

MEKONG TOURISM NEWSLETTER

Issue: July 2023



Almsgiving in Meuang Feuang District, Vientiane Province, Lao PDR
Image courtesy of Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism

“ Geographically Dispersed Tourism: Traveling to the Mekong’s Margins

The Mekong's countries are prioritizing a "more dispersed geographical approach to tourism", which spreads the benefits of the travel industry beyond the region's the most popular tourist destinations.

This was a key conclusion of the recently-concluded Mekong Tourism Forum, and remains a major priority for regional tourism stakeholders. Overtourism, after all, still haunts many destinations in the region – beaches in Thailand, cities in Viet Nam and temples in Cambodia have suffered the environmental and cultural side effects of overtourism first-hand.

Promoting geographically dispersed tourism is a way for Mekong countries to have their cake and eat it, too. Pressure on tourist hotspots like Phuket, Siem Reap and Sa Pa can be relieved, even as out-of-the-way destinations like China PRC's Lijiang Old Town, Thailand's Laem Son National Park, and Viet Nam's Lan Ha Bay begin profiting from tourism in their place.

To this end, Mekong countries are putting their secondary destinations in the promotional spotlight. For example, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is presently running a new campaign called "[Amazing Secondary Cities, Must Visit, Must Love](#)" that showcases local traditions and cultural heritage; and a tie-in with Thai AirAsia called "[Menu of New Experiences](#)" that focuses on the delicious local food available in Thailand's secondary and tertiary cities.

A lot still needs to be done, even as the Mekong Region's geographically dispersed tourist spots are slowly gaining in prominence. Local destinations need to work with government bodies and the private sector to retrain locals, build tourism infrastructure, and certify tourist businesses – but thanks to the efforts of those NTOs and other stakeholders in the global tourism trade, those things are quickly coming together as well!

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

Regional Spotlight: Guangxi's Chengyang Eight Villages

In Guangxi's Sanjiang County, which borders Hunan and Guizhou, a group of eight villages preserve the ancient traditions of the Dong people: their unique wooden buildings, their vibrantly-colored dress, and their way of life that straddles the traditional and the modern. Several trails connect the different villages in Chengyang, providing the perfect chance to interact with the local communities.
([Guangxi China](#))



Guangxi's Chengyang Eight Villages, China PRC
Image courtesy of Guangxi, China Tourism

Sustainable Tourism News



Swiss-funded project helps Quang Nam, Viet Nam develop green tourism

The chief coordinator of the Swiss Tourism for Sustainable Development Project (ST4SD) met with officials of Quang Nam province on May 25 to promote implementation of green and sustainable tourism programmes and projects.

[Read more.](#)



New sustainable summer camps launched in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Thailand-based social enterprise Able to Regenerate is launching Elemental Summer Camps, for sessions scheduled from June to August in Koh Phangan, Surat Thani and Chiang Mai. These camps seek to bring practical experiences of environmental regeneration to youths.

[Read more.](#)



Why the future of sustainable tourism might be rural

Rural tourism can help support rural communities by encouraging community-based tourism and creating economic opportunities in areas that currently experience "employment droughts" that lead many people to move into cities for better employment opportunities.

[Read more.](#)

Upcoming Festivals

27 July 2023

Changha Festival of Jing Ethnic Group, China PRC.

The Jing people of Guangxi's islands celebrate this traditional song festival in memory of the Lord of the Sea. The festival lasts three days, with locals dancing and singing day and night. Courtship rituals also take place on the side, with the music giving lovers the courage to speak their true feelings. (People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region)



31 July - 2 August 2023

Ubun Ratchathani Candle Festival, Thailand.

To mark Khao Phansa, or the start of the three-month Buddhist Lent period, the city of Ubun Ratchathani parades beautiful and intricately carved candle sculptures through town. The parade moves from the front of Wat Si Ubun Rattanaram to the park of Thung Si Muang, before the candles are finally presented to temples. (Tourism Authority of Thailand)



1 August 2023

Waso Full Moon Festival, Myanmar.

Waso is celebrated to honour three turning points of Siddhartha Gautama's life to become Lord Buddha. During this festival, monks embark on a three-month-long monastic retreat, while devotees donate robes and other items to the monks in the monasteries as a part of the merit-making ritual. (Myanmar Ministry of Hotels & Tourism)



News from the Greater Mekong Subregion

Cambodia

- ◆ 10,000 gather at Kampong Phluk on 17-18 June to mark Tonle Sap rainy season with monumental eco-tourism celebration. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Cambodia explores digital payment options for Chinese tourists, holds talks with UnionPay executives. [Read more.](#)



China

- ◆ Rock climbing boom brings prosperity to Mashan county in Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Well-preserved ancient cities in China, like Yunnan's Lijiang, are becoming top tourist attractions. [Read more.](#)

- ◆ Two-day event promoting Chinese tea culture held in Vientiane, marking International Tea Day with tea-making demonstrations and cultural performances. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Nong Khiang Airport in northern province of Houaphanh welcomes flights four times a week, replacing dangerous mountain crossing. [Read more.](#)

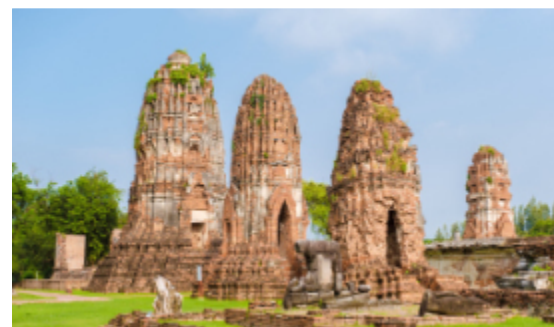


Myanmar

- ◆ Myanmar and China hold border trade fair in Nay Pyi Taw. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Myanmar seeks to boost economic, investment ties with Arab countries. [Read more.](#)

Thailand

- ◆ Thailand eyes tourism boost from Blackpink Lisa's visit to UNESCO site. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ TAT kicks off 'Shopping Challenge' to Promotes 'Amazing Thailand Grand Sale 2023' [Read more.](#)



Viet Nam

- ◆ Nghe An welcomes over 4.9 million tourists in the 1st half of 2023. [Read more.](#)
- ◆ Viet Nam focuses on developing cultural tourism. [Read more.](#)

