

Miracle Year

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The Royal Projects



HIS Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej never simply issue instructions and go it alone. The impetus always come from the local people, who must agree with the proposal and cooperate to see to its success. The Royal Development Projects have all been started in this way.

They cover a wide range of subjects from the introduction of new crops to water conservation, from swamp drainage to the preservation of forests, and their aim has been sustainable development, serving not only immediate needs, but also those of future generations. This is to be achieved by conserving the environment and restoring areas that have already suffered from misuse.

The Royal Development Projects are divided into eight categories according to the sector of the economy that is targeted viz: Agriculture, Environment, Public Health, Occupational Promotion, Water Resources, Communications, Public Welfare, and others.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the Royal Development Projects, His Majesty initiated the establishment of six Royal Development Study Centres, in various regions of the country to serve as the place for conducting study, research and experimentation in search of development guidelines and methods suitable to the different conditions of each area and the occupations of the local people. The results of such study,

research and experimentation will be disseminated to the local people. The Centres are also intended to serve as *living natural museums* where interested people can come to observe and gain knowledge from the real thing.

The Six Centres are located in Chiang Mai in the North, Chachoengsao, Phetchaburi and Chanthaburi in the Central Plain, Sakon Nakhon in the Northeast and Narathiwat in the South.

All these development projects have originated from the frequent and extensive trips made by His Majesty to all regions of the Kingdom.

During the implementation, the Royal Development Projects Board Office will periodically monitor and evaluate the work. And the King himself will return to the project site, whenever there is an opportunity, to observe the progress, and to suggest solutions if he finds any problems or obstacles.

The King has thus become not only the most travelled monarch in Thai history but also the best informed about the whole spectrum of rural problems in Thailand.

On the occasion of the King's birthday on December 5, we join Thais nationwide in wishing His Majesty a Happy Birthday.

Long Live the King.

Director's Message

SAWATDI KHRAP.

WE have come to the final issue of this year's newsletter and I would like to wish our friends out there a Selamat Hari Raya Aidil Adha, Happy Deepavali, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

It is hoped that you have had a wonderful year and have had a chance to visit Thailand in the last 10 months. If not, do not worry as there are two more months to go. And there are plenty of things happening during that period.

On December 5 is His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's birthday and the National Holiday in Thailand. Travel anywhere in Thailand during this period and you would find the streets and buildings all lit up and decorated to honour Thailand's longest reigning monarch.

In this issue of the newsletter, we focussed on His Majesty's Royal Development Projects, which are found all over the country, which cover a wide range of subjects from introduction of new crops and water conservation to swamp drainage and forest preservation.

To celebrate the occasion, in Phuket the King's Cup Regatta would be held in the first week of December for eight days with more than 100 boats taking part in the event.

On the full moon night in November, the 28th to be exact, Thais nationwide celebrate the Loy Krathong Festival, or the festival of lights. Head to any river or waterway and it would come alive with colourful floats and lights.

Two other important historical events which should interest history buffs are the Ayutthaya World Heritage Fair and the River Kwai Bridge Week.

The Ayutthaya World Heritage Fair is to celebrate the recognition of the Ayutthaya as a World Heritage Site. Those who are interested in learning about certain aspects of World War II can head to Kanchanaburi, to the west of Bangkok.

From the end of November till early December, a celebration is held called the River Kwai Bridge Week to remember those who had died building the bridge.

And if you feel like celebrating Christmas in Thailand, try heading down to Bangkok, Chiang Mai Phuket or Pattaya, where the festival is celebrated due to the large number of foreigners in these areas. And if you are already there, why not stay for the New Year countdown.

The biggest celebrations to usher in the New Year are also seen in Bangkok. Or you may also want to go up to Hat Yai or Phuket. Or even Chiang Mai.

There are many events for you to take part in and many things to see. We look forward to welcoming you to Amazing Thailand. You can help us usher in the New Year in Thailand or come celebrate Christmas in Thailand.

WIBOON NIMITRWANICH
Director
Malaysia & Brunei

Governor calls for stronger partnerships

THE Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has called for stronger regional partnerships to promote connectivity and harness the forces of technology to improve the ASEAN travel & tourism industry.

Speaking at the Asia Pacific Digital Travel Forum, TAT Governor Mr. Suraphon Svetasreni outlined how the TAT has made good use of rapidly-changing technology for everything from brand campaigns to promoting special deals to crisis management.

Said the Governor, "As the world heads towards increased digitization, the TAT will remain a strong advocate of the research, development and implementation of digital tools and technologies at both the national level and at the individual business level. We also have a strong focus on gaining insights of future trends in the travel industry."

His message was directed at the more than 200 participants of the Asia Pacific Digital Travel Forum, which was organised by the Tourism Technology Association (TTA) with the sup-



port of the TAT, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand, and the ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA).

Mr. Suraphon noted the impact the digital era is having on the travel industry, from facilitating bookings, to making decisions, writing online reviews, sharing information, upgrading professionalism, conducting research, and much more.

"The Internet has changed consumer behavior in many ways, especially for people who travel. We see dynamic changes in the way people buy their travel products, the destinations they chose, the amount of time they have to travel and the amount of money they spend. We are monitoring all these changes closely and adjusting our strategies accordingly.

"Indeed, the TAT has been using digital marketing to promote Thai tourism for many years, and we will continue to tap into a wider pool of travelers through social networks, online games, mobile and the applications," said Governor Suraphon.

Medical & Wellness Fam Trip



TRAVEL agents and journalists from Malaysia joined some 90 tourism facilitators, health tourism organisations and health insurance companies from 18 countries at the *Thailand Medical & Wellness Tourism Trade Fam Trip 2012* organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

TAT Governor Suraphon Svetasreni said, "The Thailand Medical & Wellness Trade Fam Trip is the first trade event targeting medical tourism organisations and health insurance companies. During the first day of the event, the visiting tourism facilitators had meetings with over 110 Thai medical and wellness providers to learn about the tremendous variety and high quality of services available in the Kingdom."

In addition to the meetings, the TAT also organised a 3-day trip that provided the opportunity

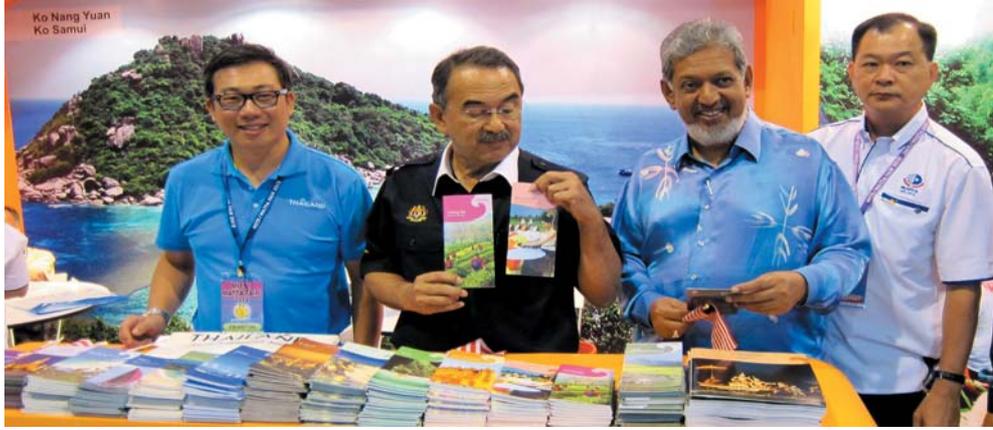
for those on the Fam Trip to experience Thai health and wellness providers, hospitals, spas, and specialised clinics onsite.

Mrs. Vilaiwan Twichasri, Deputy Governor for Tourism Products and Business for the TAT, said, "Prospective buyers visiting Thailand are interested in a wide range of medical tourism products, including wellness spas, medical spas, and especially integrated medicine and anti-aging products.

"Thai herbal medicines and therapy, as well as an array of Eastern medical knowledge, are also focal points for many international tourism operators, especially in the Russian market. The TAT believes that this is a great opportunity for the Thai health tourism sector, since the high standards of the Thai medical profession are well-known around the world."

Melaka MATTA Fair

THE Tourism Authority of Thailand recently took part in the Melaka MATTA Fair to introduce the country to a wider audience outside the Klang Valley. The crowd responded favourably by visiting the Thai booths continuously during the three-day event.



MITM fairs in Ipoh & JB



TWO separate fairs were organised by the MCTA in Johor Bahru and Ipoh recently, with the Tourism Authority of Thailand taking part in both the events.

It was a good way for us to introduce the various new products available in Thailand to people from Johor and Ipoh.

Travel fair in Brunei

THE Tourism Authority of Thailand took part in the 9th Abacus Holiday Travel Fair in conjunction with the TravelMania 2012 in Jerudong, Brunei Darussalam in early October.

The Abacus Holiday Travel Fair, established in 2004, provided the ideal platform for the TAT to promote and showcase our products and services to the consumers in Brunei.

This year the prestigious event was incorporated with the TravelMania 2012 organised by Royal Brunei Airlines.



Photography exhibition

THE Tourism Authority of Thailand took part in the Kuala Lumpur Photography Festival at the Mid-Valley Exhibition Hall in Kuala Lumpur recently.

Apart from passing out brochures and information to visitors, TAT also brought in a team from Chiang Mai to give a fruit carving and umbrella painting demonstration.

Bangkok Marathon

*Sanam Chai Road (by the Grand Palace)
November 18*

CALLING long distance runners. Come take part in the Bangkok Marathon and enjoy an experience of a lifetime.

The courses are designed to be scenic so that participants and onlookers get views of some of the famous landmarks of Bangkok.

Not only do you see historical attractions but you get to explore the culture of the country through the warm welcome and cheerful smiles of fellow participants and spectators.

The route takes runners past many fascinating tourist attractions of the capital city such as

the Grand Palace, the Temple of Emerald Buddha, the National Museum and the Chao Phraya River.

The race is divided into four categories with divisions for different age groups – the marathon (42.185km), half-marathon (21.10km), mini marathon (10.55km) and micro marathon (5km).

Contact: TAT Call Centre – 167
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Join us in the New Year countdown

It has become a well-accepted tradition in Thailand, although the Thai New Year is actually in April. But like most international practices and traditions such as Christmas and Chinese New Year, the Thais have come to embrace these events.

And one of the most widely anticipated is the New Year countdown. And nowhere is it bigger than the capital city of Bangkok.

Locals and tourists alike gather at various spots to say goodbye to the old year and usher in the new.

If you are in Bangkok at this time, head down to the front of Central World Plaza in Ratchadamri Road or Rattanakosin Island, where you could expect a lot of fun and celebration amid Thai pop performances, pyrotechnic and laser shows.

If you do not feel like travelling far, Hat Yai is only a bus ride away and you can also enjoy the same atmosphere although at a smaller scale. Or head down to Phuket, an hour's flight away



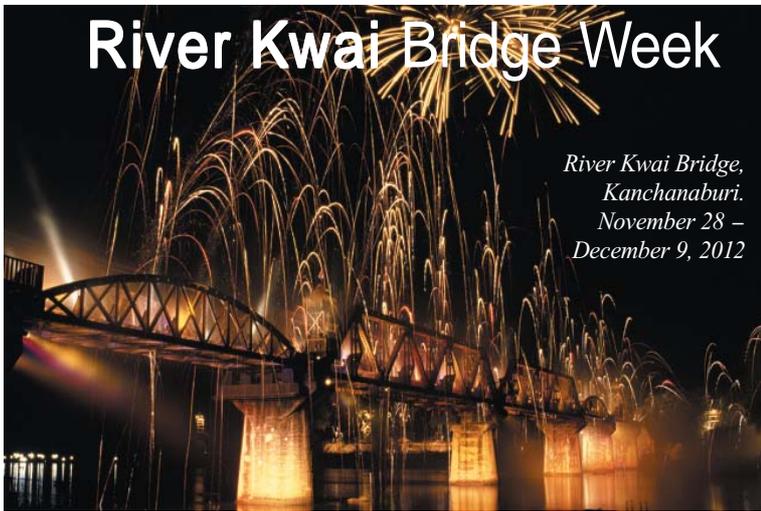
and enjoy a New Year at the seaside.

Although the Thai New Year is normally celebrated on April 13, many Thais have also come to accept Jan 1 as new year and celebrations are most often held as it coincides with a long holiday.

Pattaya and Chiang Mai are some of the other cities where January 1 is celebrated in grand style.

So if you have the time or happen to be in any of the cities mentioned do not forget to join millions of Thais and foreigners to welcome the new year with a bang and set new resolutions for 2013.

River Kwai Bridge Week



*River Kwai Bridge,
Kanchanaburi.
November 28 –
December 9, 2012*

It was the nation's capital for 417 years and enjoyed great prosperity for long periods punctuated by skirmishes and wars against Burma on the one side and Cambodia and Laos on the other.

The period of prosperity had allowed Ayutthaya's rulers to engage in nation-building as witnessed in the number of magnificent ruins at the Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Historical Park.

The extensive collection of ruins and records indicating the historical and cultural wealth of

It was the scene of great hardship in Kanchanaburi during World War II. The bridge is part of the *Death Railway* that spanned the River Kwai, which connects Thailand and Myanmar.

The River Kwai Bridge was built at the cost of many lives – British, American, Dutch and Australian prisoners of war as well as locals and Malaysians conscripted by the Japanese Army during the war.

The River Kwai Bridge Week is organised yearly to commemorate those who died while building the bridge. This event features a remembrance ceremony held at the Allied War Cemetery, light and sound presentations, cultural performances, and historical displays and exhibitions.

Visitors can also get a taste of what it was like more than 50 years ago by getting on a vintage train to watch the light and sound re-enactment of the construction of the bridge.

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Ayutthaya World Heritage Fair

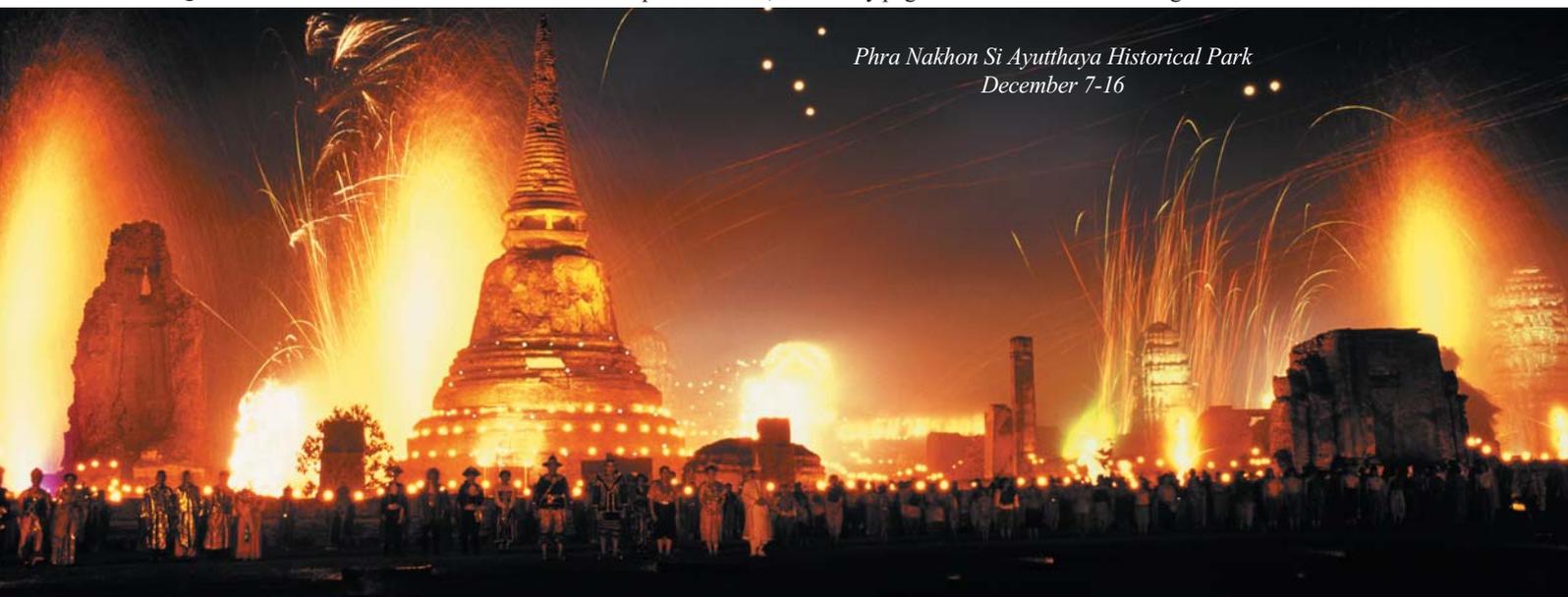
Ayutthaya earned this park the recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

To celebrate this status, the Ayutthaya World Heritage Fair is organised annually and features light and sound shows of its glorious years, exhibitions of Ayutthaya as a World Heritage Site, cultural performances, and beauty pageant con-

tests. In addition, visitors can also enjoy a variety of food, both savoury and sweet, in a traditional Thai way at the floating market, as well as shopping for various products.

For more information: TAT Call Centre - 1672; TAT Ayutthaya (+6635 246076-7); www.tourismthailand.org.

*Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Historical Park
December 7-16*



THIS year the Loi Krathong Festival would be celebrated on the full moon night which falls on November 28. But visit most of the major cities and from a week earlier, it would be abuzz with preparations leading up to the festival.

Vendors would be selling krathong by the roadside for about 100 Baht each for the smaller version to anything up to 1,000 Baht for the more elaborately-decorated types.

Like most festivals, the Loi Krathong Festival or the Festival of Lights had its origin in a legend.

In Sukhothai more than 700 years ago a court lady named Nang Nophamas, the daughter of a Brahmin priest, made a decorative float and presented it to the ruler of the Kingdom of Sukhothai. It was around the time Deepavali is celebrated by the Hindus worldwide.

Seeing the beauty of the festival, courtiers and lay people alike followed suit, and the people with them. Since then the festival had been celebrated annually all over the country and to a certain extent by Malaysians of Thai origin in the states of Kedah, Perlis, Perak and Kelantan.

In Thailand the biggest celebrations are held in Sukhothai, Chiang Mai, Ayutthaya and Bangkok. Krathong or floats decorated with flowers, incense sticks and candles in various shapes and sizes are float down rivers.

Thais believe that Krathong floating is an act of respect and an offer of thanks to the Mother of the Waters, Mae Kongkha. It is also believed that when you float your Krathong away, you are getting rid of the year's bad luck – so be careful not to upset your vessel or let it come back or you will start your new year with the old bad luck as an extra burden.

If you happen to be in any part of Thailand at this time, head to any main river in the town. Watching and taking part in the festival is an experience you would not soon forget.

Some of the main venues for the Loi Krathong event are as follows:

Bangkok: Chao Phraya River; Benchiyasiri Park (Sukhumvit Road); Benchakitti Park (Ratchadaphisek Road); Santichaiprakan Park (Phra Athit Road); around the Rama IX Bridge.

Ayutthaya: Bangsai Arts and Crafts Training Centre.

Sukhothai: Sukhothai Historical Park

Chiang Mai: Ping River

Tak: Ping River

For more information: Call 1672; www.tourismthailand.org

Loi Krathong Festival



MICE Fam trip to Chiang Mai



HAND in hand with Standard Tour, hotels, resorts and spas, the Tourism Authority of Thailand recently organised a trip for the travel agents and media to familiarise them with the MICE facilities available in the northern Thai city.

Chiang Mai is one of four places dubbed the *MICE cities* of Thailand. The others are Bangkok, Pattaya and Phuket, to be followed soon by Hat Yai and Khon Kaen in north east Thailand.

The MICE industry is an important part of Thailand's tourism and the country is slowly turning into a popular destination for holding international events, both for marketing products and holding corporate seminars.



Cleveland Srixon CSSB Open 2012 Grand Finals

THE Cleveland Srixon CSSB Golf Open 2012 Grand Finals was again held in Thailand this year.

The venue was the Blue Sapphire Golf and Resort, Kanchanaburi and the Royal Golf & Country Club in Bangkok. The grand finals were made up of winners of the 11 legs held in various courses throughout Malaysia from May to September.

The two-day tournament was co-sponsored by the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Thai Airways International, Schick and Banana Boat, InterBev, Sharp, Crest Link, Prestige Golf, MPIB, Heineken, Gatorade, Fred Lanzo, Southern Lion, Glenmark, Pharmaton, MyGolf.com, Blue Magnetic and Cinta Sayang Golf & Country Resort.





Phuket King's Cup Regatta

*Kata Beach, Phuket
December 1-8, 2012*

DROP by Phuket in the first week of December if you are a sailing enthusiasts to watch the Phuket King's Cup Regatta. Started in 1987 to celebrate His Majesty the King's 60th birthday, this famous annual event now attract participants from all over the world.

Annually, some 100 boats crewed by the world's best sailors take part in the race that had become one of the premier regatta events in Asia.

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TAT Phuket Office (Tel : +6676-212213/211036)

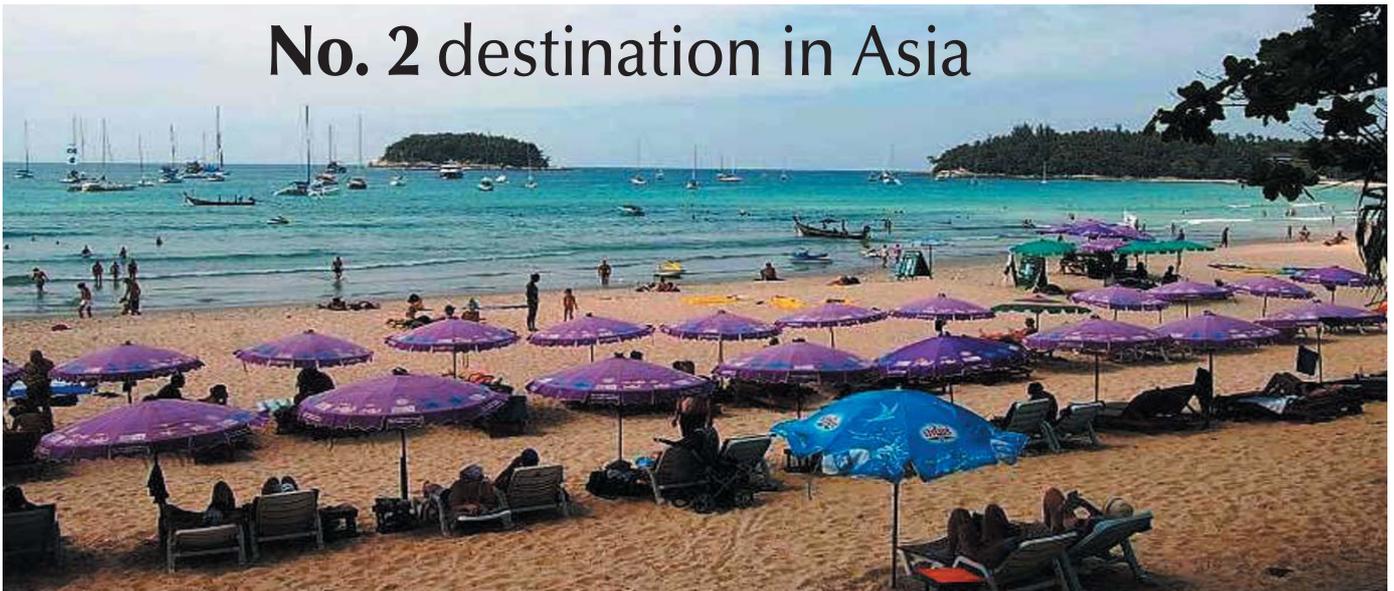
www.tourismthailand.org

Phuket King's Cup Regatta Office

(Tel : +6676-273380)

www.kingscup.com

No. 2 destination in Asia



THAI tourism destinations, airlines, airports, hotels and spa resorts scored high marks in the Best in Travel 2012 Poll announced by the popular website Smart Travel Asia 2012.

Altogether, a total of 61 Thai tourism industry products were listed in the poll rankings, some in the top ten and others in the top 25. The list was led by Phuket, which was ranked the second-best holiday destination in Asia. Bangkok ranked 4th best city for business and fifth in the top ten holiday destinations in Asia. Ko Samui ranked the 10th best holiday destination in Asia.

Thai Airways International, Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport and Samui Airport also fared well. An analysis of the poll results also indicated that the award-winning products were located nationwide, including Hua Hin

and Chiang Rai.

Announcing the awards, Smart Travel Asia's Editor-Publisher Vijay Verghese said, "The focus of the Best in Travel Poll is to determine which travel brands are sought after and why. The three-month exercise from May to July each year offers insights for our own editorial direction and generates useful comparative research data for hotels and airlines."

Mr. Verghese said that one interesting finding this year is that affluent travellers by and large first seek trusted brand evaluations online (rather than price), but often fail to find this due to the blizzard of booking engines and sales sites that tend to dominate search results.

"Readers clearly state that they will first evaluate a brand before booking it," he said.



Laguna Phuket Triathlon

*Bang Tao Beach, Thalang District, Phuket
November 25, 2012*

The race features 1.8km of swimming, 55km cycling and 12km running among Phuket's tourist attractions.

Contact : TAT Call Centre – 1672

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www.tourismthailand.org

www.lagunaphukettriathlon.com

IT has become Asia's premier destinations for triathlons and yearly the Laguna Phuket Triathlon has welcomed Thai and international athletes for 10 years to compete in this gruelling race.