

MEKONG TOURISM NEWSLETTER

Issue: June 2023



Image courtesy of pxfuel

“ Upskilling in the Mekong: Training Tourism Workers for the Future

The new surge of tourists visiting the Mekong Sub-Region are far more discerning these days: they expect a higher level of service and expertise from tourism workers. Expectations are also high among many tourism workers, who are eager to take on more responsibilities, advance to higher-level positions, and increase their earning potential in the industry.

Stakeholders in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) are hard at work helping tourism workers achieve their fullest potential, just in time to meet the returning tourist tide from across the globe.

During the Mekong Tourism Forum (MTF) in Sihanoukville, Cambodia last April, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)'s Chairman Peter Semone led a panel discussion on advancing human capital.

The panel put a spotlight on the crucial role of governments and training centers in connecting students with hospitality businesses; how strategic partnerships with industry professionals help students gain practical skills; and suggested the creation of a Mekong Institution Program to enhance tourism workforce skills and invest in employee learning and development.

While addressing workforce and skill shortages were a key concern, the panel was able to discuss reskilling/upskilling strategies for a more resilient GMS tourism industry in the near future. Read the summary of the MTF panel discussion in the [MTF 2023 Report here](#).

Read this newsletter to learn more about tourism upskilling and resilience in the region, among other developments!

Regional Spotlight: Inle Lake, Myanmar

The communities clustered around Inle Lake in Myanmar order their lives around the natural rhythms of tradition and nature. A rotating market moves in a five-day cycle throughout five towns; the annual Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda Festival finds the temple's golden Buddha images set afloat in a grand regatta; Intha fishermen and floating farms generate sustenance as they have for generations.

Inle Lake is a great place to be close to the communities and to nature. There are many things to do here, such as visiting Buddhist holy sites like Phaung Daw Oo and Shwe Indein, or taking a motorized boat around the different villages to shop for silver jewelry, tobacco “cheroots”, or knives. [Myanmar Ministry of Hotels & Tourism](#)



Sustainable Tourism News



Heat wave in Asia made 30 times more likely because of climate change

Unusually high temperatures of up to 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) were recorded in monitoring stations in parts of India, Bangladesh, Thailand and Laos last month.

[Read more.](#)



Photo Cr. Henrik Bringsoe/WWF UK

Hundreds of newly discovered species under threat in Southeast Asia's Mekong region

Nearly 400 species only just discovered in Asia's Greater Mekong region could soon become extinct due to loss of habitat caused by human activity, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) warned.

[Read more.](#)



Photo Cr. TAT News

Thailand tourism underlines move towards high value and sustainability

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is strengthening the country's drive towards responsible and sustainable tourism at the recent Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2023.

[Read more.](#)

Upcoming Festivals

10 June 2023

Via Ba Chua Xu Festival, Viet Nam.

In An Giang Province in the Mekong Delta, the Ba Chua Xu temple festival is held annually from the 23rd to the 27th of the fourth lunar month. During the festival, a marble Ba Chua statue is washed and clothed, then rites performed for the next few days. [Vietnam National Administration of Tourism \(VNAT\)](#)



Photo Cr. VNAT

22 June 2023

Horse Race Festival, China PRC.

Land-locked Yunnan celebrates the traditional Dragon Boat Festival date with a Horse Race Festival: the Tibetan ethnic community show off their traditional equestrian skills through horse races, acrobatics and other competitive horse-riding feats. [\(China Highlights\)](#)



Photo Cr. Weitu from China Highlights

23 June 2023

Phi Ta Khon Ghost Festival, Thailand.

Held in the farming village of Dan Sai in Loei province, the Ghost Festival features a procession of masks made from thick palm-leaf stems, all painted in intricate designs and enhanced with carved noses and ears. The festival is part of "Bun Luang," the Buddhist merit-making holiday of worshipping the spirits. [\(TAT News\)](#)



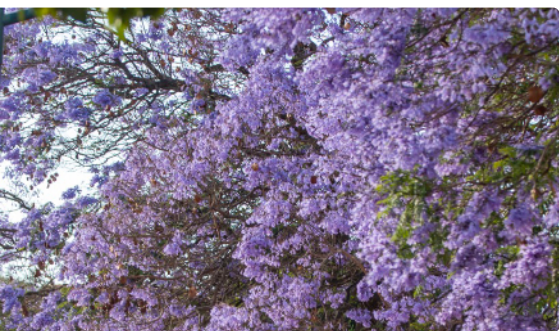
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Photo Cr. TAT News

News from the Greater Mekong Subregion

Cambodia

- ◆ Thailand and Cambodia consider reopening Preah Vihear temple to boost tourism and promote peace dialogue, after a 15-year suspension. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ MOU signed between Cambodia Angkor Air and Trip.com Group to create the country's first smart airport in Siem Reap, slated to open in October. [Read more.](#)



China

- ◆ Yunnan province witnessed a robust rebound in tourism during the 2023 May Day holiday, with more than 35 million tourist trips. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Unique jacaranda flowers help Kunming attract visitors, promote consumption over the course of the Labor Day Holiday when the Chinese tourism sector bounced back in force. [Read more.](#)

Lao PDR

- ◆ Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) and the Laos-China Railway Co., Ltd. (LCRC) engaged in discussions on business cooperation. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Lao PDR gearing up for an influx of Chinese tourists this year, with efforts to improve tourism products and modernise the tourism industry to suit the Chinese market. [Read more.](#)



Myanmar

- ◆ Myanmar, China PRC hold the fourth Myanmar (Lashio)-China (Lincang) border trade fair in Myanmar's capital Nay Pyi Taw. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Myanmar leader Min Aung Hlaing ordered the renovation of Bagan temples damaged by Cyclone Mocha after touring the area in a motorcade. [Read more.](#)

Thailand

- ◆ Thailand Travel Mart Plus 2023 reinforces revolutionized Thailand's tourism towards sustainability. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ TAT and Visa sign MoU with the objective of encouraging Visa cardholders from overseas to spend more while travelling in Thailand. [Read more.](#)



Viet Nam

- ◆ Vietnam Airlines to resume route connecting to Lao PDR and Cambodia on the first day of July, with a frequency of three flights per week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Vietnam announces 90-day visa 'open door policy' to attract foreign tourists, three times longer than the current 30 days. [Read more.](#)

