

MEKONG TOURISM NEWSLETTER

Issue: March 2023



"Mekong Tourism Forum 2023 in Cambodia takes sustainable tourism to the next level Cambodia takes sustainable tourism to the next level"

Starting 25 April, the 2023 Mekong Tourism Forum (MTF 2023) will unfold for two days in Cambodia's Sihanoukville city, the capital of Preah Sihanouk province. Tourism stakeholders from all across the Mekong Sub-Region and the world will be "Rethinking for Resilience and Digitalisation": reimagining post-Covid tourism in China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Five key ideas will take center stage at the MTF:

- Rethinking tourism to put people and planet first;
- Developing local food production networks with a focus on safety and hygiene, while reducing food waste;
- Using new digital technology to boost tourism startups and small- and medium-sized businesses;
- Improving training so that tourism workers have the skills to adapt; and
- Advancing equality of opportunity and fair treatment for women in the private and public sectors of tourism.

All these ideas will promote the goal of spreading the benefits of the travel industry spread beyond over-touristed hotspots.

A sustainable tourism exhibit on the conference grounds will show these ideas being put into practice. And beyond the conference grounds, delegates will join a series of post tours that showcase not only attractions but also sustainable tourism elements in the destination: from touring Sihanoukville city, to exploring Koh Rong Island to experiencing the local community-based ecotourism.

An estimated 150 international delegates are expected to attend the MTF 2023 in Sihanoukville, and you are invited to come as well: register through the new Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office website at www.mekongtourism.org. Read this newsletter to learn about other sustainable travel news in the region!

Regional Spotlight: Can Tho, Viet Nam



Commerce in Viet Nam's Mekong Delta converges on its biggest city, Can Tho – but there's more than just business going on here! Can Tho is all about floating on sampans, cycling down country roads, shopping in floating markets, and exploring rice paper villages and other countryside surprises.

From Can Tho, you can make an early morning visit to Cai Rang and other floating markets in Can Tho: around here, you can engage with vendors while eating steaming Hu Tieu noodles for breakfast.

On terra firma, you can visit mansions where Can Tho's wealthy merchant families lived: Binh Thuy ancestral house, for example, was built in 1870, a brightly painted home that blends French and Asian architecture. After dark, visit Hai Ba Trung Street's cafes, and restaurants, which come to life after dark with colorful lights reflecting off the river.

Despite its traditional roots, Can Tho is one of Viet Nam's most innovative "green" cities, having taken significant steps towards renewables and recycling – targeting renewable energy supply to reach 4% in 2025. ([Viet Nam Tourism](#))

Sustainable Tourism News



Plastic waste from Viet Nam tourism activities to triple by 2030, expert warns

116,000 tons of plastic waste every year was discarded by tourists in 2019 - "without immediate measures, the amount of plastic waste from tourism activities will triple by 2030," said Nguyen Anh Tuan, director of Viet Nam's Institute for Tourism Development Research [Read more.](#)



Bang Kachao: Bangkok's "green lung" to become sustainable tourism area

A new classification from the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) will protect Khung Bang Kachao's trees and mangroves, and help local communities utilise them for sustainable tourism purposes. [Read More.](#)



Cambodia PM calls for green development as major driver of tourism, economy

Prime Minister Hun Sen urged the public to pay more attention to enhancing green development in order to attract tourists for the benefit of the national economy, on the occasion of the 11th National Clean City Day 2023. [Read more.](#)

Upcoming Festivals

6 March 2023

Makha Bucha, Thailand. On the third lunar month, Thai Buddhists celebrate Makha Bucha Day to mark Lord Buddha's teachings to his disciples. On this day, Thais will visit the temple to make offerings as a sign of their gratitude. Temples all over Thailand will host a candlelight procession and a circumambulation known as a wian thian, where locals will join in to make merit. [Read more.](#)



6 March 2023

Shwedagon Pagoda Festival, Myanmar. This festival is one of the largest temple festivals in Myanmar. Come to watch locals reciting prayers with the monks at the famous golden stupa in Yangon that is rumored to contain strands of hair of the Lord Buddha. A marvelous carnival atmosphere pervades the temple during the festival, with plenty of local color. [Read more.](#)



News from the Greater Mekong Subregion

Cambodia

- ◆ Cambodia to allow China PRC tourists to pay in renminbi, encouraging its use in electronic, digital, and cash form. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Cambodia Ministry of Tourism official says tourism needs three to four years to return to pre-Covid levels of activity. [Read more.](#)



China

- ◆ Yunnan sees hiring boom as tourism makes strong comeback; welcomed 45.15 million tourists during Spring Festival holiday. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Miao ethnic groups' Pohui festival revives tourism in Rongshui county, Guangxi. [Read more.](#)



Lao PDR

- ◆ New Lao PDR's tourists haven Feuang district near Vientiane expects over 100,000 tourists in 2023. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Laos' bond with elephants on full display at Boun Xang (Elephant Festival) held annually in Xayaboury province. [Read more.](#)



Myanmar

- ◆ Myanmar reopened passport offices on 24 February via new online booking system. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Myanmar and China Have Resumed Work on Railway Project. [Read more.](#)



Thailand

- ◆ Thailand maintains "fully-reopen" entry rules: health insurance required only from tourists arriving from or going to countries requiring a RT-PCR test. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ MuvMi and other tuk-tuk apps in Thailand spare tourists the hassle of haggling, making rides more accessible to foreigners. [Read more.](#)



Viet Nam

- ◆ Viet Nam Poetry Day to take place on February 5 at Thang Long Citadel, Ha Noi. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ By 2024, Viet Nam's tourism revenues will reach US\$11 billion, surpassing pre-pandemic figure of US \$10.8 billion in 2019. [Read More.](#)

