

## **MALAYSIA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY FOR NATIONAL DAY SUPPLEMENT 2014**

Malaysia's tourism industry continues to assume a key role in the country's Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) to propel it into a high-income nation by the year 2020.

Last year, the tourism sector contributed RM51.5 billion to Malaysia's Gross National Income (GNI), making it the sixth largest contributor. It was also the second highest foreign exchange earner with tourist receipts of RM65.4 billion.

Globally, Malaysia was ranked as the 11<sup>th</sup> most-visited nation by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) with a record high of 25.7 million tourist arrivals in 2013. It continues to fare well, with Malaysia representing the only Asian country in Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2014.

Kuala Lumpur was also ranked as the 4<sup>th</sup> best shopping city in the world by CNN Travel for two consecutive years since 2012. Besides that, Malaysia was also ranked by Singapore-based Crescentrating as the world's best Muslim travel destination in 2013. In addition, three beaches in Malaysia have made it to CNN's World's 100 best beaches namely Perhentian Kecil island, Terengganu; Juara Beach in Tioman Island, Pahang; and Tanjung Rhu in Langkawi, Kedah. All these international recognitions bear testimony to the attractiveness of Malaysia as a preferred tourist destination.

The strong performance of the tourism sector can be attributed to, among others, the commitment of the Government and enhanced public-private partnership. It also contributed towards the achievement of Key Performance Indicators under the Tourism NKEA (National Key Economic Area) in 2013. In addition, the merging of the tourism and culture portfolios under a single Ministry in May 2013 has also resulted in greater synergy towards tourism development, which in turn, will provide further impetus to expedite the growth of the tourism industry.

There are numerous reasons tourists find Malaysia an irresistible must-visit holiday destination. While some are there to experience the country's marvellous natural wonders and impeccable warm hospitality, others simply enjoy the shopping and urban experiences.

Whether it's the rich and colourful multi-cultural heritage, delectable cuisines, great mountains and rivers, lush green parks and gardens, idyllic tropical islands, palm-fringed beaches or million-year-old rainforests - you can find all these attractions in Malaysia.

To achieve its goals, Malaysia is targeting high net-worth tourists. The country has rolled out various innovative and creative events and activities, as well as luxury experiences to diversify its tourism attractions. They include spa and wellness vacations, golfing holidays, wedding and honeymoon, duty-free shopping sprees and helicopter tours.

To cater to affluent and discerning travellers, Malaysia continues to welcome the arrival of many new high-end hotels and resorts such as Gaya Island Resort in Sabah, the Grand Hyatt Kuala Lumpur, and the Majestic KL. In the coming years, travellers will be spoilt for choice as many luxury hotels are set to open their doors in the country including St.Regis (2014), The Regent (2015), Four Seasons Place KL (2016), W Hotels (2016), and the 7-star Harrods Hotel KL (2018).

Malaysia has also carved a name for itself as a business tourism destination and an ideal destination for family holiday, particularly with the opening of several new theme parks in the country such as Asia's first LEGOLAND theme park, the Puteri Harbour Family Theme Park and KidZania.

Malaysia is currently celebrating its fourth Visit Malaysia Year (VMY), where over 200 tourism events comprising parades, carnivals, festivals, shows, events, conventions and celebrations await visitors. Themed "Celebrating 1Malaysia Truly Asia", VMY 2014 is a national mission that mobilises Government agencies, private sector firms, non-Governmental organisations and citizens to offer the Malaysian hospitality to foreign and domestic tourists. In addition, the entire value chain of the tourism industry will be raised to realise a higher level of tourism services and product offerings including mega events, concerts, and festivities.

Moving forward, the Tourism NKEA will continue to focus on high-yield tourism, driving economic and employment growth for the nation. Targeting leisure and business tourism, the NKEA will also focus on growing tourist arrivals and receipts to stimulate the industry's contribution to the nation's economy.

The targets set under the Tourism NKEA will be achieved through the implementation of 12 Entry Point Projects (EPPs) clustered under five themes: Affordable Luxury; Nature Adventure; Family Fun; Events, Entertainment, Spa and Sports; and Business Tourism. In addition, three Business Opportunities have been identified within this NKEA, revolving around food and beverage outlets, local transportation, and tour operators. The development of this NKEA, led by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, is also supported by cooperation with other ministries, agencies and the private sector.

After VMY 2014, the nation will be all geared up for another major campaign, namely the Year of Festivals 2015. It's a continuation of VMY 2014 and it intends to give visitors a magical holiday experience with a special emphasis on the various festivals celebrated by Malaysia's multicultural society.

Taking into account the concerted effort that will be undertaken during VMY 2014 and the Year of Festivals 2015, the tourism industry is expected to grow at a higher trajectory and, therefore, is poised to achieve the targets of welcoming 36 million tourists and generating RM168 billion in foreign exchange earnings by the year 2020.