangkok, Thailand writing as Chow Traveller. As Bangkok is a foodie paradise and the springboard to travel in Asia, Paul easily finds inspiration for articles. His Chow Traveller blog combines his love for travel, eating, and writing!

**Genevieve Pendrageon**  
**MALAYSIA**  
Genevieve is a travel writer and ASEAN speaker for 8 years. She specializes in Tourism topics for Thailand. She was the top winner for the TAT Newsroom Blogger 2016 and voted Top 40 most popular Thailand Travel blogs 2017 by Feedspot.com And is a member of the SuperNewsroom.com team.
Shayan Naveed  
Originally from Pakistan, Shayan has been living in Thailand for over 20 years. With his wife Kanika, he manages a travel and lifestyle blog called Dose of Life. It is a channel for us to share our travel and life experiences and to also push us to explore more. To do more.

Kathleen Poon  
Kathleen Poon is a travel blogger and writer from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. She blogs at KatPegi Mana: Where Is Kat Going (www.katpegimana.com) with interests in history, heritage, arts and culture. She also has works published in the New Straits Times, The Edge, in-flight magazine and digital travel publications in Malaysia.

Samantha Proyrungtong  
Samantha Proyrungtong is best known an online marketing whiz, being the boss of Extrovert Marketing Agency, and has launched many successful projects through social media with the latest being the Natural Wine Festival at About Eatery. Sam founded a women’s group of entrepreneurs and professionals including Bangkok Foodies and Phuket Foodies where food lovers go to.

Raymond Walsh  
Raymond Walsh is a travel blogger and freelance writer and photographer from St. John’s, Newfoundland, CANADA. Although his blog Man On The Lam focuses on unique destinations and quirky attractions, his sense of humour and upbeat outlook can put a new spin on even the most touristy of places.

Paula Augot  
Born and bred in Brazil, Paula decided to spend a year studying abroad. Since then, she has traveled to more than 40 countries and is currently living in Hong Kong. When she is not discovering another city, she is writing about it in her blog to share her experience and provide insight to her continuously growing audience.
The Mekong Tourism Forum hosted several national and international bloggers, who produced content for their followers about the Forum, its themes, and our location in Nakhon Phanom. Here are a few highlights from their coverage:

“Nakhon Phanom is a little-known town in North East of Thailand, bordering Laos, and rides right alongside the Mekong River. With many temples, outdoor activities and cosy coffee shops on offer, we were surprised at how clean and modern this cute little town turned out to be!”

Wanderers and Warriors

“Goal is to educate the public about great destinations in the Mekong region to drive tourism there and promote economic growth for these communities. Understanding this it begins to make sense why they’d have a large conference of travel industry folks and bloggers in Nakhon Phanom. I mean, I’d never even heard of the place until this conference – and after the 5 days I spent in the area I just fell in love with it!”

Chow Traveller
www.chowtraveller.com/nakhon-phanom
“The Mekong Tourism Forum provides a cooperative platform for stakeholders in the tourism industry to discuss the development, marketing and promotion of travel to, from and within the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). It presents an inclusive, interactive and results-oriented opportunity to encourage public and private sector participation in representing the GMS as a single destination.”

**Bangkok Foodies**  

“Nakhon Phanom was a great choice because not only is this destination beautiful, quaint and relatively undeveloped, it is a gateway to the rest of Mekong region.”

**Dose of Life**  

“With offbeat destinations becoming mainstream, Nakhon Phanom has to be on the list. A peaceful yet charming town located in the north east of Thailand needs limelight so that travelers can get their ultimate digital detox. Bordering Laos and being separated by the tranquil brown waters of Mekong River, Nakhon Phanom has everything a traveler would want and expect.”

**Explore with the Ecokats**  

“After learning that the local province and Tourism Mekong are focusing and prioritising sustainable and responsible tourism, I feel assured that they are going in the right direction.”

**Katpegimana**  
Outgoing head of the Professional Travel Bloggers Association, Matt Gibson, drew on his years of experience to offer the audience his advice for how best to work with digital influencers, that increasingly powerful, yet often little understood, group of social media content creators.

#1 Do your brands match?

Looking for how many followers is the wrong way to do it. In fact it is one of last things to look at. The first thing you should look for is for a perfect fit with your brand. And influencer with a million followers will charge you 1000s of dollars for exposure to their audience, whereas a person with just 1000 followers will charge very little. But if those 1000 followers are all interested in what your brand is about, they could be more valuable that 1 million who don’t care. People throw away a lot of money on big numbers that don’t actually help them. You are looking for the number of followers that will work for your brand.

#2 Look for quality engagement

Followers mean nothing. The number people who actually care vs the number who follow can be completely different. To understand the quality of an influencer’s reach, look at their last 20 posts and average the number of likes on a post.

Looking for how many followers is the wrong way to do it. In fact it is one of last things to look at.

#3 Make the most of their content skills

While an influencer is with you, he or she will probably take 100s of photos, and many minutes of film. Don’t let this go to waste. They are already on site. So hire the influencer to supply photos and videos that you need for your marketing, and so help keep your costs down by avoiding having to employ someone else to do this for you.

#4 Develop a comprehensive strategy

Ideally integrate the influencer into your wider marketing strategy - making them the star of a promotional video or working with them to create a video story that then draws your audience over to your other marketing efforts. Make use of the material they create with you several times over, so you get more value for your money.
Distinguished delegates,
Friends and associates,
Ladies and gentlemen…

First and foremost, let me welcome all of you to the 1st Asia Film Destination Conference, as part of the Mekong Mini Movie Festival, co-located with the 2018 Mekong Tourism Forum on June 26th in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. On behalf of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand.

When Jens Thraenhart, our Executive Director of the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office, and initiator of the Mekong Mini Movie Festival, asked me to chair this first Asia Film Destination Conference, I was immediately intrigued. Films are a very powerful way to showcase destinations and inspire consumers from all over the world to visit Thailand and the Mekong Region. As people say: A picture says a thousand words – and I would add: a film says a million words.

Today, tourists are more experienced and are looking for new destinations and new experiences. Numerous films have inspired millions to visit destinations. Especially in recent years, there has been a growing phenomenon that tourists visit destinations featured in films and user-generated social media clips.

Let me ask you: Have you ever seen a movie in the cinema, a TV show at home, or a video clip on Youtube, which has wanted you to pack your bags and travel to that destination? I can say from my own experience that I have been inspired by films to experience a country many times.

Recent research suggests that movies can have a strong influence on tourist decision-making and that films do not only provide short-term tourism revenue but can build long-term prosperity in a destination.

In the Greater Mekong Subregion, there have been various films that have put destinations in the region on the map, starting from the Tomb Raider movies with Angelina Jolie in Cambodia, The Beach with Leonardo DiCaprio in Thailand, Rambo in Myanmar, Kong in Viet Nam to the hit Chinese comedy film “Lost in Thailand”. Lost in Thailand in particular, has resulted in large numbers of Chinese tourists flocking to Thailand.
Several countries and destinations have understood how films can increase the number of tourists through the magic of films, and have started to compete for film productions.

Video Bloggers as well as videos from travelers and residents also have the power to influence consumers on where and how to experience a destination, especially in a world where user-generated content receives increased trust from consumers.

Our own Mekong Mini Movie campaign, endorsed by the six member countries of the Mekong Region, is another testament to how film can promote destinations. After four months, people have shared and tagged over 300 mini movies of 60 seconds or less. These films, inspiring people all over the world with shared experiences to visit the member countries of the Mekong Region, so far have already been viewed by over 6 million people worldwide. This is a very powerful campaign to promote the region.

But films can also make a positive impact to educate and to influence people to become better travelers. At the 2015 Mekong Tourism Forum in Danang, Vietnam, we screened the documentary film “Gringo Trails” to shed light on the important subject of overtourism, and how destinations can become victims of their own success by being too popular with tourists. Just recently, the Government of Thailand had to temporarily close one of the beaches as the impact of tourism had destroyed the natural environment, which was made famous by a movie. We need to be conscious to manage tourism destinations to preserve the beauty and heritage for generations to enjoy, and educate travelers to be responsible when visiting destinations and attractions.

In closing, I would like to thank our expert speakers from all over the world, and thank all of you for joining us at this important inaugural event. Continue to share your experiences by taking videos and sharing them on social media by tagging with #MekongMoments, so the world can get inspired by your experiences.

I wish you a successful 1st Film Destination Conference, an inspiring Mekong Mini Movie Festival, and a great time in Thailand and Nakhon Phanom.
Promoting Destination via Film
1st Asia Film & Destination Conference
FILM TOURISM

Films are a powerful tool to promote destinations internationally. Both through blockbusters as well as local movies or digital content created by influencers.

The potential to generate media value and impact tourism demand is high when the right time and budget travel are attracted to related marketing activities are coordinated.

The Greater Mekong Subregion’s numerous locations that have been known through movies and music that have a large potential to promote destinations through film.
Visual storytelling

The first afternoon of the conference was dedicated to exploring the power of visual images to promote tourism. In the era of smartphone cameras, Netflix, and YouTube, images and videos have power like never before. As the MC for the session, veteran travel writer Joe Cummings, a Lonely Planet Author and Editor at Large for Talisman Media, told the audience during his introduction: “If I was advising young people now I would say go into visual. My coffee table books would be better done now as videos.”

Some remarkable statistics were shared that show the power of film to motivate travel decisions. Following the release of the Mel Gibson movie Braveheart, the Wallace monument in Scotland saw a 300% increase within one year. Thanks to the Lord of the Rings trilogy, tourism to New Zealand grew by 10% each year from 1998 to 2003. And in Thailand, the Leonardo di Caprio film the Beach was followed by a 22% increase in youth visitors to the eponymous beach in 2000. However, as this same beach had to be temporarily closed to tourists last summer due to overcrowding, the audience were reminded that overpromotion can have risks too.

Used wisely however, said Rob Holmes, founder of responsible tourism film production company GLP Films, movies can be used to address such risks. If we use stories to promote little known destinations, to divert traffic away from oversaturated spots, and to attract quality tourists rather than chasing mass markets, he explained, then visual storytelling can help combat over tourism. “Stories have the power to shape destination planning through strategic storytelling,” said Holmes. “Target your ideal audience – e.g. adventure, food, responsible – and diversify destinations and promote areas that need economic help through sharing new stories.”

The Forum played host to its own mini movie festival, in which the audience was introduced to Mekong Mini Movies - a user generated movie campaign endorsed by the region’s 6 countries. Users are encouraged to share short movies (under 60 seconds) from destinations they visit in the region. Use of the #mekongmoments and #minis hashtag means they can be aggregated on the Mekong Tourism website, while also being shared freely to the creator’s own followers. By the time of the Forum, over 300 movies had been shared in just 4 months, with in excess of 6 million total views, inspiring people from over the word to come visit countries, while also influencing people to become better travellers.
WINNERS PHASE 1

EDITORIAL CHOICE

Mr. Sethi Zelo Phat, Cambodia
@sethizelo
Prizes: Trip to Cambodia including regional round-trip airfare

Sunny | Travel-Food Minimalist, Austria
@Lifeof_sunny
Prizes: Trip to Lao PDR including regional round-trip airfare

Baptiste Petit, France
@baptiste2344
Prizes: Trip to Myanmar including regional round-trip airfare

Roxanne, Germany
@r.oxa.nne
Prizes: Trip to Thailand including regional round-trip airfare

Nick Sullivan, Australia
@wearerunaway
Prizes: Trip to Viet Nam including regional round-trip airfare

#LUXURY CATEGORY
Sponsored by Rosewood Hotels & Resorts

Sebastian Ruiz, Colombia
@sebasruiz
Prizes: 2 nights at Rosewood Phuket, Luang Prabang, Phnom Penh

INDUSTRY CHOICE

Mr. Ric Gazarian, USA
@Global_Gaz
Prizes: Trip to Cambodia including regional round-trip airfare

Maria Kasatina, Russia
@mashikc_travel
Prizes: Trip to Lao PDR including regional round-trip airfare

Monica & Kevin, Belgium & Mexico
@vagajuntos
Prizes: Trip to Myanmar including regional round-trip airfare

Christian, Germany
@christianbrucki
Prizes: Trip to Thailand including regional round-trip airfare

Dominic Doan, USA
@dominic.firelitfilms
Prizes: Trip to Viet Nam including regional round-trip airfare

SPECIAL RECOGNITION FOR BEST VIDEO ON CONSERVATION
Sponsored By WWF And Khiri Travel

Paul Moore, USA
@chowtraveller
Prizes: Trip to Cambodia including regional round-trip airfare
RESULTS (PRELIMINARY)
FEBRUARY - JUNE 2018

300 participants (travelers, bloggers, filmmakers)
220K followers (through network of participants)
6M REACH
600K VID. VIEWS

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Deputy Director General
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Location Scout, Hanuman Films
Mr Rathasak Thong
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Mr James Sano
VP Tourism, WWF
Mr Teak Seng
Country Director Cambodia, WWF
Mr Yuthasak Supasorn
Governor, Tourism Authority of Thailand
Mr Duke Theerathada
CEO, DPT
Mr Art Thoma
Producer, Hey ASEAN
Dr Jutamas Wisansing
CEO, Perfect Link Consulting
Mr Mark Wong
VP Asia Pacific, Small Luxury Hotels
Ms Yin Myo Su
CEO, Inle Heritage Myanmar
Ms Sunny Yu
Director Marketing, IHG

Chair
Mr Jens Thraenhart
Executive Director
Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office

Mr Chantha Tith
Secretary of State
Ministry of Tourism
Cambodia

Mr Sounh Manivong
Director, General
Ministry of Hotels and Tourism
Myanmar

Mr Tint Thwin
Director, General
Ministry of Hotels and Tourism
Myanmar

Mr Pongapnu Svetarundra
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Tourism and Sports
Thailand

Dr Ha Van Sieu
Vice Chairman
Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism
Viet Nam
PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE 3RD MEKONG TOURISM FORUM AT ITB BERLIN.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6TH, 2019.
3.00 PM TO 3.45 PM AT CUBE CLUB/CITY CUBE.

THEME: FILM TOURISM & VISUAL STORYTELLING
IF A PICTURE TELLS 1000 WORDS, WHAT IS A VIDEO WORTH

- Mobile video consumption doubles every year
- 55% watch videos online every day. 92% share mobile videos
- YouTube as second largest search engine in the world.
- Online videos receive 1200% more shares than text and images combined
- 90% of daily active Facebook users use smartphones. They can be shooting and sharing photos and videos anywhere, anytime
- 87% of marketers use video for content marketing, compared to 66% for blogs and 44% for articles
- An online video’s lifespan is years, not days. Videos posted 2 or 3 years ago are still being searched for and found, whereas other kinds of media vanish after months

TRANSFORMING TRAVEL, TRANSFORMING LIVES

In January 2017, Vogue magazine said Transformative Travel was the next big thing. That year was also the UN’s Internationalism Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, exploring how the world’s largest industry could best deliver on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The aim of these goals, according to the UN, is ‘transforming our world’.

Transformation is not just the right concept for now. With threats such as climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as increasing anger and discontent at how development has been unequally shared, it is an urgent need.

The Forum’s keynote speaker was writer and communication consultant Jeremy Smith, author of the 2018 book Transforming Travel - realising the potential of sustainable tourism. He explained that what distinguishes transformation as a concept is its focus on change, and on making things better.

Too often sustainability has been seen to be about preserving the status quo, or about trying to do less damage than before. Sharing a wide range of best practice examples from across the region at the rest of the world, Smith said that transforming travel means that we look at our industry - one that is said to be responsible for 10% of global GDP and to support the employment of 1 in 10 people, and ask how can we transform their lives - how can we make them better? And as an industry that is also responsible for 8 per cent of more of global carbon emissions - more than any country except the US and China - how can we move beyond simply seeking to grow more efficiently towards actually designing our industry’s development to be one that restores biodiversity and habitat, reduces climate change,
cleans up waste and pollution, and does all this while bringing an ever growing number of travellers better, more fulfilling experiences?

Throughout the Forum, whatever their specific focus, speakers highlighted both how the industry is transforming, and the scope for it to go further. Be My Guest's Clement Wong observed that while for his parents travel was about collecting destinations, for example heading off on a 10 day tour of European cities, in today’s Instagramable social media age, it is about “collecting experiences.

More than anything, the industry is being transformed by the internet. “Even bicycles are fully digitised,” said Wong, explaining that these days 50% of tours and attractions booked with 24hrs, with the traveller wanting instant confirmation, and instant voucher, ideally that they show on their mobile. Concluding, he said to the audience: “It’s not a question of are you ready for digital boom / age? What if you’re not part of this?”

Echoing Wong, APAC business Development Manager for Cloudbeds, Jason Lusk said that: “To avoid the commodity trap you have to be thinking in terms of creating an experience.” Technology is radically changing the way people interact with tourism, he explained, predicting that by 2020, more and more guests would be wanting mobile check in, pre-set room preferences, and the ability to open and lock their door using their smartphone or wearable device.

Change isn’t only happening online. Transportation in the region is being radically transformed as well, explained Alberto Moreno, founder of startup BaoLao (its name means How Long in Vietnamese). Perhaps most surprisingly, Moreno said that it is railways that will most disrupt the region’s industry over the

### Expert Views

**“When we inspire people through stories, and especially through visual storytelling, we can not only increase number of tourists but inspire to visit secondary destinations and connect to the culture of the region”**

Jens Thraenhart, Executive Director, Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office

**“People are sharing every day, but we need to trigger specific emotions - achievement, pride, truly helpful, self-image - this is what drives people to share and engage”**

Gerrit Kruger, Managing Director, Chameleon Strategies

**“We don’t want to be sold to - we are bombarded with so much that we just want something that engages us”**

Rob Holmes, Founder GLP Films

**‘The amazing thing about today’s world is we are all allowed to show our content online for free’**

Art Thomya, Vlogger, Hey Asean

**“In terms of the talks about media and promotion, and the importance of video and the visual, and how to present and package the offerings, it’s been very interesting to see what other people are doing—what they’re doing right, and what they’re doing wrong. I think I’ve absorbed a lot about how I need to pay more attention to the aesthetics of my direct marketing.”**

Holly Monahan, Founder, Ilex Luxury Travel
next 10 or so years. In Cambodia passenger rail reopened last year after 45 years and now connects to Thailand. And thanks to China’s vast Belt and Road project, there will be high speed rail connecting across the region from Kunming to Yangon, Hanoi and to Singapore. According to Moreno, some experts consider that in the future, the region will see more passengers using railways than aviation.’

One of the countries seeing the most dramatic pace of change is Myanmar, so long closed to the outside world. Yin Myo Su, the Founder of Inle Heritage Foundation, Inle Lake, Myanmar, explained how although investment boomed after the 2012 opening up of country, with big tourism brands investing in the country, this only tells a part of the story. You rarely hear of investment in skill, education, labour, she explained, so despite the changes in the country, still 30-70% of youth drop out 30-70 from high school. Most do this not because they are stupid, she adds, but because they don’t want to be squeezed into a box where they can’t be critical or use their own initiative, in other words “they are an interesting group of people who we need to focus on and invest in.” Her company has trained up more than 200 student, with 70 percent still working in tourism, while others are now studying abroad, and some studying at home. A mark of their success, she adds, is that now some of the original students have become second generation trainers, building a legacy for the future. “We must always create a win win win,” she added, “for me, for you and for the next generation.”
GET READY FOR THE FIRST MEKONG FROM ABOVE PHOTO AND VIDEO CONTEST.

From November 1st, 2018 to March 1st, 2019, tag #MekongMoments, #MekongFromAbove and #[Destination] to your own social media posts of stunning areal pictures and videos of the Mekong Region to win.

www.MekongMoments.com

BE IN THE MOMENT TRAVEL RESPONSIBLY

In collaboration between Knowledge Media Group Thailand and Destination Mekong

Photo: Alex Photorain
After ten years of launching the initial Mekong Responsible Travel Guide in 2007, we have launched the next version of the Mekong Responsible Travel Guide, The Experience Mekong Collection. More relevant than ever to promote responsible and sustainable tourism practices and travel businesses, we have completely redesigned the platform and the process.

We are ready accept nominations to collect and showcase responsible travel experiences in the categories STAY, EAT, SHOP, DO, and CRUISE, endorsed by the Mekong Responsible Tourism Expert Group.

All included responsible tourism experiences are also searchable on MekongMoments.com with a special badge, and are promoted via our channels.

The collaboration with Mahidol University International College, every year, we will showcase a collection of innovative best practices from the six member countries in a special responsible tourism edition of Mekong Trends, presented at the annual Mekong Tourism Forum.

www.ExperienceMekong.com
The Experience Mekong Collection is a growing database of over 150 small businesses offering travellers places to stay or eat, as well as experiences and things to do. On the one hand it is a capacity building tool, but also emerging as a site used by travellers to discover these small businesses so they can visit them during their time in the region.

This year representatives of five of the initiatives profiled shared their stories with the audience, bringing the concepts of transforming travel in the region to life. Xpai-Somsak Boonkam, CEO & Founder, Local Alike, explained how his company worked to connect travellers with the “hidden wisdom of local communities”, introducing guests to unique, community run experiences that preserve local cultures while sharing authentic experiences with tourists. “I am a village boy myself,” he said. “So my inspiration was to help people like me, my family, my village and people like me.”

Yin Myo Su explained how she felt it was important to include the protection of nature and other people as part of her company’s bottom line. Observing that Myanmar is only now opening up to the world, she hoped this could be used to benefit its development, commenting: “We are latecomers, and maybe we can avoid some of the things that other countries regret.”

Cambodia’s Phare Circus has a mission to provide jobs for local circus and music artists and to provide financial support to a nonprofit school where artists are training. And to do this by providing a unique experience for visiting guests to Siem Reap, most of whom have come solely to see Angkor Wat. “Of course we are transforming the lives of artists,” said Momoko Ikeuchi, Sales Manager, Phare Cambodia Circus, “but also, we are changing ways that tourists visit Siem Reap, 90% are there to visit temples - we show them what real life is today.”

Based in Luang Prabang, Ock Pop Tok has transformed its souvenir business into an experience that provides guests with a window into the lives of the artisans behind the products they buy. Its founders’ original inspiration was to supports artisans, which it continues to develop through craft centre. Phitsamai Sipaza, Assistant Manager, Ock Pop Tok Living Crafts Center, explained that now they also offer a free tour, starting every half hour, to help visitor discover the real Laos, through learning about the materials used, understanding the source of the products they by and the work that has gone into creating them. By doing this these souvenirs become more than commodities - they embody the stories behind their creation.

Finally Jason from Longji Rice Terraces told the remarkable story of the rice terraces. What fascinated him, he said, was how these structures were formed over 800 years ago, and for hundreds of years were not seen as an attraction. Yet as photos of them began to appear in the world’s media in the 19880s and 90s, word spread and they began to attract tourists, a startling example of how an ancient marvel can become an inspiration thanks to modern science.
RECOGNIZING THE 2018 EXPERIENCE 
MEKONG COLLECTION SHOWCASES

PHARE CAMBODIAN CIRCUS

LONGJI RICE TERRACES

OCK POP TOK

INLE HERITAGE

LOCAL ALIKE

KOTO

IN COLLABORATION WITH

Mahidol University
International College
PHARE
CAMBODIAN CIRCUS
SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA

TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Phare, The Cambodian Circus tells uniquely Cambodian tales using modern circus arts and high energy music, touching on themes strong in Cambodian tradition, ethos and spirit. The performances mix theatre, music, dance, acrobatics, juggling, aerial acts, fire and contortion with an explosion of virtuosity and sensitivity. During the hour-long shows, the Phare performers share their emotions and excitement, blowing the audience away with their integrity and power.

AMAZING VIBE & ENERGY, TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF CAMBODIAN YOUTH
BUSINESS CASE

In 2013, with the aim of financial self-sufficiency, PPSA created Phare Performing Social Enterprise (PPSE) with three missions:

Create meaningful employment opportunities for Cambodian artists

Create financially sustainable social businesses that provide a reliable income streams for Phare Ponleu Selpak

Revitalise the arts sector in Cambodia and promote Cambodian art locally and internationally.

RESPONSIBILITY

Since its creation, Phare Ponleu Selpak’s priority has been the economic, social and cultural development of its neighbourhood. PPS originated in 1986 in Site 2 Refugee Camp on the Thai border with the idea that a creative association, using art and expression, would help young refugees overcome the trauma of war. This original idea was pursued after the refugees returned to their homeland, and PPS was formally founded in 1994. PPS implements a global approach and their action is centred on artistic practice. Arts are used to foster expression, but also as a complete set of tools answering children’s needs: education, life skills, social skills and personal development. It allows the population to reclaim their cultural practices and to rebuild their identity healing the destructive effects of the Khmer rouge regime. It gives them a reason to hope for a better future and believe in themselves.

Address
Phare Circus Ring Road, south of the intersection with Sok San Road, Siem Reap, Kingdom of Cambodia, Cambodia

Phone Number
+855 92 225 320

Email
ticketing@pharecircus.org

Website
pharecircus.org

Images Source: www.pharecircus.org
LONGJI RICE TERRACES  
GUANGXI, PR CHINA

TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Dragon Backbone’s Rice Terraces is the most amazing terrace in China! Construction of the terraces began in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), and continued until the early Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) when construction was completed. The Dragon’s Backbone Rice Terraces are the culmination of both the profound wisdom and strenuous labor of the Zhuang people. The Dragon’s Backbone Rice Terraces is a beautiful natural picture. The linked together rice terraces vary from season to season. In spring, the water is irrigated into the fields and the terraces look like great chains or ribbons hung on the hillsides. When the onset of summer, green waves rush continuously down the mountainside from the heaven. The theme of autumn is the harvest, with the mountainside decorated with the gold of ripened millet. Coming into winter, the whole mountain will be covered with white snow, just like dragons playing with water.

RESPONSIBILITY

Longji is also the area to visit to experience China’s ethnic minorities’ culture. The Zhuang and the Yao nationalities live here, though mainly it is the Zhuang people. The women dress in unique and colorful costumes, singing and dancing.
BUSINESS CASE

Longji area provides a unique experiences. Visitors also can join in with them to enjoy the original Zhuang life and culture, and even stay with local families enjoying both the Longji tea and the Longji wine. Besides the unique experiences, Longji Rice Terrace is as well offering and operating to guests the niche tour in order to discover the most beautiful karst landform scenery in Yangshuo, and to explore the ethnic culture in Longji and Sanjiang. Longji is a place where you can see the large scale rice terraces which founded by the Zhuang and Yao minority people, while the Sanjiang where you can find the unique buildings of Dong minority people.

Address
Longsheng, Guilin, Guangxi, 541000, China

Phone Number
+86 158770 01801

Email
longjiriceterraces@gmail.com

Website
www.longjiriceterraces.com

Images Source: www.longjiriceterraces.com
TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Founded in 2000, Ock Pop Tok was created by two friends – a local weaver and a visiting English photographer. Their vision was to blend their passion for textiles with their desire to be a positive force for change. Ock Pop Tok means East Meets West and is a perfect expression of what visiting one of their shops, or the Living Crafts Center, is like.

RESPONSIBILITY

Ock Pop Tok was founded on principles of fair trade and sustainable business practices, and was pioneering social business and ethical fashion before these terms were even a part of our cultural lexicon.

BUSINESS CASE

Veo and Jo realised early on that in order for hand loomed textiles to survive and thrive as a craft, they had to create economic value for the textiles. Weaving, which is done primarily by village women, is often considered domestic work that is not representative of progress or economic advancement. By operating on fair trade principles – specifically by providing competitive wages, opportunities for continued learning and professional development – OPT gave village weavers, most of whom are women, the ability to earn a sustainable livelihood for their families and communities. And, by opening a venue where visitors could see and practice the craft, the two were able to educate visitors about the cultural and the artistic value of the textiles.
As a social enterprise we strive to make our community a better place and a part of that is caring about our impact on the environment. We source all of our raw materials locally and seasonally in order to minimising our carbon footprint. This also reflects our commitment to the local community by supporting local business.

We aim to be a plastic free company and have taken to big steps towards this goal. We are working with our team to raise awareness and educate the local community about the issue of plastic pollution on as a global problem. We are committed to help Opt team members find solutions and reduce plastic use at work and in their personal lives.

We stopped using plastic straws in our cafés and replaced them with locally sourced bamboo straws. We also stopped selling plastic water bottles. We give all of our guest free purified drinking water. We also set up water refill stations at all of our shops and cafés so that people can refill their reusable water bottles for free with the mission of reducing the sale of plastic water bottles in the community.

Source: www.ockpoptok.com/about/environmental-commitment
TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Inle Heritage is a not-for-profit organisation that looks after the cultural and natural heritage of the Inle Region, and helps it grow as a great place to live, work and visit.

RESPONSIBILITY

Over the last few years, tourism, and growth in other markets, have presented great opportunities, but with these come threats to the region and its social fabric, livelihoods and environment. Our mission, through heritage work, knowledge sharing and socially responsible business models, is to work with the communities of the Inle Region so that they all benefit from these opportunities and reduce these threats.
**BUSINESS CASE**

The best way to support Inle Heritage is to visit us and have a good time. Preserving the heritage of the Inle Region is an ongoing commitment so its funding must be sustainable. We believe heritage efforts will not work in the long run if they are dependent on outside donations. We want visitors to enjoy supporting Inle’s unique cultural and natural identity. So we have set up socially responsible businesses around things you like doing, such as buying locally made arts and crafts, enjoying homemade Inthar cuisine, then learning how to cook it, or staying at our village Bed & Breakfast in the middle of the lake.

**Address**
Inle Heritage, Innpawkhon Village, Inle Lake, Shan State, Myanmar

**Phone Number**
+95 (9) 4931 2970

**Email**
contact@inleheritage.org

**Website**
www.inleheritage.org

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**WHAT WE DO**

INLE HERITAGE HOSPITALITY VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE (IHHVTC)

INTHAR HERITAGE HOUSE

ORGANIC FARM

ORIGINAL LOCAL CRAFTS

BURMESE CAT VILLAGE

INLE’S AQUATIC LIFE

Images Source: www.inleheritage.org
LocalAlike.com is an online marketplace where you can find curated travel experiences in local communities across Southeast Asia. You get to experience trips that are designed to be enjoyable and authentic for every traveler and local alike. You simply have to try out the amazing food and drinks, adventurous treks, immersive cultures, exciting shows, and so much more that you won’t find with traditional tour companies.

Local Alike connects you to offbeat and local Thai travel experiences. We work with locals to create once-in-a-lifetime trips for you and use income generated to achieve social development goals. We also create opportunities for local communities to better their livelihoods through tourism.
Local Alikers are on the mission to enhance the livelihoods at local communities across Thailand and neighboring countries. By introducing them to community-based tourism, we bring out their best and surface them to the world through our website. On the other hand, we also build a free online solution for locals to use in managing their tourism business.

LOCAL ALIKE WORKS HAND IN HAND WITH LOCAL PEOPLE TO PROMOTE ‘COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM’ TO PROVIDE TRAVELERS WITH AN AUTHENTIC AND MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE TO TRAVELERS AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRESERVATION OF CULTURE AND NATURE WHILE BRINGING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR DECENT AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

Source: www.localalike.com

BUSINESS CASE

Local Alikers are on the mission to enhance the livelihoods at local communities across Thailand and neighboring countries. By introducing them to community-based tourism, we bring out their best and surface them to the world through our website. On the other hand, we also build a free online solution for locals to use in managing their tourism business.

Address
No. 582/27, Soi Pho Pan 21, Soi Ratchadaphisek 3, Ratchadaphisek Rd., Din Daeng, Bangkok, Thailand

Phone Number
+66 2 115 9861

Email
info@localalike.com

Website
www.localalike.com

Images Source: www.localalike.com
KOTO

HA NOI, VIET NAM

TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

No ordinary restaurant. It’s a place where customers enjoy delicious Vietnamese and European cuisine and where the staff (mostly former street and disadvantaged youth) are so full of energy and enthusiasm that it’s contagious.

RESPONSIBILITY

Empowering at-risk youth to pursue a life of dignity by providing training, life-skills, and opportunity as well as positive permanent change for at-risk and disadvantaged youth through the transformative power of social enterprise.
BUSINESS CASE

As a social enterprise, KOTO has trained over 670 students at its two training centres in Hanoi and Saigon, with more than 200 currently enrolled. In addition to its foundation department that focuses on raising funds to support its cause through charitable activities and initiatives, KOTO also operates an enterprise that serves as a platform for vocational hospitality training as well as a source of income to support the welfare and training for the students. The KOTO Enterprise currently includes two restaurants, a bakery, a cooking class and a catering service.
How to transform travel – Expert insights from Forum speakers

“Travel is all about experiences. No one ever says the highlight was the flight or hotel room.”

Clement Wong, Founder & CEO, Be My Guest

“If you are only selling somewhere to sleep, you are selling a commodity. Think forward, use available technology. Free your time and your mind to make your property an experience”

Jason Richards, APAC business Development Manager, Cloudbeds

“We need to be conscious to manage tourism destinations to preserve beauty and heritage for generations to come and to educate travellers to be responsible when visiting destinations and attractions”

Pongpanu Svetarundra, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand
“Healthy travel is the antidote to overtourism - much of airbnb listings are out of crowded city centre.”

Mich Goh,
Head of Public Policy, Southeast Asia – Airbnb

“For a sustainable tourism future, we need to transmit knowledge to the next generation, by adjusting and adapting the challenges of our generation.”

“Our clients enable us to reflect on ourselves, to realise that in order to answer their questions, I need to rethink my own culture and history.”

Yin Myo Su,
Founder of Inle Heritage Foundation, Myanmar
Plastic Free Event

If 2017 was the year that the travel industry began to take overtourism seriously, then 2018 will be remembered as the year it started to seriously address the issue of a plastic pollution. Of course, this recent awareness and action has been taking place on a far wider scale than just tourism - and much of it has been sparked by the response to the BBC TV Series The Blue Planet, where David Attenborough showed viewers just how devastating our throwaway lifestyles have become for the world’s marine ecosystems.

In 2017 the Mekong Tourism Forum made its first steps towards going plastic free. However in 2018 it took several strides further. There were no plastic cups and glasses at the venues, and conference hotels were issued with drinking fountains. Even the lanyards were plastic free, and were made from local renewable materials by members of the villages visited in the afternoon session of day 3 (see previous section), thus further delivering on the transformative vision of the event, providing a source of income for the communities.

Keynote speaker Jeremy Smith introduced the session, presenting some harsh truths about the scale of the problem, before focussing on how the industry could best work towards solving it. It was essential, he explained, to invest time and resources in the most effective approaches - and no approach is more effective than coming up with alternatives that mean the use of plastic is avoided in the first place. He gave examples from hotels, tour companies and destinations that were working towards being plastic free to support his case.

His arguments were further developed by Gili Back from Khiri Travel provided a highly visual presentation on how best companies and destinations could get involved. In particular her infographic (see opposite page), had the audience reaching for their smartphones to take a copy home. “Tourism plays important role in driving change,” said Black,”the more people that people make demand the quicker it will happen.”

She was then joined on stage by the Forum’s organiser Jens Thraenhart, the two of them called on people to sign up to a new Plastic Free Pledge, launched at the event. Several speakers and audience members came on stage and were filmed committing themselves personally, and/or the organisation they represent, towards greater efforts to eliminate plastics from their lives and work.
The Role of Travel and Tourism in Plastic Consumption

Travel & Tourism and the world’s oceans are inextricably intertwined. As much as 80% of tourism relates to the coastal areas, and the state of the world’s oceans can no longer handle the amount of plastics pollution entering the water each day. T&T brings tourists to vulnerable regions of the world—islands, reefs, and small communities—and in many cases pushes local waste management systems beyond maximum capacity. A paper in Science magazine showed the powerful link between waste management systems around the world and the state of our oceans.

When tourism is concentrated in areas without effective waste management systems, trash and plastics invariably end up contaminating forests, rivers, and oceans. Litterbase visually maps where marine litter concentrates, and the magnitude of the issue is staggering. According to the United States Institute of Peace, “Once essentially excluded from the tourism industry, the developing world has now become its major growth area. Tourism is a key foreign exchange earner for 83 percent of developing countries,” and according to study from the University of Maryland “more than 50 million people from industrialised nations travel to developing countries each year.

The rise in tourism to developing regions of the world has many positive effects on local economies and employment, but it creates issues when these countries are not equipped to handle the side-effects of tourism, which include increased stress on waste removal systems. While destinations and T&T companies must act to counter the effects of tourism on the world’s oceans, travellers must also understand the stress tourism places on local and global ecosystems, and take actions to mitigate the negative effects.

Source: World Travel & Tourism Council

Minimise Plastic Usage

Every delegate will receive the following – just for attending the 2018 Mekong Tourism Forum, and joining the discussion of “Transforming Travel – Transforming Lives”:

As plastic bottles and debris float on top of the ocean they are broken up by sunlight, waves and salt to create what is known as microplastics. The plastics and toxins found in marine life can (and do) enter the food chain, and end up on our plates.

A Bryde’s whale was reported to have 6sqm of plastic inside it when it washed up on the shoreline off Cairns in Australia. The post-mortem found that the whale’s stomach was tightly packed with mostly plastic checkout bags.

Scientists estimate that there are more than 5 trillion particles (pieces of plastic) in our oceans.

Birds are affected too: shearwater birds and albatross are often found dead with their stomachs full of microplastics. One shearwater bird was found with up to 270 pieces of micro plastics inside its body, that’s the equivalent of 6-8 kilos of plastic inside a human being.

Plastics and toxins found in marine life can (and do) enter the food chain, and end up on our plates.
Single-use plastic is one of the biggest issues we face in today’s world, and the travel and tourism industry can do its part to help solve the problem.

The 2018 Mekong Tourism Forum tries to do its small part to raise awareness of the issue and make the event plastic free.

On June 28th, we will put the Plastic Issue front and center and invite anybody to join the discussion on how we as an industry can reduce single-use plastic in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

Also, for the second year in a row, MTF 2018 is has designed a limited-edition refillable water bottle, as part of our MTF Plastic Free Kit.

Most of us reading this piece will no doubt work in the travel and tourism sector and therefore will have some awareness of the scale of plastic the industry attracts and consumes. In the last 10 years, we have made more plastic than ever before. In this year alone, every man, woman and child will consume on average 300 pounds or 136 kilos of single-use plastic. By 2025, 10 times more plastic each year is estimated to be dumped in our oceans. Furthermore by 2050 the population is expected to grow to a whopping 10 billion people and our plastic consumption is expected to triple. The truth is, only a fraction will be recycled.

These are just some of the facts we learned watching the Plastic Oceans documentary this week, and there are more here:

**How You Can Minimise Plastic Usage**

Minimising our use of plastics means looking for all the ways plastics have infiltrated our daily lives. From shopping bags to food packaging to bottled drinks, there are opportunities in many areas of your life and travels to limit your use of disposable plastics. Although there are exciting innovations underway aimed at undoing some of the damage from plastics in the environment, travellers still play a very important role in limiting the amount of plastic consumption in T&T. Here are four ways to lower your impact on the countries and communities you visit on your travels.

- **Bring your own water bottle.**
- **Carry your own collapsible tote.**
- **Refuse small shampoo bottles from hotels.**
- **Recycle when possible.**
pledge

noun

a solemn promise or agreement to do or refrain from doing something; a pledge of aid; a pledge to reduce plastic usage.

take the plastic-free pledge today

show your commitment to reduce single-use plastic by taking a video or photo and tagging

#mekongmoments #plasticfree add your business #
to pledge your hotel, restaurant, shop etc. to join this important movement

Hosted on

Mekong Moments

mekongmoments.com/plasticfree
Refill here!
Refill station for Mekong Tourism Forum 2018 delegates.

take the plastic-free pledge today

mekongmoments.com/plasticfree

MEKONG TOURISM FORUM 2018

What will you make?

‘plastic-free’ hotel opens in Bangkok in 2018
8 THEMATIC STRATEGY WORKSHOPS,
HOSTED BY 8 COMMUNITY-BASED VILLAGES
5P

THEMATIC STRATEGY WORKSHOPS

To ensure some consistency of all the sessions, we have developed a model that is aimed to position the GMS as a competitive tourism destination. The components of the model are: Positioning, Promotion, Product Development, Partnerships, and Policy.
The most innovative part of the Mekong Tourism Forum 2018 were the village sessions. On the afternoon of day three, all of the delegates split into groups of around 20 people, and then took buses to nearby villages. Some of these villages had almost no experience of tourism, while some had a little more, but all were very much traditional rural villages.

In each village, an expert facilitator guided a discussion involving the villagers and delegates around one of six topics, chosen because they are considered to offer potential for development as niche forms of responsible tourism in the region. In addition, villagers provided traditional food and interactions to showcase their own culture.

These sessions were deliberately freeform and left mostly to the facilitator and the villagers to curate, and ranged from round the table discussions, to structured workshops to more traditional presentations with Q&A. What follows are some key points raised throughout the afternoon that anyone wishing to develop responsible community tourism might wish to consider. While some of the ideas are specific to the session where they were raised, most have wider benefit.
Organic Tourism
Tai Kalerng Village

- Organic Tourism is a social movement emerging in Thailand, using tourism as a tool to drive toward a more balanced food system.

- Instead of buying from the usual suppliers, hotels and restaurants buy from local organic farmers, developing networks to ensure a market for their produce.

- The tourism businesses then educate their customers that organic is not only beneficial for their health, but also for the environment and the farmers. In this way, the whole value chain benefits from this partnership from farmers, businesses and consumers.

Adventure Tourism
Tai Nyaw Village

- New ideas for activities that the Mekong region could offer include Farm-to-table cooking, Oxen and work demonstration, Fishing (both with local fishermen and without), and River boating in traditional craft.

- Ensuring community consensus with all developments avoids negative impacts from the introduction of new touristic activities.

- By pooling income from activities and distributing to village rather than to individuals, the risk of jealousy and competition can be avoided.

TAI KA LERNG

Tai Ga Lerng is the ancestors of Ban NongSang community, in Nong Sang subdistrict, Na Khae district, Nakhon Phanom province in Thailand, originated from Savannakhet province in Lao.

TAI NYAW

The Thai Nyaw people are predominantly from Hongsa city and Sainyaburi, provinces in Laos. Most of the Nyaw people migrated and settled down in Shaiyaburi at the estuary of the Songkram river, Mekong Riverside, presently known as Shaiyaburi sub-district, Tha Uthen district, and Nakhon Phanom province of Thailand.
A recent study by the World Food Travel Association shows that 93% of all travelers create long-lasting positive memories through food experiences.

88.2% of people say that food is a defining element of a destination, so where villages have unique dishes, food could be a primary draw for attracting tourists.

Potential food-related experiences that villages could offer include: an introduction to local ingredients, market visits, cooking demonstrations, cooking classes, home stays and cooking and/or eating with families in their homes.

Tai Guan, at Ban Na Ton village, Na Ton subdistrict, Tat Phanom district, Nakhon Phanom province, has a long history starting from Sib-Song-Chu-Thai kingdom. Khun Borom is the founder of Tang city since the 12th century. Villagers called this type of location as “Guan” meaning the plain surrounded by mountains.

Thai Isan is a large group in this region. They speak Thai-Lao, and the Isan language. They are a leader of culture in the Isan region such as Heet Kong, Legendary, linguistic, traditions. The Isan people generally settle in a group on a hill area which is known as ‘Non’ in their local language, and have spread over the Isan region.
Religious Tourism
Phu Thai Village

- It is important to clearly define what market segments religious tourism is being targeted at as the expectations of someone with no knowledge of Buddhism would be very different from someone who has grown up in the traditions. Yet both could benefit.

- Correctly run, religious tourism can promote jobs and businesses, while also preserving indigenous knowledge for future generations, such as supporting artisans creating worshipping tools, statues and images, or passing on dance and music techniques.

- Promoting religious tourism may help families and the younger generation find ways to live sustainably and more harmoniously together.

- The Mekong Region has both strong historical and cultural connections between the countries, but also many unique experiences in different regions, making it possible to create interesting thematic trips.

- It is essential that visitors and tourists are taught the correct ways to behave at holy sites and religious ceremonies so as not to disrespect villagers’ beliefs.

PHU THAI

Phu Thai tribe is one of the tribe in Nakhon Phanom lived in Renu district, Nakae district, Tat Phanoom district, and Nawa district. Originally the tribe settled in Sib Song Chu Thai Kingdom (the northwest Vietnam) and Sipsong Panna Kingdom. Later in 2369 BE, during the reign of King Rama III, Phu Thai emigrated from the left side of the Mekong to Thailand.

Heritage Tourism
Tai Kha Village

- Heritage tourism offers villagers a way to protect their traditions and intangible culture.

- A challenge is to adapt tourism to ensure the well-being of villagers and to not turn their village into a tourist trap.

- A related challenge is to establish how to promote an authentic experience without radically changing people’s way of life.

TAI KHA

Tai Kha is one of the significant ethnic groups in Nakhon Phanom province. Tai Kha people originated from Savannakhet province, Salavan province, Attapeu province. Generally, the anthropologists consider Tai Kha as one of the original tribe in the Mekong Delta. They believe that there is a high possibility that Tai Kha people are the ancient khmer descendant from Chenla kingdom which later on is changed to the Khmer empire and Srihotraboobon kingdom.
Wellness Tourism
Tai So Village

- Highlight the region’s slow and relaxed way of life – how calm and peaceful it is. The ideal destination for wellness tourism, it offers “A sanctuary for the senses.”

- Focus on how wellness is embedded in local traditions, such as the facts that meditation is central to Buddhism, and massage is a way of life for Thais.

- Work with local skincare product companies to develop their formulas, packaging and distribution/marketing efforts to bring them to standards needed to market internationally.

Eco Tourism
Tai Seak Village

- Tourism policy should be developed by villagers (with partner support) so that everyone understands and commits to it.

- Experiences should be positioned as offering travellers a chance to immerse themselves in a unique cultural community. This means they would not be passive observers, but invited to learn and participate, through activities such as fishing, music & dance, and making handicrafts.

- Tourists should be encouraged not to bring disposable plastic items into the villages, and if they do so, then they are responsible for taking it out again.

TAI SO

Tai So is one of the ethnic groups in Nakhon Phanom province that has a long history. Phon Chan people believe that their ancestors emigrated from the left side of the Mekhong River to settled down around the upstream area called “Kud Yang”. The name Phon Chan derives from the characteristics of this landscape; in dialect, people called this area “Phon” as it is on the hill and called this area “Chan” as there are several “Chan” trees.

TAI SEAK

The Saek people originally resided in Muang Rong, which is under Hue City, located in the middle of Vietnam and China.

The Saek people are eminent as a sedulous group, adhering to unification when they found out that their own land was unsuitable for life, they united the group and migrated along the Mekong River to a temporary settlement in the middle of Vietnam and China.
Village Sessions
Accelerating travel and hospitality innovation in the Greater Mekong Subregion

Mekong Innovative Startups in Tourism (MIST) equips innovative entrepreneurs to solve industry challenges and promote responsible tourism. Now in its second year, MIST has two tracks: a Market Access Program for mature innovators from around the world, and a Startup Accelerator for the region’s early-stage travel and hospitality startups.
MARKET ACCESS FINALISTS

The MIST Market Access Program invites innovators from around the world to present solutions to regional tourism and hospitality industry challenges. It then helps them clear market entry obstacles, form local partnerships, and secure financing for pilot projects.

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<tr>
<th>Adventoro /Malaysia</th>
<th>DidaTravel Technology /China</th>
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<tr>
<td>offers bucket-list worthy activities including whitewater rafting, jungle treks and diving excursions. Currently serving Malaysia, Adventoro will use the MIST Market Access Program to enter Viet Nam.</td>
<td>based in China, offers backend technology for hotel booking, providing real-time inventory and rates.</td>
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<th>Moneybay /Malaysia</th>
<th>Monkey Theory /Malaysia</th>
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<tr>
<td>provides a digital cross-border currency exchange platform. The Malaysian fintech makes it simple for tourist to make payments online and collect currency from a local partner.</td>
<td>creates fun and happy experiences with branded sporting events - encouraging public health and social activity.</td>
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<th>HereO /Israel</th>
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<td>A creator of the hero GPS watch for kids, offers plug-and-play IoT technology. It is considering IoT solutions for last-mile tourist transportation in the Greater Mekong Subregion.</td>
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STARTUP ACCELERATOR FINALISTS

The MIST Startup Accelerator teaches business fundamentals to local travel and hospitality startups, while connecting them with industry leaders and investors. The startups attended a weeklong bootcamp in May, and they will receive intensive coaching throughout the year before reconvening this Fall to compete for innovation grants up to USD $10,000.

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<tr>
<th>BambooLao /Lao PDR</th>
<th>ECOHOST /Viet Nam</th>
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<tr>
<td>produces reusable bamboo straws to replace single-use plastic straws.</td>
<td>makes homestays bookable with an online booking system, mobile application, and a database of select partners.</td>
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<th>Go Explore /Viet Nam</th>
<th>SidesBag /Cambodia</th>
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<tr>
<td>organizes “workation” programs aimed at international and domestic remote workers while providing marketing services to business-to-business partners.</td>
<td>is a mobile application that enables airline passengers to purchase available luggage allowance from fellow travelers.</td>
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<th>VDEs /Viet Nam</th>
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<td>connects event planners with event venues and makes them bookable through their database.</td>
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</table>
The Mekong Innovative Startups in Tourism (MIST) accelerator equips innovative entrepreneurs to solve industry challenges, promote responsible tourism, and seize areas of opportunity in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. MIST has two tracks. The MIST Startup Accelerator teaches business fundamentals to local travel and hospitality startups, while connecting them with industry leaders and investors. The MIST Market Access Program invites innovators from around the world to present and implement solutions to regional tourism and hospitality industry challenges. Below are eight areas of opportunity.

1. PERSONALIZATION AND ENHANCEMENT

Today’s traveler wants a personalized experience. There are opportunities in providing niche tourist services across the region and in connecting travelers with these experiences through innovative travel tech. Examples include apps that help users build tailored itineraries or connect with the right tour guide.

2. BETTER SECURITY

Solutions that keep travelers, their families, and their finances safe will always be in demand. Jason Lusk, project focal for MIST says: “Travel tech solutions can help make travelers feel more secure. Apps that help people out when they’ve lost their wallet, for example.”

3. MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION BOOKING

Air travel and moving around cities is easier than ever. But travelers still face problems traveling from city to city on buses and trains. “Foreign travelers still struggle to book the right tickets at the right price,” says Tran Thuy Hai of the MIST Market Access Program.

4. REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

“Why is it that so many tourists come to Viet Nam and never return?” Asks Torsten Edens of Go Beyond Asia. “I firmly believe that the classic north to south – or south to north – tours are partially to blame.” Torsten suggests cross-country tours as an alternative. There is a need for solutions that facilitate these types of tours, such as multi-country itinerary builders and services that smooth over border crossings.
There are many non-tech solutions to the environmental issues facing the region and the tourism industry. Companies that address and reduce the environmental impact of tourism will find opportunities, but so will charities and social enterprises.

Technology that helps personalize the user experience will automatically lead to improved conversions for booking platforms. Larger booking platforms such as Booking.com and Trailfinders are incentivized to list a variety of options. They are good for general travelers but not for users looking for a specific accommodation or tour type.

Hotels have a lot to consider, including oscillating seasonal volumes and varying high seasons across different markets. Travel tech can help monitor and manage these fluctuations.

“There is a huge opportunity for smaller hotels to use tech to help manage operations more efficiently,” says Matt James of Amadeus.

Tourism may be booming in the Mekong region but this is largely restricted to specific tourist hotspots. There are opportunities for travel tech solutions that ease access to secondary and tertiary destinations.

“One of our mandates is inclusive growth, balancing the economic benefits tourism can bring to a wide range of the population,” explains Jens Thraenhart, CEO of the MTCO and co-founder of MIST.

MIST is a joint initiative of the Mekong Business Initiative (MBI) and Destination Mekong. It is supported by the Australian Government, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO).
Introduced at the MTF 2017 Food Festival, to reduce the use of plastic straws, every registered MTF 2018 delegate received one bamboo straw, provided by Bamboo Lao, a 2018 Mekong Innovative Startups in Tourism (MIST) winner.
Startups in the Mekong region

Committed to promoting innovation and ensuring a sustainable future for the region and its tourism industry, The Mekong Tourism Forum places a significant focus on startups. In particular it does this through two programmes - x and y.
In 2018, candidates for both programmes were invited to present their ideas to the audience, and their stories reflected how energised and broad the region’s startup scene is. As Jens Thraenhart observed: “Many look at accelerators just in terms of tech. They assume that is what they all are. Many do, but what is most important is that they are solving problems - ground transportation, secondary destinations, visa, security, visitor facilitation, but also environment problems such as plastic pollution.”

As he went on to explain, what the Forum’s startup programmes are looking for is the potential for scale and invest-ability, adding “but most importantly we want to know how it can drive tourism development in the Mekong region.”

Other speakers surveyed the state of the scene, adding their own expert opinions and creating a picture of ever-growing dynamism in an area defined as the fastest growing subregion for inbound tourism growth in Asia over last decade, with growth of 190%. As Jason Richards from Cloudbeds said: “Five years ago the problem was trying to find examples. Now the problem is that there is so much choice.”

BaoLao’s founder Alberto Moreno said that what he saw was different rates of progress, with some sectors being faster to adopt change than others. He said the airlines were the most innovative, followed by hospitality, and then finally experience providers.

Acknowledging that for small experience providers, especially those new to the industry, investment may be hard to come by, Victor Chua said the key question for those looking to keep pace with innovation was whether it was better to buy it in or build it yourself. “By time you build it it is out of date,” said Chua. “If you are in the business of providing great experiences, spend your budget and time on providing better experiences and focusing on customer acquisition rather than focusing on something you are not familiar with and is a drain on your resources.”

WORDS FROM THE STARTUPS

“Not a question of are you ready for digital boom / age? What if you’re not part of this?”
Clement Wong, Be My Guest

“Everyone is moving to the cloud. If you are not in the cloud yet, you are late.”
Jason Richards, APAC business Development Manager Cloudbeds

“Truly an exciting time for innovation and disruption in region”
Conor McGuinness - Regional Program Manager of Economic Development, ASEAN Mission, Government of Australia
Profiles of Pioneers

The following companies all presented their innovative solutions to challenges confronting today’s travellers at Mekong Tourism Forum 2018.

STARTUP ACCELERATOR

ECOHOST
Ecohost supports homestays in Vietnam to gain market understanding, meet tourist expectations, maintenance, and provide quality tour products. It advises and consults, trains, helps with sales and marketing, and connects ecohosts with other destinations through its website.

GO EXPLORE VIETNAM
Go Explore Vietnam offers remote work and travel programmes that connect locals and internationals through digital nomad lifestyle. It offers opportunities for coliving and coworking, as well as training and mentorship.

SIDEBAGS
Sidebags addresses the problem of baggage allowances, by matching those needing more space with those not using their full allowance. It says its service will be 50% cheaper than regular baggage fees.

VDes
VDes is an event venue search tool for Vietnam, already listing 823 hotels and 1030 registered restaurants for events, plus 641 convention/events venues. It says using its platform would save event organisers 80% in time and 30% in cost.

BAMBOO LAO
Bamboo Lao creates cheaper, environmentally - friendly alternatives to single use plastics out of sustainably harvested bamboo. It has already prevented the need for one million plastic straws.
MARKET ACCESS PROGRAM

ADVENTORO
Adventoro connects tour agents and tour operators to travellers, with a mission to unearth and promote exciting adventures in SEAsia especially the Mekong Region.

HEREO
HereO is the world’s first plug and play Internet of Things platform. Invented to help locate a child lost in Seaworld, it can now be used to find lost luggage, as a smart watch for your children, or added to accessories, wallets or handbags.

MONKEY THEORY
Monkey Theory is an experiential marketer and event creator, aiming to address a lack of unique events, lack of brand engagement, lack of quality experience through boosting customer interaction.
A remarkable session on Buddhist tourism explored the challenges and opportunities that focusing on developing such tourism in the region would create. Despite the majority of the world's Buddhists being found in Asia, there has been little effort to capitalise on this form of tourism, with itineraries suffering from poor branding of circuits and overexposed key sites, resulting in overcrowding at such destinations and putting the often fragile infrastructure under great strain. A further risk was considered to be if well-meaning tourists keep children away from school by giving them money at temples, thus encouraging them to beg.

Overall, the concept was seen as double-edged sword. It could endanger Buddhism itself, since tourism as a growth industry is by its very nature antithetical to Buddhism which is about containment. On the other hand, maybe this could also be turned on its head, “Is it time for the philosophy of Buddhist economics to be applied to tourism as a whole?” Lim Kooi Fong from the company Buddhist Travel.


definition of Buddhist Tourism

Buddhist Tourism - Striking the right balance

Quote by Thai Minister:
The seminar on Buddhist Tourism will explore the power of transformative travel. As one of the fastest growing tourism segments in Asia, Buddhist Tourism not only draws international tourists into the GMS, but also boosts domestic travel and contributes significantly to the local economies. Nakhon Phanom, this year’s host of the Mekong Tourism Forum and an important center of Buddhism in northeastern Thailand is the perfect destination to focus on Buddhist Tourism.

H.E. Mr. Weerasak Kowsurat, Minister of Tourism and Sports of the Royal Kingdom of Thailand said: “Thailand is ready to be a leader in Buddhist Tourism in ASEAN and South Asia, and we are looking to propose the creation of the ASEAN-South Asia Buddhist Tourism Story Book project, in collaboration with member countries.”
“When foreigners come to Buddhist countries, they aren’t necessarily looking to see temples, they are looking for mindfulness to help them destress - turning buddhist concept of mindfulness into a tool.”

Lim Kooi Fong (buddhist travel)

“Buddhist tourism is more than just a segment - it is a way of life that connects communities and cultures.”

Jens Thraenheart, Mekong Tourism
Are you passionate about sustainable, responsible, and inclusive travel & tourism?

Do you have a stake in the Greater Mekong Subregion?

MEKONG TOURISM GIVES YOU A VOICE
Help us tell your story.
Share with us your knowledge and expert opinion so that we in turn can share it with the industry:
- Articles, analyses, and opinion pieces for our news feed
- Documents for our e-library

Help us tell the stories of others.
- Nominate operators for our Responsible Tourism Guide
- Nominate destination hosts for our Tourism Impact Stories project with UNWTO
- Nominate promising travel & tourism startups for MIST

Help us build capacity.
Join our #MekongMoments campaign and help micro & small enterprises learn about digital and social media marketing.

Become a Mekong Tourism Expert, Partner, or Storyteller.
Regular contributors to Mekong Tourism receive a profile page and will be eligible for a range of profile-enhancing benefits and advocacy opportunities.

Contribute to tourism policy on a topic YOU are passionate about.
Mekong Tourism Experts & Partners can initiate, lead or join a Mekong Tourism Network; a group of like-minded regional stakeholders determined to advocate for positive change.

Learn more at www.MekongTourism.org
Subscribe at www.MekongTourism.org/e-newsletter
Sign up to make a difference at www.MekongTourism.org/contributor-program
Join the next Mekong Tourism Forum at www.MekongTourismForum.org
Follow @TourismMekong on f/i/instagram/t/twitter/G+
In 2004-2005, at the request of the GMS TWG and with the support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), a GMS Tourism Sector Strategy (GMS TSS) was formulated. The strategy envisioned the GMS as a single destination, with strong focus on culture, nature and adventure. The intention of the strategy was to inspire not only the governments of the subregion, but also all its stakeholders, particularly in the tourism industry, to promote a sustainable development of tourism, respectful of its people, and cultures, enhance and protect its unique natural and cultural heritage, and fostering poverty alleviation schemes. Finally, the strategy delivered a truly unique Mekong brand of tourism that showcases the subregion's incomparable beauty, diversity, and spirit, and brings its people a better quality of life.

This Experience Mekong Tourism Marketing Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2020 launched in 2015 and aligns with GMS member countries’ shared objectives to develop thematic multi-country tour programs and promote secondary destinations to help distribute tourism benefits more widely. A strategic objective of the plan is to promote secondary destinations and encourage multi-country itineraries, especially those with themes such as ecotourism, local cuisine, and cultural appreciation, consistent with the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan and ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy.

In 2016, the GMS TWG updated the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy to guide subregional tourism cooperation through 2025. The updated GMS TSS was introduced at the 2017 Mekong Tourism Forum.
Latest UNWTO Report Heralds Mekong Tourism Forum as an Inclusive Tourism Global Best Practice

The UNWTO report highlights the MTCO’s 2017 Mekong Tourism Forum in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR as a possible model for inclusive tourism across other destinations.

A new United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) report praises Mekong Tourism’s 2017 Mekong Tourism Forum (MTF) as a global best practice in inclusive tourism. The innovative event, hosted by the Provincial government of Luang Prabang, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Information (MICT) of Lao PDR, and executed by the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO), took place across several community venues in Luang Prabang including boutique hotels, local restaurants, a heritage craft centre, the city’s botanical garden, a rice farm, a golf club, a silk weaving centre, a hotel training school, and even a couple river-cruise boats along the Mekong river.

Instead of concentrating activity on one large venue, the forum rather empowered local businesses and residents to participate and benefit from the four-day conference. The UNWTO marked this execution as a showcase model “for practical public action” toward strengthening inclusive tourism efforts globally.

“They are paths towards inclusion that are adaptable, modular and scalable, and facilitates the transformation of tourism models towards socially and economically inclusive models,” the UNWTO proclaimed of the projects featured in the published report, titled as ‘Global Report on Inclusive Tourism: Model and Success Stories’.

“MTF 2017 in Luang Prabang, hosting over 400 delegates, demonstrated that by making the destination the venue, and having delegates spread out to experiences various tourism products, matched with topical sessions, true engagement can be achieved,” said Jens Thraenhart, Executive Director of the MTCO. “This event was truly an event by the industry for the industry.”

“As globalization, interconnectivity and a growing middle class leads to ever more people travelling, the world will continue seeming to get smaller and inclusion will become even more of a priority,” said UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili.
In a release sent out by the UNWTO, Secretary-General Pololikashvili said that success stories like MTF 2017 “will serve as an important tool for the tourism community to create and promote inclusion in destinations, and a valuable reference for all tourism stakeholders in developing best practices for a more inclusive sector.”

The report also mentioned the 2018 Mekong Tourism Forum, hosted by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand in the town of Nakhon Phanom, bordering to Lao PDR at the Mekong River. The 2018 MTF concept, themed “Transforming Travel - Transforming Lives” followed on the inclusive and experiential nature of last year’s event by innovatively hosting eight thematic strategy workshops in eight community-based villages, and integrating the villagers in the discussions and actual production.

Also recognised in the UNWTO report was the MTCO’s focus on highlighting plastic pollution by banning single-use plastic water bottles, and turning MTF session venues and hotels doubling as official water refill stations. By giving each delegate a durable and reusable water bottle, the campaign was estimated to have saved the use of over 5,000 single-use plastic bottles during the Mekong Tourism Forum. Plastic straws were also banned from the event, including the Mekong Food Festival, and replaced by sustainable bamboo straws produced by Luang Prabang-based organisation Bamboo Lao.

“We think that the MTF should play a leading role by showing that sustainable environmentally-friendly goals and actions are compatible with conference events,” said Thraenhart. “Through this, we wanted to stress the urgency and effect of reducing single-use plastic in Asia right now, which we believe will have a profound impact on life around the Mekong River,” he added.

The Mekong Innovative Startups in Tourism Accelerator Program (MIST), a joint initiative between the MTCO and the Asian Development Bank, supported by the Australian Government, was also acclaimed by the UNWTO for its unique tourism startup accelerator platform, which offers early-stage startups from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam access to publicity, investment opportunities as well as mentorship and direct access to the tourism ecosystem.

“MIST, integrated into the Mekong Tourism Forum to connect startups with travel organizations, was one of the first international programs in connecting promising startups with the travel and tourism industry via a pitch competition and accelerator program,” said Thraenhart. “I personally believe that it is critically important for us to embrace innovation and integrate new startups into the tourism ecosystem by mentoring passionate young entrepreneurs,” he said.
#MEKONG MOMENTS
BE IN THE MOMENT
TRAVEL RESPONSIBLY

1. CAPTURE
memorable Mekong Moments on your camera or phone

2. TAG
your pictures and clips with @mekongmoments and #[where you are]

3. WIN
For a chance to WIN, visit our webpage to create your “My @mekongmoments” account

4. SHARE
your #MekongMoments for the whole world to see

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MekongTourismForum

SHARE YOUR MOMENTS DURING MTF 2018
#MEKONGMOMENTS + #MEKONGTOURISMFORUM

BE IN THE MOMENT TRAVEL RESPONSIBLY
The destinations in the Greater Mekong Subregion are as unique as the journeys experienced by our travellers. Get inspired, and share your own Mekong Moments in one of the most unique regions in the world – all influenced by the mighty Mekong River, the Mother of Life in Southeast Asia – via your own social media by tagging #MekongMoments, and win prizes via social media contests via participating companies. Get inspired by browsing shared Mekong Moments at MekongMoments.com.

Mekong Moments is a globally unique and pioneering visual consumer marketing campaign and travel inspirational platform that collaboratively promotes the GMS as a single tourism destination and drives direct business to individual businesses through social commerce. Businesses regardless of type and size encourage their guests, staff, and stakeholders to share their experiences via their own social media accounts by tagging #MekongMoments and the respective hashtag of the experience (hotel, restaurant, destination, attraction, event, tour, shop, etc.). The user-generated content is aggregated to MekongMoments.com and directs traffic to the respective websites of the experiences and businesses.

A true public-private partnership, Mekong Moments has been carefully planned over 2 years to meet the requirements and executed through a public-private partnership between the six tourism ministries and six companies including IHG, Small Luxury Hotels, Yaana Ventures, and Odynovo Tours China to create a sustainable and efficient program for the GMS. The initiative is aligned with the Experience Mekong Tourism Marketing Strategy 2015-2020 and the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy 2016-2025. UNWTO Affiliate Member Chameleon Strategies developed the concept, which is powered by their ENWOKE technology to build Mekong Moments with significant input from the travel and tourism industry.
PARTNERSHIPS OPPORTUNITIES

**Participating Experience**
Participation at Mekong Moments is free as long as an active campaign is run. Be part of your own story: register your experiences, launch a contest or participate at our campaigns to entice your guests to tag their posts.

**Strategic Partner**
Numerous strategic partnerships are available from campaign partner to association partner. Contact us to find out more.
WHAT IS MEKONG MOMENTS?

A TRAVEL INSPIRATIONAL PLATFORM

Travellers already share their stories. With Mekong Moments you can leverage the phenomenon of social media sharing and allow moments to turn into memories by enticing your visitor to connect their social content and by connecting to social influencers, such as bloggers.

STORIES ARE CONSTANTLY BEING SHARED

GENERATING DIRECT BUSINESS THROUGH SOCIAL COMMERCE

More and more travellers are finding their information through social media and relying to peer-generated content to make their travel decisions. Mekong Moments provides a direct link to your booking channel from user generated content.

COLLABORATELY PROMOTING THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION

Use the power of many to build powerful and sustainable campaigns in collaboration with partners. The GMS has a strong network of experiences. This creates millions of shared moments through a strong network of micro social media contests , showcasing the diversity and strong appeal of the GMS by building a cloud of content that increases the awareness of the region internationally.

The more you engage your customers and connect to other experiences, the more exposure you will get online, the more bookings you will receive in the future, and the more the region will be promoted as a result.

A VISUAL CONSUMER MARKETING CAMPAIGN

An authentic image tells your complex story in a simple way. Research has shown that visual content, such as images and videos, builds stronger connections to consumers.
85% of millennials report that user-generated content influences what they buy and where.
Organisations make decisions based on data and intelligence. However, it is challenging for many companies to gather the right information to put together strategies for investment, development, business operations, and promotion, especially in the GMS.

Mekong Trends is a public-private partnership that delivers valuable industry intelligence on specific and relevant topics. Download your copy at www.mekongtrends.com

www.mekongtrends.com
Contact info@mekongtrends.com to be part of any future Snapshot for example
Destination Mekong has been created in 2017 as a public-private partnership framework to promote the Mekong region, comprising of Cambodia, PR China (Provinces of Guangxi and Yunnan), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Yunnan (PRC) as a single tourism destination to stimulate responsible and sustainable development and investment, and drive inclusive growth.

Endorsed by the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office, and aligned with the mandate of the regional collaborative tourism framework of the six member governments of the Greater Mekong Subregion, Destination Mekong executes targeted projects and initiatives via a public-private partnership investment structure, led by UNWTO Affiliate Member Chameleon Strategies.

The flagship initiative is Mekong Moments, an innovative collaborative social commerce platform, enabling any organisation related to the visitor economy in the GMS regardless of size and type to inspire domestic and international travelers with practical digital marketing tools.

For more information, please visit: www.DestinationMekong.com
Chameleon Strategies, an Affiliate Member of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), is proud to be the lead partner of Destination Mekong.

chameleonstrategies.com
With over 20 years’ of experience working with boutique to multi-national partners from logo design to multi-lingual hotel brand standards, we are here to support your graphic and web-design processes and help to enable world-standard branding.
MTF 2018
SUMMARY

DELEGATES 405
REGISTERED
DELEGATES 117
WALK-IN
DELEGATES

SPEAKERS 44
SPEAKERS

BLOGGERS 17
BLOGGERS 18
BLOG POSTS

SESSIONS 8
VILLAGE
SESSIONS

29 PAX,
ORGANIC
TOURISM
14 PAX,
ADVENTURE
TOURISM
28 PAX,
WELLNESS
TOURISM
20 PAX,
RELIGIOUS
TOURISM

22 PAX,
HERITAGE
TOURISM
24 PAX,
ECO
TOURISM
25 PAX,
FOOD
TOURISM

POST TOURS 6
POST TOURS
34
POST TOURS
ATTENDEES

PLASTIC STRAW
SAVED ≈4,000
PLASTIC STRAW
SAVED

PLASTIC BOTTLE
SAVED ≈4,000
PLASTIC BOTTLE
SAVED

SOCIAL MEDIA
SHARING >400
POSTS SHARED
ACROSS SOCIAL
MEDIA DURING
MTF 2018 WEEK

>50 STORIES ON
INSTAGRAM
I would like to start by thanking you for all the effort you put in to organise last week’s conference. I have never seen a conference with such a varied and creative mix of activities and formats: from the business startup sessions, to the short film festival, the environmentally sustainable efforts, the varied collection of speakers, the inclusion of the blogger and media community, the thematic strategy sessions in the villages (the highlight for me), and the post-conference tours. I would really like to commend you for a huge achievement.

NICK DAY
GOCO Hospitality

I am so delighted to be invited to join the MTF2018 and share the Experience Mekong Collection Showcase about Longji Rice Terraces’ case to the forum. It’s also an opportunity for me to collect an lifelong unforgettable experience in the tranquility of Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. The breathtaking landscape of the rice fields and the ever-flowing Mekong River view were really amazing. The craftsmanship of the local villagers inherited from the ancestors also left me with a very very deep impression. My sincere thanks for the opportunity to join in the MTF 2018, and looking forward to seeing all of the delegates for the coming years!

Mr. Zhu Jinsheng
Guilin Tourism University
Chiangmai University

Mr. Marc Ruffet
Go Beyond Y Thailand

Just a quick email to thank you and your team for this really inspiring MTF. Met lots of interesting people and made new connections.

Very much looking forward to the next one and thanks again for the top notch organization.
“I recently had the privilege to attend the Mekong Tourism Forum 2018 held in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. The coordinators did an amazing job of balancing useful and informative sessions led by knowledgeable industry professionals whilst orchestrating cultural events to showcase the amazing people, food, and sights of the charming city of Nakhon Phanom. It was a great opportunity to network with fellow travel and food enthusiasts as well as discover a city which is rarely traveled to by foreign tourists. I am already looking forward to next year’s conference!”

I’ve also posted a recent article about my experience in Nakhon Phanom and That Phanom. I made sure to tag #MekongMoments and #TATbangkok when I shared it on Facebook. You can check out that article here: www.chowtraveller.com/nakhon-phanom
The Event
Where next for MTF?

In 2019 the Mekong Tourism Forum moves to the Chinese city of Dali. Located 45 mins by air or four hours by road from Kunming in the province of Yunnan, this is a region famous for its dramatic mountain scenery, and rich culture and history. It was Yunnan’s third most visited destination in 2016, with 934,000 foreign travellers (excluding HKG, Macau and Chinese Taipei).
Ministry of Tourism and Sports
Mr. Itthipol Kunplome
Vice Minister attached to the Prime Minister
Mr. Pongpanu Svetarundra
Permanent Secretary
Mr. Santi Pawai
Deputy Permanent Secretary
Ms. Jiraporn Prommaha
Director, International Affairs Division
Ms. Janjirapon Piboonthiti
International Affairs Division Officer, Practitioner Level

Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Nakhon Phanom province
Mr. Trakul Arnut
Director of Tourism and Sports, Nakhon Phanom Province
Ms. Harirug Maneesoy
Assistant Director of Tourism and Sports, Nakhon Phanom Province

TAT Nakhon Phanom
Mr. Suharith Chanwanangkul
Director, Nakhon Phanom Office
Ms. Srisuphorn Chomsriharachphorn
Deputy Director, Nakhon Phanom Office

Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO)
Mr. Jens Thraenhart
Executive Director
Mr. Nattakorn Asunee Na Ayudhaya
Operations Manager
Mr. Luc Citrinot
Media Coordinator

Nakhon Phanom province
Mr. Somchai Vitdamrong
Nakhon Phanom Provincial Governor

Destination Mekong
Mr. Gerrit Kruger
Co Founder & Managing Director
Ms. Tassapon Sutthidetkul
Project Coordinator
Mr. Nattaphon Toanan
Project Coordinator

Thai Ecotourism & Adventure Travel Association (TEATA)
Ms. Vasumon Netkijcharoen
Vice President, Domestic Marketing
GMS MEMBER COUNTRIES

Cambodia
Laos

MTF 2018 HOSTS

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