

Winning tourists via Malaysian cuisine

MALAYSIA is turning to its many gastronomical delights to woo tourists. The Tourism Ministry is thinking big in an innovative way to boost tourist arrivals, especially for Visit Malaysia Year 2007 (VMY 2007). The ministry hopes to further sell Malaysia to the world through the "Malaysia: The Truly Asian Kitchen" or the "Malaysia Kitchen" programme.



The programme involves five-star restaurants offering popular Malaysian cuisine in many parts of the world.

The government's target under the Ninth Malaysia Plan is to have 8,000 Malaysian eateries worldwide by 2015.

Our pioneer restaurant in London, called Awana Chelsea, is already getting very good response. We are currently talking to interested foreign parties, who are keen to open "Malaysia Kitchen" in their own countries.

Food transcends many cultures and barriers as seen here in Malaysia, which is a culinary haven. Many countries in the region have become popular tourist destinations because their food is available in so many parts of the world.

Malaysia is known internationally for its multi-racial and multi-cultural society, and our people live in harmony and enjoy political stability.

When tourists come to Malaysia, we should be flexible with them and allow them the liberty of spending their vacation here on their own terms.

This means they should be allowed to see the country and many of its tourist attractions, such as the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, the Mulu Caves in Sarawak, Sipadan Island in Sabah, Bukit Larut in Taiping and Gua Tempurung in Perak, Butterworth and Padang Besar in the north, and Gemas, Dabong and Tumpat in the east coast according to their own timetable. They should also be able to enjoy cultural activities at leisure.

**FROM THE
TOURISM MINISTER**

Tourists prefer do-it-yourself holidays, which are good for our tourism industry as well as other industries as the tourists will want to rent cars, hop on public transportation, including taking the train, to see the various parts of the country.

Keretapi Tanah Melayu can work together with local and foreign tour operators to enable foreign tourists to see some of the beautiful countryside by travelling on trains — hop-on, hop-off style.

We also need storytellers to take tourists around and explain about an activity, place or even a product. Our tourist guides must be good storytellers.

We have a good working relationship with the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the Tourism Authority of Brunei and also the Singapore Tourism Board. Together, we cross-sell our destinations to the world.

With this arrangement, we can get tourists who come into this region and stay in Singapore for three nights to then spend some nights in Malaysia. Or they can spend three or four nights in Malaysia before they go to Bangkok and stay there a few nights. Malaysia also enjoys a similar arrangement with Brunei.

Malaysia is a value-for-money destination. The country offers world-class shopping, quality medical treatment and also internationally recognised education programmes.

We have to continuously strive hard to stay ahead of competition and to attract more quality tourists.

If VMY 2007 is a great success, Malaysia will be the benchmark for this region. So, let's rally around to deliver our very best.

Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor

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