

# MEKONG TOURISM NEWSLETTER

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Photo credit: Mekong TourismForum

## 2024 Mekong Tourism Forum in Lijiang a Success: See You Next Year in Luang Prabang!

It's a wrap: the Mekong Tourism Forum (MTF) 2024, held at Lijiang, China PRC, drew in hundreds of tourism professionals and both public and private travel stakeholders.

The theme, "Visionary Journeys Redefining Tomorrow's Travel", resonated with the audience - prompting constructive discussions and fruitful networking that will lead to better planning and coordination for Mekong tourism in the year to come.

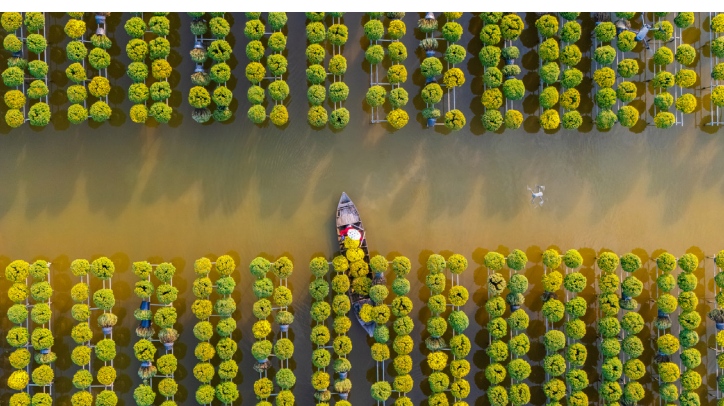
The launch was graced by the presence of H.E. Zhang Zheng, China PR's Vice Minister of Culture and Tourism, whose speech revealed the sustainable and conscious-tourism future of Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) travel.

The event also featured a keynote speech from Kimi Xiaozhou Liu, VP of Trip.com Group and CEO of TripAdvisor China, which shed light on the industry's post-pandemic transformation, along with the changing preferences of today's mindful travelers.

After the Forum's discussions, MTF delegates were able to explore Lijiang's Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Later on, they were able to experience the cable car ride to the snowy peak of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain at 4500m above sea level.

At the end of the Forum, delegates handed the Mekong Tourism Forum flag to the senior representative of Lao PDR, who will host next year's MTF in Luang Prabang.

In the meantime, the hard work of developing tourism in the GMS goes on – read vital news and updates about the Mekong tourism industry in the rest of this newsletter! Click [here](#) to see photos of MTF2024.



## Regional spotlight :Sa Dec, Viet Nam

Immortalized in literature by French author Marguerite Duras, the town of Sa Dec is a gorgeous repository of colonial French architecture, Vietnamese temples and flower nurseries. The 19th-century mansion of Duras' lover still stands in the town centre, as do other grand buildings set on the town's tidy riverfront. For more local color, visit Sa Dec's market, or explore the local flower nurseries, where thousands of exotic blooms flourish in greenhouses. ([Vietnam Travel](#))

## Sustainable Tourism News



Photo credit: Khmer Times



Photo credit: Global Alliance of National Parks



Photo credit: VNA/VNS Photo Phan Sau

### Green tourism corridor planned for Phnom Kulen National Park

The Cambodia Ministry of Environment plans to launch a green tourism corridor at Preah Jayavarman-Norodom Phnom Kulen National Park in Cambodia's Siem Reap province. [Read more.](#)

### Continuous ecological efforts protect picturesque Lijiang River

Guilin officials have implemented more than 30 major projects in the Lijiang River basin to address disorder and water pollution.

[Read more.](#)

### Nha Trang Bay needs protection for sustainable tourism development

Tourism infrastructure around Nha Trang Bay has caused increasing sedimentation, leading to marine environmental degradation. To reverse this, conservation and development must aim towards sustainability. [Read more.](#)

## Upcoming Festivals



Photo credit: TAT News

### 10-12 May Bun Bang Fai, Thailand.

Held in May at the end of the dry season, the Bun Bangfai festival is held to bring rains down from the heavens, by firing rockets into the air. Bun Bangfai starts with all-night partying on Friday, parade day on Saturday, and Sunday, when the rockets are launched. ([Tourism Authority of Thailand](#))



Photo credit: Tourism Laos

### 22 May Boun Visakhaboucha, Lao PDR.

Celebrated on the full moon of the sixth month in the Buddhist calendar, Boun Visakhaboucha sees devout Buddhists performing Wien Tien (Candlelight procession) in the evenings. In Vientiane, the That Luang stupa is the epicenter of Boun Visakhaboucha events. ([Tourism Laos](#))



Photo credit: Tourism Cambodia

### 26 May Royal Ploughing Ceremony, Cambodia.

A symbolic ploughing procession, conducted by the King himself, marks the beginning of the rainy season in Cambodia, and traditionally predicts a range of events depending on what the royal oxen choose from a selection of seven golden trays. ([Tourism Cambodia](#))

# News from the Greater Mekong Subregion



## Cambodia

- Cambodia's famed Angkor records 47% rise in int'l tourists in Q1, totaling 347,534 foreign visitors. [Read more.](#)
- Cambodia's Shaolin-Bokator event a "cultural diplomacy breakthrough", successfully executing Cambodian tourism and diplomatic strategies aimed at fostering deeper ties with China. [Read more.](#)

## China

- Water-Splashing Festival: traditional festival for Yunnan's Dai people ignites cultural excitement for tourists. [Read more.](#)
- Ethnic groups celebrate two-day Double Third Festival in South China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, starting on April 11. [Read more.](#)

## Lao PDR

- The first tourist train running from Guiyang in Southwest China's Guizhou province to Vientiane in Lao PDR will set off on its debut journey on May 8. [Read more.](#)
- New QR payment system to support electronic transactions between Thailand and Lao PDR launched; may boost tourist spending on both sides of the Thai-Laos border. [Read more.](#)



## Myanmar

- Mon State of Myanmar sees tourism surge of over 1.25M visitors in 2023-24FY. [Read more.](#)
- Almost 100% of accommodations in Yangon Region resume operations, as local and foreign travelers have been visiting destinations in the region throughout the year. [Read more.](#)

## Thailand

- Thailand extends visa exemption for Russian tourists until July 31. [Read more.](#)
- True and TAT tout Thai tourism campaign for digital nomads, with exclusive deals for domestic and international tourists under the "True Nationwide, For Everyone" campaign. [Read more.](#)



## Viet Nam

- Beyond Ha Long Bay, Quang Ninh has recently become Viet Nam's largest recipient of foreign direct investment, overtaking Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and other economic hot spots. [Read more.](#)
- Viet Nam advances carbon credit market, prepares for national exchange launch by 2027. [Read more.](#)