

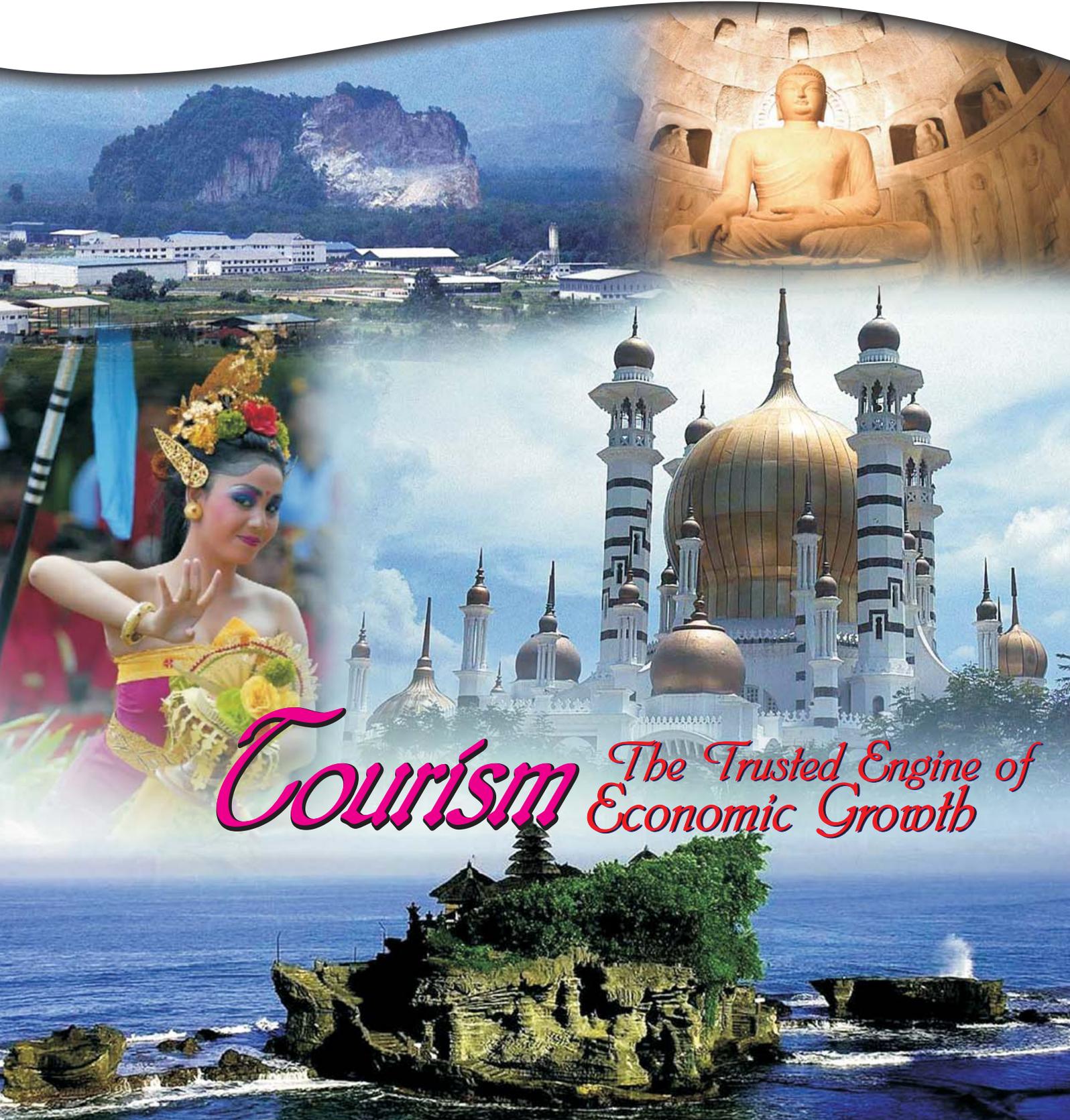
JOURNAL *Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce*



Brunei · Cambodia · Indonesia · Korea

Laos · Malaysia · Myanmar · Pakistan

Philippines · Singapore · Thailand · Vietnam



Tourism *The Trusted Engine of Economic Growth*

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Dear Reader,

Greetings. South East Asia is one of the world's richly endowed regions with enormous potential for development of tourism. From the white powder sands of the Philippines beaches to the mountainous expanses of land-locked Laos, all the countries of the region offer their own peculiar magic to the growing number of tourists visiting them. We have Bali in Indonesia, whose global appeal does not diminish. Then there is Korea, a country that has transformed itself from a farming economy into a manufacturing giant, which also showcases its rich cultural heritage. While Vietnam is a country which is in the midst of a change for the better, Pakistan is an investor-friendly nation offering immense scope for adventurous travel in its mountainous reaches dotted with lakes. The Sultanate of Brunei is poised to become an eco-tourism destination as is Cambodia which is bracing for a bright future. There are two write-ups on Thailand, one on its pre-eminent status as a popular tourist destination and the other a media trip to Thai growth centres. Also presented is an article on Malaysia, a blend of fascinating cultures. While an article on building schools in remote areas of Myanmar provides an insight into that country's educational needs, a feature on Hagar International dwells on the organization's efforts in helping the abused Cambodian women and children in finding a better future.

In response to the natural disasters which struck several countries in Asia in September and October, SACC, together with the Ambassador of the Philippines, H.E. Teresa Lazaro and in coordination with the Ambassador of Indonesia, H.E. Lucia Helwinda Rustam, has set up a Taskforce Asia (see Mission Statement and other information at www.taskforceasia.com). The Taskforce has cooperated with Swiss Solidarity (Glückskette, Chaîne du Bonheur) in their fundraising efforts which netted close to CHF 12 Mio. and SACC members and friends have provided the largest single donation. The Taskforce will continue its efforts in cooperation with SACC members with a view to assisting in the economic rehabilitation. Any feedback, support, ideas are most welcome!

We would like to thank you very much for your patronage in the last year, and look forward to assisting you further in 2010. Best wishes for the festive season, and a Happy New Year filled with prosperity and success.

Yours very truly,

Dr. Martin Kurer LL.M

Chairman Philippine Committee
Member of the Executive Board
Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce
E-mail: kurer@pbklaw.ch



The Kingdom of Unexpected Treasures

An Ecotourism Destination Far from the Madding Crowd

General Overview

Welcome to Negara Brunei Darussalam, the third largest island in the world. Located on the northern shores of Borneo, Brunei's total land mass covers 5,765 sq km, about 70 percent of which is covered in pristine tropical rainforest. Ecotourism is one of our main focuses in our tourist sector, and we hope that you will take the opportunity to visit some of our beautiful National Parks and Nature Reserves.

Brunei welcomes any potential investor interested in establishing a business, and offers an attractive incentive scheme. It is a very stable country, rich in culture and tradition, with a Royal heritage dating back some 600 years, and enjoys an excellent strategic location, being connected with most major cities in Southeast and East Asia by a 2-5 hour flight. Several cities in Australia, New Zealand, Middle East and Western Europe are also accessible by direct flights. Excellent public services,

along with high quality private international schools and first-class medical facilities are available to cater for the needs of those residing in Brunei. It is also an ideal place to live for families with children, due to its peaceful and wholesome environment.

Tourism Development

Tourism in Brunei is still a young industry; therefore, there is very little competition. There are existing local, regional and international markets that can be tapped for further growth.

Brunei is located within the world's fastest growing region for tourism, and is only a few hours away from India and China (the future major world source markets for tourism), as well as the fast-growing economies of South East Asia.

Brunei's well preserved natural features, offering easily accessible ecotourism activities that can be further developed, address the growing demand for nature, health and wellness tourism, and its deserted, sandy coastline offers a welcome respite from the more crowded and commercialized regional beach resort areas.

Although it is not Brunei's intention to attract low-budget mass tourism, it is easy to envision a future where Brunei will be one of the few places in the region to offer peaceful, tranquil and relaxed vacations to many in the upper end of the regional market, those who will willingly pay a premium to avoid the massive crowds overrunning the more popular destinations. With this in mind, the Government's support and incentives for the industry are very generous. It is actively supporting the industry's development through the promotional



National-mosque-of-brunei-bru

activities of the Brunei Tourism Development Department, part of the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources.

The availability of high standard infrastructure and facilities, along with attractive incentive schemes, make Brunei an ideal choice for investors.

Brunei has 161km of undeveloped coastline, fringed by sandy beaches bathed in the South China Sea, and a hinterland covered by vast tracts of virgin, uninhabited rainforest, particularly in the lightly populated Temburong District.

The Sultanate emphatically prohibits activities that are detrimental to the environment. The clean air and safe and healthy environment provides both residents and visitors with an excellent place for rest and relaxation.

Alcohol is not freely available for sale, making Brunei a wholesome family destination.

Brunei has an adequate yet underutilized tourist infrastructure, with around 15 percent of its 850,000 foreign visitors a year (on average) considered bona fide leisure and business tourists staying at least one night in paid accommodation. Current accommodation options range from budget to first class business hotels; from

the superlative Empire Hotel & Country Club to a few simple chalets in the Temburong area. Although accommodation is sufficient in terms of room numbers, it must be noted that most of the accommodation available caters more to the needs of the business traveller rather than the tourist.

With the current demand for nature, health, wellness and spa tourism, and with Brunei's image as a healthy, green, uncrowded and unpolluted destination, there is a yet untapped potential for small, eco-sensitive and up-market boutique nature and wellness resorts, in pristine areas which remain easily accessible due to the country's small size and good road and river network.

Affordable and close-to-home resort accommodation for the domestic market is still wanting in Brunei. The local population has the spending power for it, but little choice in resort-type accommodation providing largely family-oriented vacations in their own 'backyard', usually at seaside locations.

With no resorts taking advantage of the attractions of the rainforest-covered interiors, and no proper beach resorts, the potential is there to develop accommodation targeting both overseas tourists as well as the yet untapped

domestic market.

With the country almost entirely covered by pristine tropical rainforest, ecotourism is understandably one of the main attractions for tourists visiting Brunei. Currently, ecotourism activities available in Brunei consist mainly of visiting nature areas, spotting wildlife and walking along trails, plank walks and canopy walks maintained by the Forestry Department.

Investment Opportunities

Investment opportunities can be explored in areas such as physical activities (canoeing, kayaking, mountain biking, rock climbing, tree climbing, etc) conducted in rainforest areas, as well as other sport and leisure activities in both coastal and inland areas (diving, paragliding, water sports, sand sailing, motorbike rentals and tours, 4WD tours, yachting, etc).

With the available tourist product limited, the potential exists to develop a vast range of new products and activities to cater to both the growing number of overseas visitors and the wealthy and young Brunei population of locals and expatriates.

Beach resorts, jungle lodges, up-market boutique nature resorts, themed attractions, water parks, animal parks and



other places where tourists and locals could spend time and money are areas of investment that will certainly be viewed favourably by the government. They will not only help to increase Brunei's tourist product base, but also help to enhance residents' quality of life and reduce foreign exchange outflows by offering more activities in the country for residents, ensuring that they do not need to travel abroad.

Although the island of Borneo has a vast array of flora and fauna, there is no proper animal and plant park in the region to showcase, in an easily accessible location, wildlife from Brunei itself and further abroad.

With no competition in the region, investment in a properly run wildlife park offers great potential, and is certain to receive strong government support, as long as it is in line with current conservation policies.

With a wide range of foods, from local home-cooked fare to international cuisine, Brunei offers a feast for anyone who loves to eat. Food in Brunei tastes a little bit Malaysian, a little bit Filipino, a little bit Thai, a little bit Indonesian and a little bit Chinese. However, it still retains its Malay individuality to stay typically Bruneian.

Agro-tourism is a fast-growing concept in the regional tourist industry, and Brunei offers visitors a range of activities related to the agricultural, marine and plantation sectors. With good weather all year round, and constant land and sea temperatures, Brunei offers good opportunities for the production and processing of an array of fruits and vegetables, as well as aquaculture for both domestic consumption and export. Those investing in such sectors may also want to consider making their facilities "tourist friendly" by offering visits, sampling and purchasing to both local and foreign visitors, especially those from the regional metropolises, for whom it has become a trend to experience the lifestyle of their rural forefathers.

Sports such as fly- and deep-sea fishing are well established local pastimes, but opportunities exist to develop these activities more professionally to offer the experience in a safer, cleaner and more comfortable way to both residents and tourists.

Located at the epicentre of marine biodiversity, Borneo is well known as a diving paradise. With well-preserved coral reefs and shipwrecks, Brunei is one of diving's new frontiers, offering opportunities to those interested in

developing the sector along international standards of service, safety and equipment.

In the modern world of fast-developing Asian economies, the pressures of daily life are being felt more acutely by many, especially in the growing metropolises ringing the region. Pollution, noise, overcrowding, cultural dislocation, rising crime rates and the competition for jobs, position and status all contribute to creating stress and anxiety.

Previously a luxury pastime for the elite, tourism in Asia is increasingly becoming a 'must do' activity for the masses, as in other parts of the world. This trend is expected to grow significantly in the next 15 to 20 years, by which time hundreds of millions of tourists will be travelling across the region, putting enormous pressure on the more popular destinations.

For those from the region and beyond, it will become increasingly difficult to find a place far from the crowds, where they can enjoy a natural, green and peaceful environment in refined comfort.

However, Brunei can offer that today; a place where the weary urbanite can soothe his or her senses and play golf in peace and quiet; a family destination with a rich national and cultural heritage.

Demand for destinations like Brunei will only increase in the future. If the proper investment in the right type of accommodation, tourist products, transport, destination management and human resources are in place, Brunei can become an exclusive destination for high-spending tourists from the region and beyond. ■



Modern Architecture

A Country with Rich Historic Past Bracing for Bright Future

Overview

The last century saw Cambodia occupied several times (with an occupation nearly every decade), before coming under the horrible regime of Pol Pot. The citizens of Cambodia are still suffering and the country is nowadays ranked as the second poorest state in South-East Asia. Taking Cambodia's painful political history into consideration one will nevertheless be surprised about the friendliness of the Cambodians toward foreigners and how safe one feels traveling around the country.

Cambodia has one of the fastest growing economies in the region, with an annual growth of about 9.8 percent in the years 2004-2007 (this rate subsequently dropped to 7.0 percent in 2008 as a result of the world economic crisis). Over the past years growth was driven by an expansion in the garment sector but also in construction, agriculture and tourism. If you talk with Cambodians, one can immediately recognize three things:

firstly, their desire to look forward and maintain a positive attitude; secondly, their respect for education as a means to personal development; and thirdly, their growing appreciation of the benefits their tourist sector brings. Cambodians are therefore working hard to carve out a tourist niche amongst Thailand and Vietnam.

"Nowadays a typical tourist stays 2-3 nights in our hotel to see Angkor and its temples, although Cambodia has a lot more to offer", says Denis Lamont, Director of the Sofitel in Siam Reap. Cambodia is still a so-called extended destination for tourists coming to South-East Asia. In practice, this means that they add a trip to Cambodia when booking holidays for Thailand or Vietnam. "Almost every traveler comes to regret having only booked such a short visit to this beautiful country", says Thomas Preischl, Vice-Director of Asian Trails Cambodia, the biggest tour operator in Cambodia since 1999.



By **Oliver Stern**
Freelance journalist and photographer
Lucerne, Switzerland
E-mail: olivergustavstern@gmail.com



Ta Prohm temple in Angkor

"If you want to see the true Asia in terms of people but also the rich heritage of the culture you can't find a better place to explore than Cambodia", describes Thomas Preischl. Although the country, with its tumultuous history, has many difficulties to overcome before it moves forward, you can see that the people have preserved a positive attitude toward foreigners and that change is underway.

Looking at the Roots

Around 15 years ago, in 1994, tourists who came to see Angkor and its temples were flown in and out on the same day from Phnom Penh to Siam Reap. There were two reasons for this; on the one hand, a hotel industry and its related infrastructure simply did not yet exist. On the other, Khmer rouge insurgents hiding in the forest continued their attacks on people in Siam Reap.

If you step into Siam Reap now, you would not believe that things like this happened only 15 years ago. Cambodia has forced itself to meet the challenges of attracting tourists from all over the world, and you will find a fine selection of modern hotels, luxury resorts, and boutique hotels with world-class spa facilities. The conditions of the streets can still change within a minute, but for now they are full of life and tourists. At the same time, Siam Reap is trying to

retain its traditions in the face of change, and you will also find many budget-friendly and family-run guesthouses. The temples, which are a World Heritage Site, are an astonishing glimpse of the grandeur of Cambodia's past but there are plenty of other things to do in the country.

Visiting Sihanoukville and its beaches will change the traveler's understanding of what to expect of a beach and its surroundings. These beaches on the mainland as well as on the offshore islands in the gulf of Siam are unique in terms of cleanliness and the crowds they attract.

Facts & Figures

A total of 2.125 million people visited Cambodia in 2008, which is a tremendous leap of 91.25 percent compared to 2004, when there were 1.05 million arrivals. The situation for 2009 shows a slight decrease due to the world economic crisis, but remains stable. For the first quarter 2009 a total of 0.62 million arrivals were counted, meaning a slight decrease of 3.4 percent. Compared to other countries in the region, this slowdown is proportionally rather small, despite the fact that the overall figures are still on a small scale in relation to other countries. Furthermore, the average length of the stay per visitor has increased from 5.5 days in 2003 to 6.65 days in 2008. This development goes in

line with the increased rate of hotel occupancy, up to 62.68 percent in 2008, compared to 50 percent in 2003 (and so is up 12.68 percent). The increase in the tourist sector's financial contribution is a milestone in Cambodia's development: tourists spent 1.6 billion USD in 2008 (750 USD per tourist), compared to 0.58 billion USD in 2004 (500 USD per tourist).

A look at the countries of origin of the tourists coming to Cambodia shows that South-East Asian countries contribute the most visitors, with Vietnam and Korea in first and second place respectively. However, third place has been taken by the US, and with the UK and France, two European countries are now in the top ten. According to a Cambodian government presentation, the projected number of arrivals in upcoming years will increase tremendously. Estimates range from 2.5 million arrivals in 2011, up to 3.6 million in 2015. These huge numbers are predicted on the back of the numerous mid- and large-scale projects in the tourist sector already in development. The government directs all activities under the brand name "Cambodia Kingdom of Wonder". They support foreign investors who are interested in establishing businesses in Cambodia. There are particular opportunities in the fields of hotel infrastructure, gastronomy, transportation and education.

Golf a Driving Force?

"The Sofitel Group's new hotel in Phnom Penh, with 200 rooms and seminar facilities on more than 1,800 sq m will open in June 2010", says Denis Lamont. As part of the concept a golf course, which will meet international standards, is planned outside of Phnom Penh. When it comes to golf Lamont gets very enthusiastic, talking about the success they have already had with their golf course in Siam Reap and the Johnnie Walker Cambodian Open, which is part of the Asian tour. As golf is very popular in Asia (especially in Korea, Thailand and Japan) the sport is regarded as a good opportunity to attract tourists on the one hand and create jobs on the other. "Golf is a superb activity which brings wealthy people into



Par 3 hole on the Phokeethra golf course, part of the Sofitel resort

the country, and it needs a lot of encouragement”, Lamont explains. He knows this too well; Sofitel engaged a whole village outside Siam Reap as staff for the maintenance and service department of the course. Beside the creation of jobs, Sofitel also invests a lot in the education of these people. “It is the only way to bring the country forward, and a win-win situation for both parties”, he adds. Currently there are three first-class golf courses in Siam Reap, including Sofitel's.

Obstacles & Opportunities for Investors

“The first priority in promoting Cambodia as a tourist destination is to develop more extensive trips that take advantage of ongoing improvements in roads and infrastructure. A number of tours lasting 10 to 15 days, covering much more of the country than before, are already in place. Longer tours are becoming more and more popular”, explains Thomas Preischl. He is truly convinced of the opportunities which Cambodia has to offer, for tourists as well as for investors. He puts a special focus on eco-tourism, which demands a premium that people will voluntarily pay, which will fund the development of environmentally sensitive resorts. Once built, the operating costs of low impact facilities are lower than those of other establishments, and the higher prices help boost long-term



Trishaw owner in Siam Reap



fisherman painting his house in the fisher village near Siam Reap

profitability. Low impact eco-tours also help to preserve the uniqueness of Cambodia.

So far the country, and especially the coast around Sihanoukville, is unspoiled by architectural eyesores. Although stories are being reported about village people forced off their land to make way for development, Cambodia is generally on the right track. A look at the country's economic data shows an inflationary rate of 18.7 percent in 2008, which will likely increase in 2009. The average household income is USD 625, which doubled in the last seven years. However, 30 percent of the citizens are still living on 1 USD per day. Around 70 percent of the total population of 14 million Cambodians are still working in the agricultural sector, and have to spend 80 percent of their earnings on food.

“The development and promotion of the more responsible practices in the tourist industry should be a top priority on the list. Along with the benefits that tourism undoubtedly brings, the largely unplanned and rapid development of Siam Reap and the coast around Sihanoukville has resulted in many environmental and social issues”, explains Thomas Preischl. He is convinced that Cambodia has definitely something to offer for investors. “The government encourages investment by allowing 100 percent foreign ownership

with one exception: non-Cambodian nationals cannot own land” he remarks.

In fact, Cambodia's government supports foreign investment with a very positive approach. The regulations provide investment incentives such as

- Twenty percent corporate tax
- Up to nine year exemption from corporate profit tax
- Five years loss carry-forward
- Possible exemption from import duties for the period of construction of the project and first year of business operation
- Repatriation of profits (withholding tax)
- Tax free distribution of dividends and profits
- Employment of foreign expatriates where no qualified Cambodians are available
- Equal treatment of all investors

Large Investments on the Way

The Cambodian government has signed an agreement with a foreign Investment company to develop Koh Puos, one of the largest of the 22 islands in the province of Sihanoukville. This 300 million euro project is designed to turn this island into a paradise by 2010. The project will be crowned by a bridge connecting Koh Puos and Sihanoukville.

Sokha Hotel Company has officially announced the Bokor National Park Development Project, with a ground breaking ceremony on top of Bokor Mountain. The project will take 15 years to complete, and has a budget of about USD1,000 million. It includes the building of a road network on the mountain, sewage and drainage systems, the construction of hotels and casinos, condominiums, villages, flat houses, amusement parks, restaurants, department stores, vegetable farms, hospitals, schools etc. This plan aims at transforming the area from a quiet tourist city into a dynamic developmental city surrounded by the great views of Cambodian natural forest. ■

Hagar: Committed to Providing a Future to Women & Children

Who We Are

Hagar is an international Christian organization, that was founded in 1994 and is committed to rehabilitation and empowerment of women and children who are victims human rights abuse; particularly domestic violence, human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Since the day we opened our doors, we have served as many as 4,689 women and children through our services such as residential care, community education, reintegration services, and our community learning center.

We believe that full restoration happens when women and children are able to reintegrate into the community with

resilience and dignity. Hagar's programs and enterprises give abused, rejected and exploited women and children all they need to confidently walk into the future: education; a deep sense of self-worth; financial independence; a community of people who believe in them; hope.

Hagar is in it for the long haul with each person who walks through our doors.

We are also committed to partnership and know that as we work together with the private sector, governments and NGOs both in Cambodia and internationally, that we are stronger. Hagar currently has support offices in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland and the United States and is expanding its programs into Afghanistan and Vietnam.



Hagar Career Pathways

What We Do

Hagar restores women and children who have been victims of human rights abuse to life in all its fullness. Recovery can take a long time, but Hagar is committed for the long run - until each woman and child is able to reintegrate into community again.

Trauma Recovery Centres provide critical crisis care including safe and secure shelter, food and clothing, and intensive counseling and therapy. Whether a woman is fleeing domestic abuse, a young girl is escaping from sexual exploitation, or a child has been abandoned by family and friends, these shelters are the first step on the journey to healing.

In response to recent research, Hagar's Trauma Recovery Centre recently began a new program for boys who are victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Trauma Recovery Centre offers intensive care to children by providing them with caring house parents love and support them and provide a sense of healthy family and community, counseling and psychosocial therapy as well as medical services. Every child in Hagar's Trauma Recovery Centre also goes to school.

Our Aftercare Program is for girls from 4-14 years of age who have been sexually exploited through trafficking and rape. Each young girl who comes to Aftercare has experienced emotional trauma. Skilled counselors and staff work with each of the girls and facilitate a sense of belonging, healing, and community.

Wherever possible, the counselors and staff at Hagar's Aftercare Program will walk the girls towards reintegration in the community. Hagar first explores whether reintegration with the girls' family might be possible. Often however, this is not the safest option and Hagar seeks a community-based care alternative.

Children with intellectual disabilities are one of Cambodia's most abused and rejected populations. Hagar's Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program

addresses these needs.

Hagar currently operates two integrated classrooms in two government schools as well as its original House of Smiles care centre in Phnom Penh. A Hagar staff member works at each government school location, providing children with education, independent living skills, physiotherapy, aids to support their mobility and support for their parents. Parents are encouraged to assist with the classes and are offered a small stipend and training in return for the time they give.

Hagar's CBR model raises awareness of disability in Cambodia and encourages the inclusion of children with disabilities in society. The integrated classroom is located on school property, encouraging children with and without disabilities to play and get to know each other. The CBR model also drastically reduces costs as facilities are provided by the government and only one staff member is needed at each location.

Hagar continues to run its residential facility, House of Smiles. House of Smiles provides a home and specialized services for a small number of children who have been orphaned or abandoned by their families.

Hagar's Women's Programs reach out to the Hagar's of Cambodian society - women

who have been abused, traumatized and abandoned. Through residential care, counseling, education, medical services, and legal support, Hagar defends the rights of these women and walks with them on their journey to wholeness.

As women experience a loving community, have counseling, and gain literacy and vocational skills, they begin to dream about the future - they begin to heal. Hagar encourages each woman to pursue her dreams, whether that is working in one of Hagar's social enterprises, opening a small business in her community, or seeing her children through school. The sense of dignity and self-respect combined with financial independence that are all fostered through Hagar's programs, reduce each woman's vulnerability and her risk of being exploited again.

Career Pathways prepares Cambodian women and young people for the workforce. It helps them identify their gifts and dreams and supports them as they choose the career path they want to take.

Holistic Program

It's a holistic program. Through a diverse curriculum, students learn about teamwork and attitude, personal grooming and what employers expect. Vocational skills training, job placement and ongoing support give participants the technical



Hagar Women's Shelter

skills they need to be effective employees in the competitive workplace.

Hagar's is committed to the recovery and reintegration of women and children who have been trafficked, through quality programming, social entrepreneurship, and long-term follow-up. All of these pieces combined is what builds resilience and strength and enables women to reintegrate into community with dignity. Hagar provides trafficked women with psychosocial therapy, health care, legal support, spiritual nurture, literacy education, life skills and vocational training, employment support and reintegration support and follow-up.

Our Social Enterprises

Economic independence is one of the most important ways Hagar builds resilience. We know that poverty and lack of education can increase women and children's vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking.

Our businesses are one way we work towards breaking that cycle.

Hagar's social enterprises - Hagar Catering and Hydrologic under the umbrella of Hagar Social Enterprise Group (HSEG) - provide jobs for many women from Hagar's programs. Each business has a safe working environment, pays living wages, and gives its employees the chance to develop new skills, make friends, and provide for themselves with dignity.

As women and young people become independent, as they build life long friendships, and support themselves financially, they can reintegrate into their communities and experience life in all its fullness.

Hagar Catering and Facilities Management

What began in 1998 as a small food-cart franchise has grown into a fully-functioning catering and facility management service.

Hagar Catering and Facilities Management (HCFM) provides quality food catering and professional industrial cleaning and laundry management services to businesses and organizations across the city.

It also provides valuable employment opportunities for women who graduate from Hagar programs. Employees at Hagar Catering gain strong technical skills in the hospitality industry that set them up for the future. Employment at Hagar Catering is often an important stepping stone into future employment.

Over the past 10 years, Hagar Catering has gained a strong reputation for the quality of its employees and its service.

Currently, HCFM employs over 140 people and has 20 contracts with businesses around Phnom Penh including several major manufacturers, the US Embassy as well as a number of five star hotels.

In 2008 Hagar Catering sold more than a million meals and brought in US\$1.2 million in sales revenue.

A Story from Hagar: Malis Becomes a Businesswoman

Malis has a dream of opening her own beauty salon in her home province one day. At the rate she has been learning, and with her determination and creativity, it won't be long before she can make that dream a reality.

The mother of two did not have an easy life, and ended up seeking refuge and care at Hagar's women's shelter. Her confidence, self-esteem and hope for the future are returning. In September 2007, Malis began the Career Pathways training program. First she learned soft skills like literacy and personal development through creative arts. Then she got a sense of what kinds of industries and businesses would interest her through various site visits with other program participants.

Malis settled on esthetics training. It was a

step in the right direction to fulfilling her dream of opening her own beauty salon one day. Malis is becoming a great esthetician. As she interns at a local beauty salon she is learning new techniques - washing customers' hair, coloring, and perming hair and is even learning different makeup techniques and how to care for and polish customers' nails.

With her daily stipend of \$1 and the tips she receives in the shop, Malis is investing in beauty products and equipment and keeping them in her security box in her room at the women's shelter. The Salon manager is also helping her acquire all the equipment she will need to one day to open her future shop. In the evenings, along with another trainee, Malis takes home the hairdryer, curlers and other products so that she can practice on her friends at the shelter.

Malis is particularly interested in Cambodian wedding makeup and hairstyling. Before Malis is reintegrated into her home land, she will be placed in a local salon specializing in this area. Hagar will also provide her with specialized business management training and teach her how to write up a business plan. Before reintegrating into her homeland and starting her business, Hagar staff will make several site visits with Malis to assess the local market and help her answer some important questions so she can really take ownership of her business and be successful.

For more stories like these or for other information on Hagar, please visit our website at www.hagarcambodia.org

Beyond Cambodia

In light of its achievements, Hagar International is poised to launch its replication project. In stages, Hagar International will implement its model of social programs complemented by commercially viable business activities in three targeted countries namely Cambodia, Afghanistan, and Vietnam. Hagar International will introduce the innovative holistic 4R model as a working

framework for NGOs and local government to increase/create capacity in providing recovery, rehabilitation, community reintegration, and job readiness programming.

In 2008, the first country of operations outside Cambodia was established in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Hagar Afghanistan

Hagar Afghanistan was officially registered with the Government of Afghanistan on July 29, 2008. We are pleased to have this endorsement from the Government, and look forward to working in partnership with the relevant Afghan Ministries, local NGOs and international NGOs.

At present, the main task HA is engaged with is determining what kinds of services and facilities are available to vulnerable women and children in Afghanistan. There is some excellent work being done by

local NGOs, and we will seek to assist these efforts. One area of need that is emerging is that of support for women after their immediate crises are resolved - women who have been in prison, but are now freed or women who have sought and obtained divorce and now are without immediate family support.

Hagar Afghanistan will seek to assist vulnerable women such as these, though housing assistance, job training and placement, and long term support.

We are pleased to announce that Hagar Afghanistan has entered a new partnership with IOM (International Organization for Migration). Together, we will be providing much needed shelter services to trafficking victims in Kabul. Women and children who have been trafficked to other countries and returned will be served. Hagar is currently in the process of hiring and training counselors, social workers,

and case managers to provide holistic recovery services.

Hagar Vietnam

From 17 to 21 November 2008, Hagar International was honored to host government delegations from Vietnam and Laos for a comprehensive study tour of our programs and facilities. The top leaders of the Women's Union are collaborating with Hagar to build a partnership in their home country and are eager to strengthen their work in the fight against human trafficking and gender-based violence.

In the process of building up our services in Vietnam we have also invested in JoMa Café and Bakery and they officially serve as our Social Enterprise Partner for the country, employing the women we serve and establishing a solid presence for Hagar within Vietnam. ■

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Schneider + Cie AG
Solothurnerstrasse 48
CH-4002 Basel
Phone +41 61 365 96 90
basel@schneider-transport.com

Schneider + Cie SA
1A, rue de la Bergère
CH-1217 Meyrin 1 (Geneva)
Phone +41 22 989 10 50
gva@schneider-transport.com

Schneider + Cie AG
Domicile: Oberfeldstrasse 12 c,
CH-8302 Kloten
Postal address: P.O. Box,
CH-8058 Zurich-Airport
Phone +41 44 800 17 17
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Land of the Gods Offers Exotic Tourist Experience

A country of thousand facets; rich and diverse arts and cultural heritage; numerous breathtaking scenic spots; exotic and tasty culinary delights; and the smiling people all over the countryside; Indonesia is a country awaiting visitors. Indonesia promises an abundance of pleasure-filled and yet adventurous journeys across its 33 provinces and 17,508 islands, some of which are yet to be discovered.

Bali - An Island Paradise

Bali is known as "Paradise Island" thanks to the beauty, mystery and tranquility of its land and the friendliness of its inhabitants. Bali is so magical and mystical that most visitors feel it the moment they set foot on the island. The "magic" of Bali permeates its stunning temples and grand old palaces; it washes over the terraced rice-paddy land and the high mountain lakes, and is captured in the graceful hand movements of a traditional dancer or the delicately carved features of a wooden statue.

Bali covers 5,633 sq km and floats a few degrees South of the equator between the islands of Java in the West and Lombok in the East. Bali's 3.2 million citizens are 95 percent Hindu and most of them live on the Southern coast. The skewed population distribution is due largely to the unequal distribution of resources in each regency. Bali is divided into eight regencies and one municipal city--Denpasar, which is also the island's capital. Between them, the regency of Buleleng and the city of Denpasar account for approximately one third of Bali's total population.



By **Lucia Helwinda Rustam**
Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia
Indonesian Embassy, Bern
E-mail: kbribern@bgb.ch



Ulun Danu Temple at Bedugul Bali



Balinese Dancer

Bali is undoubtedly one of Indonesia's most beautiful islands. There are miles and miles of sandy beaches, much sought after by surfers and snorkelers alike; spectacular, active volcanoes towering over 3,000 meters whose calderas enclose pristine lakes; picturesque rice terraces and lush tropical forests full of exotic wildlife. Bali is so steeped in culture and

history that hardly a day goes by without a ceremony or festival taking place at one of its 20,000 temples and palaces. It is the harmonious relationship between nature and culture that makes Bali so special and the reason why it has long attracted artists and visitors and continues to lure them from the four corners of the world. Indeed, there is something for everyone to do, see, stay and eat, and the island caters for all tastes and budgets.

Nonetheless, Bali is also renowned for its diverse and sophisticated art forms, such as painting, sculpture, woodcarving, handcrafts, and performing arts. Balinese percussion orchestra music, known as gamelan, is highly developed and varied. Balinese dances portray stories from Hindu epics such as the Ramayana but with heavy Balinese influence. Famous Balinese dances include pendet, legong, baris, topeng, barong, gong keybar, and kecak (the monkey dance).

The Best of Bali

The beautiful beaches of Kuta, Sanur, Lovina, and Tanjung Benua are world renowned and have been attracting visitors for decades. Kuta is undoubtedly the most popular—hence crowded—beach, famous for its fine, white sand and unforgettable sunsets, as well as its

nightlife and its array of bars, restaurants and hotels. The white, sandy beach of Tanjung Benua, located at Nusa Dua, offers a wide range of water sports and luxurious hotels. Located on the East coast, Sanur is renowned for its sunrises and colorful fishing boats. The sea is calmer here because it is protected by coral rocks. Rental canoes provide the best way to explore this beautiful coastline. On the North coast is Lovina beach which is considered the most stunning and safest place to swim and dive. Boats can also be rented and dolphins are often spotted swimming just off the black sandy beach.

Bali's villages are also worth exploring and the most visited are Ubud, Mas and Tenganan. Famous for its painters' community, Ubud is special in more ways than one. Its beautiful surroundings and gracious way of life have drawn celebrities and artists from all over the world for decades and many have adopted Ubud as their home. An array of boutique hotels and unique restaurants cater to Bali's most culturally inclined tourists. The village of Mas is home to the island's prominent woodcarvers who specialize in carvings of all kinds. Protected for centuries from the outside world by its surrounding walls, the village of Tenganan has maintained its ancient pre-Hindu customs through a



Tanah lot Temple

strong code of non-fraternization with outsiders that continues even today. The village is famous for its unique woven material called gringsing, which allegedly affords the wearer magical powers.

The foothill village of Sangeh is surrounded by dense, virgin rain-forest which is inhabited by hundreds of monkeys. Many of the forest's trees are unique to the area and cannot be found anywhere else on Bali; their existence in Sangeh remains a mystery. A mossy temple lies hidden among them and is an exotic and tranquil place providing the hairy, inquisitive residents are kept at bay.

The Tasty Balinese Culinary Specialities

The "Island of the Gods" offers a thousand and one tantalizing flavors from Indonesian to international cuisine in a diverse array of settings. The typical Balinese food is rice as the central dish served with small portions of spicy, pungent vegetables, fish or meat and served almost always with sambal or chili paste. Specialties of Balinese food include Babi guling or roasted suckling pig is a specialty, and bebek betutu (smoked stuffed duck wrapped in bamboo leaves). Some say Ubud is the best place to sample the the betutu chicken.

World's Best Spa Destination

Indonesia and especially Bali region were voted as the Best Spa Destination in the World by the Berlin-based International Travel Bourse and the island is regularly honored with International Wellness Awards. By combining ancestral knowledge with modern scientific research, the spas of Bali are undeniably some of the world's best, offering a wide range of baths, treatments and massages.

Komodo National Park - Beyond the Dragon Paradise

Komodo National Park, the last remaining habitat of the world's largest lizard, is one of the most unique and beautiful places on the planet. Consisting of island groups and their surrounding waters, the Park is widely recognized as an outstanding storehouse of globally significant terrestrial and marine biodiversity and, in acknowledgment of its immense value, was designated a Man and Biosphere Reserve in 1986 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1991.

The Park was established in 1980, originally to protect the Komodo dragon, which occupies a unique position in the Park's terrestrial ecosystem and has a high tourism value. It is located between the

islands of Sumbawa and Flores at the border of the East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) and West Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) provinces. It includes three major islands, Komodo, Rinca and Padar, and numerous smaller islands together totaling 603 sq km of land. The total size of Komodo National Park is presently 1,817 sq km. Proposed extensions of 25 sq km of land (Banta Island) and 479 sq km of marine waters would bring the total surface area up to 2,321 sq km.

From some of the most vivid coral gardens in the world to surreal savannah dotted with Lontar palms to monsoon forest, the Park presents a uniquely primordial environment. The presence of the world's largest lizard on these islands, together with a rich marine fauna, present opportunities for wildlife viewing that are not possible anywhere else on earth.

Komodo Dragons

Komodo dragons are the world's largest lizards. They can be found on only four islands Komodo, Rinca, Gili Motang and Nusa Kode - in Komodo National Park, and a handful of small areas of northern and western Flores, just outside the Park. Less than 2,500 of these giant lizards inhabit the Park's dramatic landscape, and they do not exist anywhere else on earth. Komodo dragons, which were discovered by western science in 1910, are thought to have once lived over a much larger area. Growing pressure from human activities has reduced their habitats to the small refuges found today. Due to their extremely limited range, the Komodo dragon is considered to be endangered and in need of protection.

Terrestrial Ecosystems

The many animals in Komodo National Park are important to the ecology of the Komodo dragon. The Komodo dragon is the top predator in its environment and all animals in the Park are potential prey of the Komodo dragon. The 277 animal species found in the Park are made up of a mixture of animals originating from Asia or Australia. These include 32 mammal



species, 128 bird species and 37 reptile species. Prey species on both Komodo and Rinca include wild buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), and Timor deer (*Cervus timorensis*). There are at least three species of poisonous land snakes, including the Green tree viper, cobras and Russel's vipers. The long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*) and a small population of wild horses are found on Rinca.

Marine Ecosystems

The marine area constitutes 67 percent of Komodo National Park. Indonesia is the only equatorial region in the world where there is an exchange of marine flora and fauna between oceans and the Park boasts one of the world's richest marine environments. The seas in and around the Park are reputed to be among the most biologically productive in the world. The Park encompasses 1,214 sq km of highly diverse marine habitats, including coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds, seamounts, and semi-enclosed bays. These habitats harbor more than 1,000 species of fish, some 260 species of reef-building coral, and 70 species of sponges. Dugong (*Dugong dugon*), dolphins (10 species), whales (6 species), and hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and green

(*Chelonia mydas*) turtles all occur within the Park.

In recent years, Komodo National Park has become extremely popular as a diving destination, thanks to the pristine state of much of its coral and its unusual levels of marine biodiversity.

Lombok - A Paradise of Natural Wonders

Long overlooked, the Lombok island beyond Bali are treasure-trove of fascinating cultures and natural wonders. Lombok located directly to the east of Bali belong to the province of West Nusa Tenggara. With a huge variety of stunning attractions there is no doubt that Lombok will be major players in the future of Indonesian tourism.

Lombok is one among the two largest islands in West Nusa Tenggara. It is the capital and largest city of the province. Lombok wide area is about 4.738,70 sq km (23.51 percent). The other largest islands is Sumbawa, with 15.414,37 sq km (76.49 percent) wide area. Beside that, the province of West Nusa Tenggara is also surrounded by thousands small islands, such as Gili Air, Gili Meno, Gili Trawangan, Gili Gede, Gili Nanggu, Gili

Tangkong, Moyo Island, Bungin Island, Satonda Island, Kaung Island, and Panjang Island.

Lombok experienced strong Balinese influences, but has retained a unique identity. The indigenous people of Lombok, the Sasaks, are predominantly Moslem and have a strong, distinguished tradition, as do the people of neighbouring Sumbawa. Soft, white sand, virgin beaches are typical in Lombok, where the motto is "You can see Bali in Lombok, but not Lombok in Bali". Famous for its ikat handwoven textiles, the island has exceptional charm and is relatively undiscovered, except for the town of Senggigi, which is becoming a major resort area.

Set in arid savannah-like landscape, the village of Sengkol, Pujut and Rambitan take us back to centuries gone by. Not unlike Bali, Lombok is also a haven for water-based activities. Lombok's Kuta Beach is one of the island's many virgin beaches. For five kilometers along the Indian Ocean, an unbroken stretch of clean white sand and sparkling water are perfect for bathing and swimming. On the 19th day of the tenth month in the Sasak lunar calendar, the Nyale come to the sea's surface and Kuta Beach becomes the site of



Senggigi Beach Boats

great festivities of the Nyale Ceremony. In the west are surfers and windsurfers beaches. On the three offshore islands of Gili Meno, Gili Trawangan and Gili Air, palm-fringed, white sandy beaches spread towards crystal clean waters that teem with tropical reef fishes, turtles and even sharks. Senggigi beach is one of the most scenic with coral gardens growing just offshore. Climbing Mount Rinjani (3.800 meters) and soaking in the tranquility of the Segaranakan Crater Lake and valley near the summit is the ultimate Lombok experience.

West Lombok.

West Lombok has both the lushness of Bali and the starkness of outback Australia. The 3,726m Rinjani volcano dominates the northwest of the island, while the southwest is arid and covered by savannas.

Famous for its basket ware, pottery and ikat hand woven textiles, Lombok has

exceptional charm and is relatively undiscovered, except for Senggigi and the Gili islands that have become popular tourism areas. We visit traditional villages and a local market in search for rare pieces of handicraft.

With the three 'big cities', the airport and the biggest concentration of hotels, West-Lombok is the best place to stay for the visitor. Here are the popular Gili Islands, as well as the most important Balinese temples, the center of Wetu Telu and mount Rinjani. The first route takes the tourist north, from Ampenan to Senggigi beach, Gili's, Wetu Telu center Bayan and surrounding, and eventually to the foothills of Moutn Rinjani. The second route goes south to quiet beaches and surfing locations of the southern peninsula.

Central Lombok

Central Lombok is the tourist heart of the

Island. The area concludes the traditional villages which are visited in most daytrips - and which are not far from the 'big three' cities - and the southern coast: Kuta beach, where the festivities around the sea worms (nyale) takes place and Tanjung Aan, with beautiful beaches for surfing. Many travel agencies organize daytrips to these easy to reach destinations.

East Lombok

East Lombok is lush and less developed than the western part of the island, allowing you to peek into a rural part of Indonesia, inhabited by the indigenous Sasak people, who keep their culture very much live. ■



Sasak Village, Sade

Land of Morning Calm

A Giant Leap from Agriculture to Manufacturing & Services

General overview

Korea has a population of 48.60 million (2009) and a total land area of 100,032 sq?km (2008). Located at a major crossroads in Northeast Asia, it has also achieved the "Miracle of the Han River." The Korean Peninsula is bordered by the Amnok (or Yalu) River, which separates Korea from China to the northwest, and the Duman (or Tumen) River to the northeast, which separates Korea from both China and Russia. The country itself is flanked by the Yellow Sea to the west, and the East Sea to the east. There are several notable islands surrounding the country, including Jeju-do, Ulleung-do and Dok-do (Liancourt Rocks). Mountains cover 70 percent of Korea's landmass, making it one of the most mountainous regions in the world; its granite and limestone peaks are part of a breathtaking landscape of scenic hills and valleys. The mountain range that stretches the length of the east coast falls steeply into the East Sea, while along the southern and western coasts, the mountains descend gradually to the coastal plains that produce the bulk of Korea's agricultural product, including rice, its staple crop.

Economic overview

As early as the 1960s, when the country's five-year economic development plan was first implemented, the Korean economy showed signs of exponential growth. From 1962 to 2005, the country's GNI surged from US\$2.3 billion to a staggering US\$786.8 billion. The 1997 East Asian foreign currency crisis was only a temporary set-back for the Korean economy, with GNI briefly stagnating at US\$340.4 billion in 1998. However, the economy soon began to advance again, soaring to US\$955.8 billion by 2007. Years of rapid economic development saw Korea become the world's 14th largest trading partner. The country's industrial base shifted from agriculture to manufacturing, and is now shifting to a service economy. A global force in a number of significant industries, including automobiles, petrochemicals, electronics, shipbuilding, textiles, and steel, Korea's GDP grew by 5.0 percent in 2007 and 2.2 percent in 2008. GDP in 2008 totaled US\$929 billion, making the country the 14th largest global economy. Since 2004, Korean-made semi-conductors, automobiles, and wireless telecom devices have accounted for over 30



By **Dr. Urs Lustenberger**
Vice President, Co-Chairman Korea
Committee and Chairman Legal Affairs
Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce,
Zurich, Switzerland

E-mail: urs.lustenberger@lgpartner.ch



Hallasan National Park



Suwon Hwaseong, the Brilliant Fortress

percent of the country's total trade volume. Exports of IT products have risen every year since 1998, reaching US\$82.5 billion, or 29.5 percent of total exports, in 2005. Memory chips, mobile phones, LCD monitors, PCs, and satellite broadcasting receivers are some of Korea's major IT export goods. Korea's semi-conductor industry, in particular, has grown tremendously over the past two decades, and is now the third largest in the world.

Climatic Conditions in Korea

Korea has four seasons, with a wet monsoon season/summer in the middle of the year, and a cold winter from November to March. The island of Jeju, off the southern coast, is the warmest and wettest place in the country. The most ideal time to visit Korea is during the autumn months (September-November). During this time, the country experiences warm, sunny weather, skies that are cobalt blue, and perhaps the biggest draw of all, some truly spectacular foliage. Winters are cold and dry and are the time to go if you are interested in winter sports, as there are numerous ski resorts. Spring (April-May), with the cherry blossoms all in bloom, is



Seoraksan National Park

also beautiful, but very busy; visitors need to book in advance to ensure accommodation is available. The summer months are muggy and hot, and rather crowded. It is also the start of the monsoon season, and many activities are subject to the fluctuations of heavy rain.

Korean Tourist Highlights

General

Korea's most famous historical tourist attractions include the ancient capitals of Seoul, Gyeongju and Buyeo. Most international tourists come to Seoul to experience both the classical and modern aspects of Korean culture. Korea's natural landmarks are resplendent and form important tourist attractions, the most spectacular of which are the peaks of the Baekdudaegan, particularly Seorak-san and Jiri-san. In addition, the caves of Danyang and Samcheok, and beaches such as Haeundae and Mallipo, are popular attractions. Korea's many smaller islands also play an important role as tourist attractions. Excursion ferries are a frequent sight along the south and west coasts, traveling to Ulleung-do off the east coast. And there is of course Seoul, the ultra-modern city which still preserves its ancient past. Seoul has a hidden history of centuries-old temples, palaces, pagodas and pleasure gardens. There is also the Korean Folk Village, where visitors can experience rural Korean life. The Korean national park, meanwhile, is simply thrilling, with high rugged peaks, lush forests, boulder-strewn whitewater rivers, beaches and ancient temples.

Must-see sights in Korea

Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes

The island of Jeju is a significant nature preserve, noted for its biodiversity. Almost half of all vascular plants found in Korea are found on the island, along with half of Korea's endangered and protected wild species. High on the summit of Mt. Hallasan, you can find polar plant species that advanced southwards during the Ice Age, while numerous indigenous and endangered species inhabit the lower altitudes. Without a doubt, Mt. Hallasan is a rich ecological treasure trove, with 1,565



Seongsan Ilchulbong Peak

species of plants and 1,179 species of animals.

On June 27, 2007, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee listed Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes as a World Natural Heritage site in view of its parasitic volcano and lava tubes, its outstanding geological features, and its special properties as a habitat for a variety of rare and endangered species.

Mount Hallasan Natural Reserve

At 1,950 meters, Mt. Hallasan is the tallest mountain in Korea, with gentle slopes formed by eons of volcanic activity. The summit area is steep, however, and formed of trachyte. A variety of animals and plants inhabit the nature reserve, including numerous endangered species. Because of the unique and mysterious landscape created by the surrounding 360 cinder cones and its outstanding research value, the Korean government designated the mountain as a national park in 1970, and it has been protected ever since.

Changdeokgung

Changdeokgung was built in 1405, the 5th year of the reign of King Taejong of the Joseon Dynasty, as an alternative palace to Gyeongbokgung, the dynasty's original main residence. Located to the east of Gyeongbokgung, it was also known as Donggwol, or the east palace. Gyeongbokgung and Changdeokgung were burned down during the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592. Changdeokgung was rebuilt in 1609, serving as the royal seat for 300 years until the reconstruction of Gyeongbokgung at the end of the Joseon Dynasty.

Overall, Changdeokgung is divided into administrative and residential quarters and a rear garden. The existing administrative

quarters encompass Donhwamun, the front gate and the oldest existing palace structure, Injeongjeon, the throne hall, and Seonjeongjeon, the administrative hall.

The residential quarters include Huijeongdang and Daejojeon, the king's and queen's bedchambers, the royal kitchen, the infirmary and other annexes.

The rear garden boasts exquisite pavilions, the court archives, a library and lotus ponds. ■

Exploring Cultural Legacy from Past to Present

The efforts of the Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce to Promote Korea's Cultural Heritage in Switzerland

On October 26, 2009 the Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce invited its members and Swiss businessmen to attend a special presentation on Korea's cultural heritage at the Zunfthaus zur Saffran, called "Exploring Korea's Cultural Legacy from Past to Present". Han-Jin Chang, a Korean national and now an English-trained lawyer working for Linklaters in London, presented some films on Korea's



Hang-Jin Chang is an English qualified lawyer at Linklaters LLP

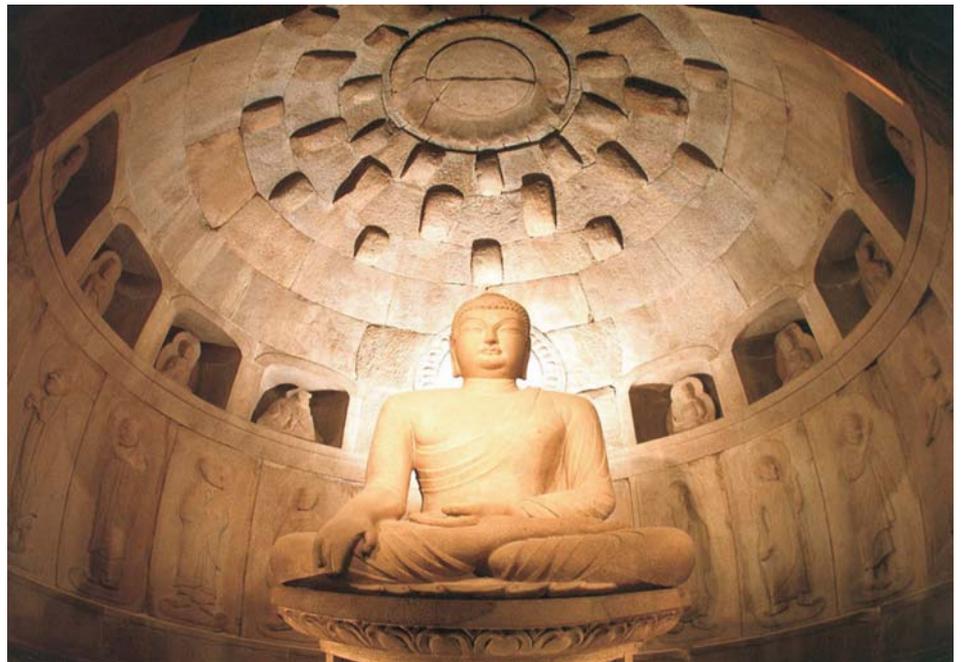


Audience learning about the heritages of Korea

cultural highlights. Only a few people have much knowledge of Korea's astounding artistic achievements in the first millennium CE, and the presentation included highlights such as the Sarira Casket (7th century AD). Impossible to replicate with modern technology, the 1300 year-old Sarira Casket remains a mystery of ancient craftsmanship. From the golden granules that are only 0.3 mm in diameter, to the carvings of expressions on faces smaller than a grain of rice, this masterpiece houses many untold secrets. The Sokkuram (8th century AD), was another highlight; the world's only cave temple to have been built by human hand. Built to a margin of error of 1 in 10000 - or

1 millimeter in every 10 meters it represents an incredible architectural achievement, especially given that stonemasons today work to a level of accuracy of 1 in 300 (1mm in 30 cm).

The lunch guests were deeply impressed by Korea's rich heritage, and the fine handicraft skills of the Korean people. Ambassador Chul-Kyoon Chang expressed his gratitude at having the opportunity to introduce Korea's cultural heritage to the Swiss business community. The event was a genuine chance for the Swiss to learn about the roots of Korea's modern-day success, built as it is on accuracy and long term goals. ■



Sokkuram (8th century AD), the world's only cave temple to have been built by human hand. Built to a margin of error of 1 in 10000 - or 1 millimetre in every 10 metres - it represents an incredible architectural achievement, especially given that stone masons today work to a level of accuracy of 1 in 300 (1mm in 30 cm).

A Land of Stunning Beauty Awaits a Surge in Tourism

Brief Look at the Country's History

Laos' long history dates back to the founding of its first kingdom in 1353. It was then known as Lan Xang (the land of a million elephants). It reached the period of its greatest glory and influence during the years 1633-90. Later succession struggles led Lan Xang to break into three smaller kingdoms. These weakened kingdoms then initially came under Siamese control and later French colonialism, under which system Laos suffered great neglect.

After achieving complete independence from the French in 1953, the royalist Lao regime was gradually drawn into the vortex of the U.S. war in Vietnam. The economy was greatly damaged by the war, and became extremely dependent on foreign aid. Extensive U.S. bombing of northern, north-eastern, and eastern Laos from 1965 to 1973 seriously disrupted the rural economy. The U.S. dropped 33 percent more bombs on Laos than on Nazi Germany.

On 2 December 1975, the Lao People's Democratic Republic was established, bringing an end to an extended revolutionary war. This event brought peace and independence to the country. The economy was transformed into a Soviet-style planned economy and received economic and technical assistance from other communist nations. Attempts to collectivize agriculture were abandoned rather quickly, however. In 1986, a new policy termed the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) was introduced to transform the economic system from a state-planned one into one determined by free market forces and prices. The major goal of this reform was to

provide greater incentives to increase economic performance and productivity. With the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the Lao PDR opened its doors to active economic engagement with the West, in terms of both international aid and investment. The Lao PDR became a favourite target for diverse donors, and foreign aid currently represents some 20 percent of GDP. From 1991 to 1997, the Lao PDR enjoyed considerable macroeconomic success under the NEM system, with annual economic growth averaging 6.5 percent.

During the 1990s, the Lao economy became increasingly interconnected with that of Thailand, from which Laos imports many basic modern consumer products. On weekends, it is common to find many Lao families from Vientiane visiting Thailand via the Friendship Bridge and shopping for basic household items, such as various packaged foods.

Initially, it appeared that the Lao economy (with no stock market and a currency not traded internationally) would be immune to the Asian economic crisis of 1997 which shook so many Asian economies. In a somewhat delayed effect, the Lao currency went into a far steeper decline than any other Asian country. Given Laos' dependence on imports, this had an adverse effect on almost the whole country, except a small number of elite individuals connected to the dollarized economy. The Asian economic crisis also adversely affected the Lao economy by reducing foreign direct investment from other Asian countries and reducing the demand for Lao electricity exports, a major source of foreign exchange.

As it traditionally received foreign aid from the Eastern bloc countries, and in the past



By **Barbara Möckli-Schneider**
Secretary General, Chairwoman,
Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar
Committee, Swiss-Asian Chamber of
Commerce, Zurich, Switzerland

E-mail: sacc@sacc.ch

decade from multilateral agencies (primarily the World Bank and Asian Development Bank) and other countries, the country does have a debt burden. Total external debt in 1997 was estimated to be US\$2.32 billion, and debt payments represented 4.0 percent of government expenditure in 1995-98. Many Lao loans are granted on highly concessionary terms, meaning that the interest rates are quite low over a long payment period, and thus almost amount to grants.

The major challenge currently facing the Lao PDR is to restore the sound macroeconomic performance of the early and mid-1990s and to develop its own sources of foreign exchange earnings. Hydroelectric power development on the tributaries of the Mekong, the development of light industries such as garments and textiles, marketing of natural resources such as gypsum, tin, and wood products, and tourism development are the primary economic sectors being promoted.

People

Laos' population was estimated at 6.8 million in early 2009, dispersed unevenly across the country. Most people live in valleys of the Mekong river and its tributaries. Vientiane prefecture, the capital and largest city, had about 740,010 residents in 2008. The country's population density was 27/sq. km.

About half the country's people are ethnic Lao, the principal lowland inhabitants as well as the politically and culturally dominant group. The Lao are descended from the Tai people who began migrating southward from China in the first millennium A.D. Mountain tribes of Hmong-Yao, and Tibeto-Burman (Kor and Phouyoy) as well as Tai ethno-linguistic heritage are found in northern Laos. Until recently, they were known as Lao Sung or highland Lao. In the central and southern mountains, Austro Asiatic (Mon-Khmer and Viet-Muong) tribes, formerly known as Lao Theung or mid-slope Lao, predominate. Some Vietnamese and

Chinese minorities remain, particularly in the towns, but many left in two waves—after partial independence in the late 1940s and again after 1975.

The predominant religion is Theravada Buddhism. Animism is common among the mountain tribes. Buddhism and spirit worship coexist easily. There also are small numbers of Christians and Muslims.

The official and dominant language is Lao, a tonal language of the Tai linguistic group. Minorities speak an assortment of Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Yao, and Tibeto-Burman languages. French, once common in government and commerce, has declined in usage, while knowledge of English—the language of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—has increased in recent years. The government is encouraging officials and students to learn English. High school students are required to take either French or English; the majority today chooses English. The government plans to introduce English at the primary school level by 2010.

Location & Overview

Laos is situated in the golden mainland of South East Asia. It is located in the centre of Indochina, sharing borders with China to the North (416 km), Myanmar to Northwest (236 km), Thailand to the West (1,835 km), Cambodia to the South (492 km) and Vietnam to the East (1,957 km). Laos is a land-locked country of stunning natural beauty, rich in culture and history, beautiful temples, and strong spiritual traditions, remaining to this day relatively unexplored.

With a total area of 236,800 sq km, around 70 percent of Laos' terrain is mountainous, reaching a maximum elevation of 2,820 meters in Xieng Khouang Province. The landscapes of northern Laos and the regions adjacent to Vietnam, in particular, are dominated by rough mountains.

The Mekong river is the main geographical feature in the west and, in fact, forms a natural border with Thailand in some areas. The Mekong flows through nearly

1,900 km of Lao territory and shapes much of the lifestyle of the people of Laos. In the south the Mekong reaches a breadth of 20 km, creating an area with thousands of islands.

Laos is a peaceful country and is a potentially lucrative tourist destination. More than 70 percent of the country is comprised of highland areas, offering great opportunities for a variety of outdoor adventures from trekking and kayaking, to cycling or caving. Pristine, lush jungles, limestone forests, rivers and waterfalls, islands on the Mekong - Laos has it all.

It is not just the beauty of the country but also the kindness, friendliness, hospitality and generosity of its people, along with their unique and attractive arts and crafts, that makes travelling to Laos an unforgettable experience. All over the country there is a multitude of traditional celebrations and festivals. In addition, Laos boasts numerous historic sites that testify to its long history.

Laos benefits from a relatively predictable and tropical climate, which does not suffer from extreme temperatures. There is a monsoon season between May and October, with a dry season from November to April. Throughout the year expect hot weather with slightly chillier climates in areas of high altitude. Lightweight cotton clothes are advised, with at least one sweater for travel to upland areas.

Places to Visit

The capital of Laos is the city of Vientiane. Situated on the banks of the Mekong, the city is home to plenty of temples, shrines, monuments and markets. The biggest tourist attraction is probably the Wat Pha Kaew, or Temple of the Emerald Buddha. This 16th century former royal temple is now a museum and houses a collection of Buddhist statues from all over Asia. The other must-see temple is the Wat Si Saket, which is the oldest temple in Vientiane.

There is also a magnificent triumphal arch, called the Anousavari Monument, which



Wat Si Saket

was built in 1962 to commemorate the lives of the people who died defending Laos. Also of interest is the Lao National Museum, the cultural hall and the forested enclave containing the Wat Sokpaluang temple.

The city of Luang Prabang is often described as the jewel of Laos. This tiny city houses just 16,000 inhabitants and has been virtually unaffected by the gradual creep of Western culture across Asia. Literally dozens of historic temples form the city's main tourist attractions.

The Wat Xieng Thong and Wat Wisunlat



Wat Xieng Thong

temples are particularly worth visiting. The Pak Ou caves, which contain hundreds of Buddha images, and the impressive Kuang Si waterfalls are approximately half an hour's drive south of the city.

If you are looking for something a little different, then you will no doubt be fascinated by the Laos "Plain of Jars". This area is situated in the Xieng Khuang province, and is littered with enormous stone jars in five major groupings. These jars are of unknown origin but comparison with local rock indicates that they did not originate in the area. The most accessible site is Thong Hai Hin, which is designed to deal with tourists and is also the site of the largest jar, which weighs 6.5 tonnes.

How to Get Around

There are only two methods of travel in Laos; along the river in a variety of boat tours, ranging from standard ferries to speedboats, or by road. River travel is somewhat expensive and the ferries are notoriously slow, so most travellers opt for overland travel. Buses now link all of the provinces and major cities, but the standards can vary dramatically, from converted pick-ups right through to modern coaches. Services are run by private individuals and as a result there is

no real central resource for information on bus routes. The best bet is to ask for advice from your hotel or hostel staff. Many people opt to hire a car in order to get around Laos. It is not recommended to drive yourself, as the driving style of the locals can be somewhat hazardous for those not used to it.

Accommodation

Tourist accommodation is somewhat sparse in Laos. In the major cities, such as Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Vang Vieng there are a modest number of good hotels available. Elsewhere, it can be difficult to find accommodation. There is generally a selection of village hostels and guesthouses, but it is advisable to contact a tour operator with experience of Laos to help you arrange accommodation, or simply for advice.

Recently the Laos government has built "ecolodges" in Laopako, Nam Mgum and Luang Namtha in a bid to encourage eco-tourism to the country. These lodges are specially constructed to have as little impact on the environment as possible and are open to visitors all year.

Development of Tourism & Investment Incentives

Tourism has been the second largest contributor, after mining, to Laos's GDP. Laos expects tourism to be the top contributor to its economic growth, and is focusing on promoting eco-tourism to international markets. The country recorded 1.7 million tourist arrivals in 2008, which generated US\$245 million, an increase of about 20 percent from 2007. The government expects tourist arrivals to reach two million in 2009, hoping the SEA Games will drive up tourist numbers and give Laos a boost amid the economic recession.

The government has made tourism development, with the focus on ecotourism, one of 11 priority sectors to help improve standards of living - a way of generating income for local people, raising

awareness about environmental conservation, encouraging local production and protecting Laos' multiethnic culture and traditions.

Tax & Duty Incentives

The DDFI automatically awards all approved foreign investors an incentive tax rate of 20 percent, compared to the general tax rate of 35 percent. Unlike most other countries, this 20 percent rate applies to foreign investment in all sectors of the economy and does not depend on company or performance. Foreign investors must pay a 10 percent dividend withholding tax. Foreign investors and expatriate personnel pay a flat 10 percent personal income tax.

There is a minimum tax on all companies (unless tax holidays are granted) of 1.0 percent of turnover, i.e. foreign-owned companies pay either 20 percent tax on profits or 1.0 percent tax on turnover, whichever is greater. In special cases, primarily for hydroelectric projects or resource-based development projects, tax holidays can be negotiated.

As an incentive to all foreign investors, a duty of only 1.0 percent is charged for imports of capital equipment, spare parts, and other means of production. No duties or import turnover taxes are payable on any imported inputs for export production.

Foreign investors whose products substitute for imports can negotiate incentive duties and turnover taxes on imported inputs on a case by case basis.

At present, an administrative ruling of the Minister of Finance allows all imports subject to incentive duty rates to be free of turnover tax and excise tax. Producers whose output is sold on both the domestic and export markets pay no duty on the inputs for export production, and a negotiated rate on inputs for import substituting production. This simple system obviates the necessity of instituting cumbersome duty drawback systems or creating free trade or export processing zones.

In the future, however, the government may move to a system in which foreign investors face the same tax and tariff incentives as domestic investors do. Under this system, investment in "promoted industries" would receive tax and duty reduction incentives, but investment in other sectors would pay the normal corporate profit tax, turnover tax and duty rates.

Non-tax Incentives

The government provides the following incentives to all foreign investors:

a. Permission to bring in foreign nationals

to undertake investment feasibility studies.

b. Permission to bring in foreign technicians, experts, and managers if qualified Lao nationals are not available to work on investment projects.

c. Permission to lease land for up to 20 years from a Lao national and up to 50 years from the government.

d. Permission to own all improvements and structures on the leased land, transfer leases to other entities, and permission to sell or remove improvements or structures.

e. Facilitation of entry and exit visa facilities and work permits for expatriate personnel.

The government also offers guarantees against nationalization, expropriation, or requisition without compensation.

Under the FI Law, the government does not offer incentives of import protection (in the form of increasing duties or banning imports) for import substituting investments, and it does not provide measures to restrict further entry to reduce competition for current investors. The policy of not reducing market competition as an incentive for investors is not a feature of the foreign investment systems of most other countries in the region, such as Thailand and Vietnam. ■

The Cocoon in Vang Vieng Turning into Idyllic Tourist Destination

The newly-opened resort, 'The Cocoon' in Vang Vieng in Laos has the ambition of becoming a destination by itself.

The idea of The Cocoon is that of a sanctuary. The Nam Song river, the Pha Tang mountains and rice fields are all views from the traditional bungalows; so

the focus is on the environment as opposed to the party life Vang Vieng is famous for.

With 40 traditionally built bungalows overlooking the river or the rice fields, each with a private terrace, has spectacular views. The bungalows cater to



Bungalows

all types of travelers with the Papillon River rooms with all the hotel comforts at \$49 per night, Maingkabula Nature Rooms at \$42 a night and Aponi bungalows with shared bathrooms at \$25 a night, all with breakfast inclusive.

The Cocoon is owned by Swiss-Lao-Invest Ltd which belongs to two Swiss Nationals, who fell in love with the amazing scenery



Table on the ricefield



E-mail: thecocoonlaos@gmail.com

and wanted to share it with the others. The resort is five minutes walk away from the village centre but its parkland property is quiet and peaceful and blends into the nature as you watch the locals fish, wash or water their animals by the river.

The village of Vang Vieng itself is a strange phenomenon to be experienced and the surrounding Mhong villages and forests are definitely worth a visit for its wildlife and cultural aspects. The Cocoon exclusively organizes tours to these areas, along with night walk tours and rice plantation trips for experiences unlike anything else available. They have also selected the best activities for their guests: cave tubing, mountain climbing, kayaking, treks and caving.

In house activities are also numerous with the swimming pool, volleyball court and petanque field. Unique beer cocktails at the bar are also not to be missed.

The Cocoon plans to build a butterfly sanctuary as the native butterfly varieties are incredible so you see them up close and learn about the amazing maingkabula.

Because there is so much space and food sources cannot always be reliable here, they have decided to reopen the old pig sty in the corner of the property, breed chickens and start up the old fish farm to guarantee freshness and quality in the Khamsouk restaurant. A vegetable and herb garden is also growing and this whole project will be part of the Lao cooking classes where guests can pick their own food for the meals they will prepare- the class includes learning about rice processes, going to the farm and visiting the local market.

Last but not least, the monkey children kK and Lulu were orphaned at a young age, the village monks raised and gave to The Cocoon as a friendship gift. They are well loved and a little cheeky, love hugs and bananas.

The Cocoon is something you won't find anywhere else! ■

A Confluence of Cultures & Intriguing Diversity

Malays, Chinese, Indians and many other ethnic groups have lived together in Malaysia for generations. All these cultures have influenced each other, creating a truly Malaysian culture.

The largest ethnic groups in Malaysia are the Malays, Chinese and Indians. In Sabah and Sarawak, there are a myriad of indigenous ethnic groups with their own unique culture and heritage.

Malay

Today, the Malays, Malaysia's largest ethnic group, make up more than 50 percent of the population. In Malaysia, the term Malay refers to a person who practices Islam and Malay traditions, speaks the Malay language and whose ancestors are Malays.

Chinese

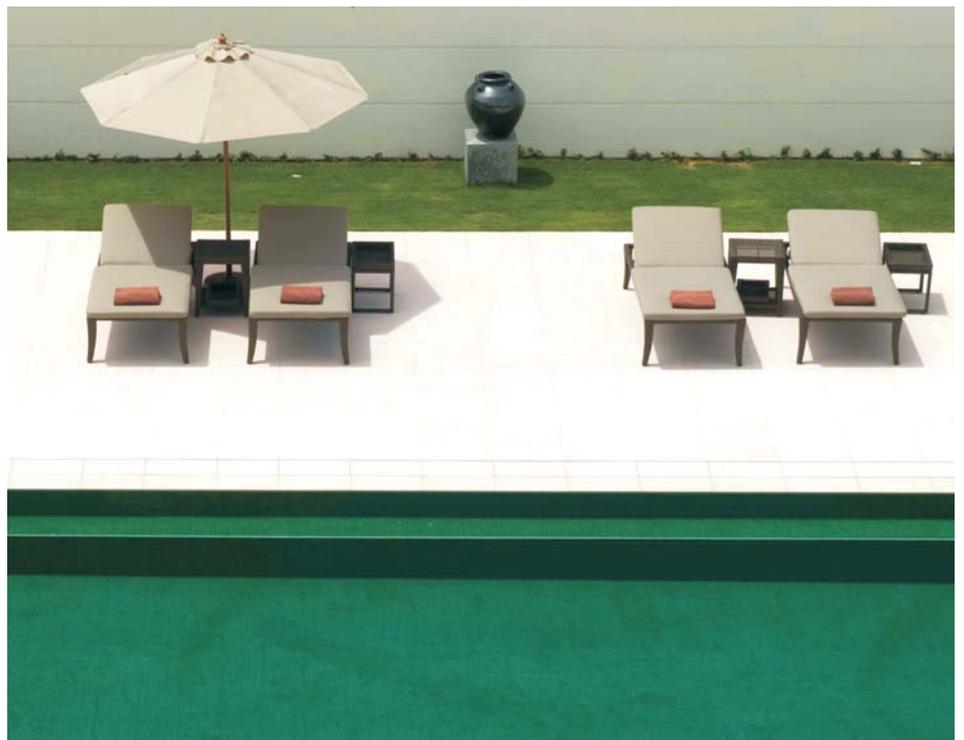
The second largest ethnic group, the Malaysian Chinese form about 25 percent of the population. Mostly descendants of Chinese immigrants during the 19th century, the Chinese are known for their diligence and keen business sense.

Indian

The smallest of three main ethnic groups, the Malaysian Indians form about 10 percent of the population. Most are descendants of Tamil-speaking South Indian immigrants who came to the country during the British colonial rule. In total 27.17 million people are living in Malaysia.



By **Patrick Kriesemer**
Chairman Malaysia and Brunei Committee,
Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce,
Zurich, Switzerland
E-mail: pkriesemer@kriesemer.com



The Club of the Saujana

Key facts about Malaysia

Situated between 2° and 7° to the North of the Equator line, Peninsular Malaysia is separated from Sabah and Sarawak by the South China Sea. In the northern part of Peninsular Malaysia lies Thailand, and in the south, neighbouring Singapore. Sabah and Sarawak are bounded by Indonesia while Sarawak also shares borders with Brunei. The surface of Malaysia is 329,758 sq km. Malaysia follows the bicameral legislative system, adopting a democratic parliamentary. The head of the country is the King or the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong, a position which is changed every five years among the Malay Sultanates.

Manufacturing constitutes the largest single component of Malaysia's economy. Tourism and primary commodities such as petroleum, palm oil, natural rubber and timber are major contributors to the economy. Malaysia is a fascinating holiday destination offering something for everyone to enjoy. There are three distinct destinations in the country- Peninsular Malaysia and the states of Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia. Visitors are often surprised to discover how developed the

country is, yet rich and varied in cultural tradition.

Tourism

Malaysia's long coastline and many coral-fringed islands, with the Straits of Malacca to the west and the South China Sea to the east, give rise to a large number of fabulous beaches. Islands like Langkawi, Tioman and Pangkor are world-renowned resort destinations. Penang is another island famous for its history, relaxing beaches and cultural mix. Further south, Melaka is known for its history, museums and the unique Baba- Nyonya community. The charming east coast of the peninsula with its laid back lifestyle, is the country's cultural heartland. The states of Sabah and Sarawak await nature lovers and adventurers. Discover the prolific marine life and dense rainforest while exploring the underwater world and wilderness of Borneo.

Malaysia has many exciting places of interest and during a holiday of just two weeks, visitors will get a mere glimpse. One thing's for certain; everyone wants to return to discover more of Malaysia.

Highlights of the Peninsula Malaysia

Kuala Lumpur

Kuala Lumpur is a city of contrasts. While Malaysians are justly proud of their new structures, older buildings also appeal. Its architectural heritage includes Moorish styled edifices, stately colonial buildings and old shophouses. Modern offices and condominiums tower overhead. Established in 1857 at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak Rivers, Kuala Lumpur (KL) is one of Asia's most dynamic cities. The city began as a mining settlement in the late 1800's with the discovery of tin. Its impressive skyline includes the world's tallest twin towers, the old Moorish styled railway station and numerous mosques, temples and churches.

Peninsular Malaysia offers the visitor a wealth of attractions and holiday options.

Head north from KL up the west coast to explore historic cities, sun-drenched beaches, cool mountain retreats and to experience the local lifestyle. The North-South Expressway makes travel around the peninsula easy and fast. Adventurous travellers can explore the far north and head through scenic mountainous terrain to the rustic east coast. Interesting sights here include quaint fishing villages, cultural pastimes and numerous islands off the coast. Penang founded in 1786 by Captain Francis Light of the British East India Company is a cultural melting pot and the oldest British Straits Settlement. Its historic heart of Georgetown was where ships refuelled and served as a centre for the spice trade as well as tea and cotton from China and India. The island's alluring beaches and old-world charm has made Penang a popular tourist destination. Locals swear Penang has Malaysia's best food and will delight in taking visitors to the multitude of open-air stalls along Gurney Drive. Nyonya food (a Chinese and Malay culinary blend) is also best sampled in Penang and Melaka. A visit to Perlis and Kedah will reveal a land of



The Club of the Saujana

serene natural beauty surrounded by the greenery of paddy during the planting season and golden hues at harvest time. From Ipoh northwards, rounded limestone hills rise above the paddy or rice fields. Caves are found within many of these hills, with several being open to visitors. Caves accessible to the adventurous include Gua Kerbau in Kedah, Gua Kelam and caves in the Perlis State Park. The Langkawi archipelago consists of 99 islands situated in the Andaman Sea, south of Thailand. Tourists flock here for the delightful beaches, superb resorts and refreshing nature-based activities. The best beaches include Pantai Cenang, Burau Bay, Pantai Kok and Pantai Datai. Pulau Payar Marine Park, 20 km south of Langkawi is a popular diving and snorkelling site. Boats from Langkawi take day trippers to the park where there is a viewing platform for relaxation between underwater adventures. Langkawi is a duty-free island, offering an attractive range of goods. Shops in the main town of Kuah and the Langkawi International Airport offer the island's best shopping. Ipoh and Taiping in the state of Perak were two cities that boomed after tin was discovered in the 19th century. Malaya was then the world's largest tin and rubber producer. Situated at the base of Bukit Larut or Maxwell Hill, the Taiping Lake Gardens is surrounded by old tin mines, a small golf course and a zoo, providing the town with a refreshing ambience. The colonial buildings, church and war cemetery in this charming town are reminiscent of the British era. Maxwell Hill is a perfect retreat for those who appreciate tranquility and accommodation in quaint rest houses.

Countless other places are fascinating destinations for tourists and travellers. Further information about the rich variety of Malaysia, its culture as well as destinations can be found on www.tourism.gov.my.

Swiss Investment in Tourism in Kuala Lumpur

Med Beauty Swiss combines medical ingredients with cosmetic components for effective skin care products with highly proven results. After having achieved such a success story in Switzerland and Europe, Med Beauty Swiss launches its first Med Beauty Center at the Saujana, a joint venture between the Kriesemer Group and Med Beauty. The Spa and Med Beauty at the Club of Saujana, scheduled to open on November 1st 2009, is like no other spa in Kuala Lumpur. Evolving beyond spa and beauty, The Spa and Med Beauty at the Club of Saujana is dedicated to the restoration of strength, beauty and balance of mind, body and soul. This Hotel is the first member of the Leading Hotels of the World (LHW) in Kuala Lumpur and the second (beside the Datai) in Malaysia - both managed by prestigious and famous hotel developer and operator GHM Hotels (www.ghmhotels.com) Singapore. ■

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The Story of Building Schools in Cyclone-Hit Remote Area

On 2 May 2008, disaster struck as Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar with full force winds of up to 160 mph and heavy rainfall, causing total devastation in the Irrawaddy Delta, Myanmar's rice basket. Around 2.4 million people lost everything; their homes, rice fields and farm animals. Around 78,000 people died and 58,000 people are still missing today.

The compassion with which the people from Myanmar's unaffected or lesser affected regions organized help was remarkable. Everyone who had any means of transport gathered whatever aid was available and drove into the delta to distribute their goods to the victims. Burmese NGOs were the first organizations on the scene, providing food, shelter and medical help. Whereas the international media concentrated on writing articles on the UN and international aid organizations not being allowed into the country in the first days and weeks after the cyclone, Burmese NGOs and the common people did a tremendous job in helping in whichever way they could.

Today, one and a half years later, the Myanmar government has acted with the UN, international NGOs and Burmese NGOs to restore key infrastructure in the main areas of the delta, and have played a pivotal role in enabling the population to return to making a living from agrarian and arable farming. The situation is quite different in remote areas of the delta, where people continue to struggle to make ends meet and a key ingredient of 'normal' life is still missing: schools.

It is with my personal philosophy of helping people where no other help is available that I have embarked on a journey to help finance schools in remote

areas of the Irrawaddy Delta. I am a firm believer in education as a major means of eradicating poverty. Education opens the door to a world of understanding and new possibilities in the poorest areas of our planet. To teach children to read and write and do mathematical calculations is a wonderful thing. In the developed world we take this for granted. In many parts of our world, however, this is not the case.

A school brings meaning to a community. It brings a sense of belonging together. It is a place where problems and solutions are discussed. It is a place where old meets young. It is the place where the foundations of a child's future are laid. My aim is to play a role, however small, in giving Myanmar's children the chance of a better life. In practical terms, this will contribute to an overall increase in prosperity for the inhabitants of the Irrawaddy Delta. For example, a farmer with several children will be able to have at least some move on to higher education, rather than being tied to their farm their whole life. This in turn will increase the



By **Laurent Kuenzle**
Group Managing Director of
Asian Trails Bangkok, Thailand
Email: kuenzle@asiantrails.org



Laurent Kuenzle opening the school facilities

family's prosperity, as the educated child will be better able to support the entire family. The project aims to give a primary school place to every child, with the chance of higher education for some. Higher education means middle school, the stepping stone to high school and eventually university. I realize that I can't help everybody, but I want to help where nobody else does and by doing this in a direct, non-commercial way.

The Network Activities Group (NAG) is a Yangon-based NGO doing research and development projects in Myanmar's delta area, dry zone and hilly regions. They maintain close links with the local business community and create contacts between public needs and private resources. When NAG approached me for funding for the Apaung Primary School project, I put the wheels in motion, and was able to give the green light to construction within a short period of time. As a result of private donations, Apaung Primary School was opened in May 2009, and today provides education for approximately 300 children.

Apaung Primary School is a typical project which without private financing would have taken years to complete, if at all. The village's 300 children would be condemned to lifelong illiteracy. Apaung is an extremely remote village, where the nearest town is more than one hour by boat, the village has no road access, and there is no electricity or running water. Schooling is at the bottom of anyone's task list for such a remote village.

NAG shares my vision on how such projects lead to success. First of all, one must listen to the needs of the villagers. Don't build something they don't need. Don't give them something they don't need. It sounds silly, but I have seen so many projects completed which are of no use to anyone. Once a project gets the go-ahead it needs strong leadership and management. The construction must be done by a local company in order to sustain the local economy. The village must help in the construction of the school as they must take ownership of it. It must become 'their' school.

Apaung Primary School was built by Pyae Phyo Kyaw Co, a local construction company in the Irrawaddy Delta at a cost of USD 35,000. The site consists of a six-classroom building, separate toilets, sports ground and a fresh water tank. In addition to this we invested another USD 7,000 in building materials to produce classroom furniture, writing boards and a starter pack with school material, school bags and uniforms for all children.

All management activities and finances were organized by volunteers. The construction company was paid at market value to sustain the local economy. The school was built on public land with no fees attached.

The school is administered by the Myanmar government, which is responsible for running the school and for providing the soft infrastructure of the school principal and teachers.



Schoolkids at their first school day in the new school

Laurent Kuenzle

Laurent Kuenzle has lived in Asia for 20 years and is based in Bangkok, Thailand. He is the Group Managing Director of Asian Trails, a destination management company in Asia and a subsidiary of Kuoni Travel. He is probably best known in South-East Asia for pioneering travel to the remotest corners of Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos. Being at the forefront of socially responsible tourism activities, he personally supports many social projects throughout South-East Asia, with a focus on rural education and on education for the underprivileged.

I am, at this present moment, embarking on the next school project. The objective is to raise the funds to build a middle school in Kyon Kan village. Kyon Kan is very remote, located about three hours by boat from the nearest town. Whereas the primary school is under re-construction, no funds were available for the middle school. The completion of the project follows the same strategy as for the Apaung Primary School. The budget is USD 40,000 for the school building and USD 10,000 for classroom furniture and starter packs.

There is no doubt in my mind: money flowing directly into such projects brings immediate help to poor rural communities. Money is not thrown away on bureaucracy. It is a step in the right direction in eradicating poverty. It gives the chance of a better life to the poorest communities. It is sustainable over the long term.

Critics will tell me that this is a rain drop on a hot stone. I disagree. As a single individual I can't help everyone, but the donors and I will certainly make a difference in the lives of the villagers who as a result send their children to school. And yes, there is a bigger plan we intend to build new middle schools in more remote areas of Myanmar. ■

An Investor-Friendly Land of Culture & Adventure

Pakistan is a paradise of sun, sea, mountains, and lakes that offers the holidaymaker a complete change from the routine anxieties of everyday life. From April to October, most parts of Pakistan have an ideal climate, providing perfect conditions in which a visitor can relax on the sandy beaches or enjoy the peace of the mountains and lakes.

Pakistan has a magnificent past, and is thus a land full of historic treasures covering several successive civilizations. Glimpses of this past are obvious even to a person who spends only a little time in Pakistan.

There is no doubt that one visit is not enough; the visitor is compelled to return again and again, to keep discovering one extraordinary place after the other. All destinations in Pakistan, no matter how different, have one thing in common - the friendly and hospitable people of this unique country.

Introduction

Pakistan emerged on the world map as an independent sovereign state on 14 August 1947, and stretches over an area of 796,095 sq km, with an estimated population of 160 million. It lies between 23-35 to 37-05 north latitude, and 60-50 to 77-50 east longitude. It is a federation of four provinces, Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab, and NWFP, and also includes the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Northern Areas. The main tourist attractions of Pakistan are its scenic beauty, its flora and fauna, its art and culture, adventure and sports and above all, the hospitality of its people. The country is home to the Mohenjodaro cradle of the ancient Indus Valley, and the Gandhara Civilization. It is the land where three mighty mountain ranges, the Himalyas, the Hindukush and Karakoram, meet. It is situated at the crossroads of East



By **Peter Zuellig**
Co-Chairman Pakistan Committee,
Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce,
Zurich, Switzerland
e-mail: sacc@sacc.ch

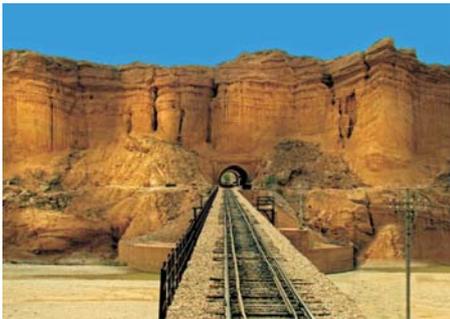


Indus Valley

and West and presents a fascinating combination of traditional and modern ways of life. Pakistan has a fairly developed tourist infrastructure.

Balochistan - Potential Travel Destination

The largest Pakistani province, Balochistan, covers some 347,190 sq km, and has an estimated population of 7.797 million. It is a land of contrasts, lofty and rugged mountains alternating with plains stretching to hundred of kilometers. It has a fascinating history, preserved in the memory of its people. The Balochistan coastline extends over 750 km, from the Hub River at Karachi, to the Gawadar Bay on the Pakistani-Iranian border. The area is rich in fish and marine resources. Balochistan has great appeal as a potential travel destination, particularly now that access to neighbouring Iran has become so



Sibi

much easier. Balochistan is known for its apple produce, and the Gawadar Port will be in the not too distant future a great seaport and the hub of economic activity in the region. Balochistan has an eventful history, dating back to the Stone Age. Recent research and archaeological excavations at Mehrgarh have revealed the remains of a 9,000 year old civilization. Alexander the great passed through Balochistan in 325 B.C.

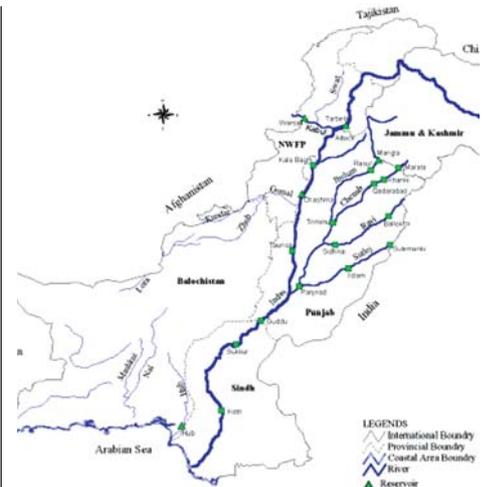
Sindh - Cradle of Indus Valley Civilization

The province of Sindh is named after the river Sindh (Indus), which literally created it, and has been its sole means of

sustenance. However, the importance of the river, along with a close phonetic resemblance, would make Sindh the likeliest origin of the name 'Sindh'. Later phonetic changes transformed Sindh into Hindu in Pahlavi and into Hoddu in Hebrew. The Greeks (who conquered Sindh in 325 B.C. under the command of the Alexander the Great) rendered it into Indos, hence modern Indus. It covers an area of 140,914 sq km, with an estimated population of 36.714 million. Sindh has a rich cultural background, encompassing literature, music and the arts. Sindhi artists excel in pottery, glazed tiles, lacquerware, quilt making and carpet weaving. The local art of ajrak and sussi, a strapped cotton cloth for women, is very popular. Sindh has a rich cultural heritage in the lands of Moenjodaro and Thatta, which embrace a 5,000 year old civilization; the Indus valley civilization is indeed the oldest civilization yet uncovered by archaeology. The prehistoric site of Kot Diji in Sindh has proved highly significant, allowing academics to reconstruct a history for Pakistan stretching back to about 2,500 BC. Evidence of a new element of pre-Harappan culture has been found here.

Punjab - Land of the Five Rivers

The name Punjab literally translates from Persian into the words Panj, meaning "five", and Âb, cognate with Sanskrit Âp, meaning "water" "(the) five waters" - hence the name 'land of the five rivers', which refers to the Biyas, Ravi, Sutlej, Chenab and Jhelum rivers. Punjab is the most fertile and heavily populated province of Pakistan, covering an area of 205,344 sq km with an estimated population of 88.115 million. Punjab truly is the land of contradictions, enduringly antiquated and progressively modern. Although Punjab has well-planned cities and beautifully conceptualized residential colonies, most of its people are rural folk, for whom life revolves around the cycle of seasons, a rich variety of traditions, fairs and colourful folk festivals all the year round.



The houses in the rural expanses are for the most part built of mud and clay and strengthened with straw. They are the proud custodians of the centuries-old Harappa civilization, the grandeur of the Mughal Empire that even time could not work away. Explore Punjab by spending some time in a village, and feel the warmth and strength of its people and their craftsmanship, reflected in their pottery and craft.

NWFP - Land of Mountains & Deserts

North West Frontier Province is located on both banks of the river Indus, and stretches from the Himalayas in the north to the deserts in the south, where it is bordered by the Baluchistan and Punjab provinces. On its western flank is the rugged terrain of neighboring Afghanistan, which is accessed via the historic Khyber Pass through the mountains of the Suleiman Range. Its borders touch or are close to those of China, Tajikistan and the disputed



Historic Khyber Pass

territory of Jammu and Kashmir in the north. The province's capital is the city of Peshawar. The NWFP is Pakistan's most diverse province, covering an area of over 101,741 sq km (including the Federally Administrated Tribal Area's 27,220 sq km) with an estimated population of 25.134 million (including the Federally Administrated Tribal Area's population of 3.717 million). At the heart is Peshawar Valley, often referred to as the vale of Peshawar. Its rich alluvial soils, watered by the Kabul and Swat rivers, make it one of the most productive agricultural regions in the country. The mountains to the north, particularly the Hindukush, are amongst the most spectacular in Pakistan, offering some of the best opportunities for trekking and climbing in the world. The northern half of the province consists of five river valleys running roughly parallel north to south, namely, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Indus and Kaghan. These valleys are on the northern edge of the monsoon belt, which is why they are fairly green and partly wooded to the south. The North Western Province is famed for its metalware, but proudly distinguished by the gateway to warriors known as the Khyber Pass.

The Northern Areas - Where Three Ranges of Mountains Meet

The Northern Areas is perhaps the most spectacular region of Pakistan in terms of its geography and scenic beauty. The three mightiest mountain ranges on the planet the Karakorams, the Hindukush and the Himalayas meet here. The whole of the Northern Areas is a paradise for mountaineers, climbers, trekkers, hikers and anglers. The region has a rich cultural heritage and variety of rare fauna and flora. Historically, the area has remained a flashpoint for political and military rivalries amongst the Russian, British and Chinese empires. Immediately after the end of British rule in the sub-continent in 1947 the people of this region declared themselves part of Pakistan after a popular local revolt against the government of Maharaja of Kashmir.

Five out of the fourteen mountain peaks have a height of over 8,000 meters, including the K-2, the world's second highest peak. Some of the largest glaciers

outside polar region are also located in the Northern Areas. Acknowledging the vast potential for tourism and its effects on downstream industries, the Government of Pakistan as well as the Northern Areas Administration are focusing on tourism for the creation of employment opportunities, achieving higher economic growth and to introduce the outside world to the "hidden treasures" of the Northern Areas. Beautiful landscapes and unique and rich biological diversity gives the Northern Areas a competitive advantage in attracting tourists from all over the world

INVESTMENT POLICY FOR TOURISM

Factors	Policy Incentives
Foreign Equity Investment Repatriation	100% Allowed No Minimum Limit Allowed (capital, profit and dividends)
Customs Duty	5% of PME (Not manufactured locally)
Initial Depreciation Allowance (IDA)	50% of PME in addition to normal depreciation allowable @ 10%



Hunza, Northern Area Pakistan

Incentives for Investment in Tourism Sector:

The Government has taken a number of initiatives in order to attract investment to the tourist sector. The following incentives and concessions are available for foreign investment in the tourist trade and industry:-

Tourist Industry:

- i) Tourism is categorized as an 'Industry' according to the current Investment Policy. The Ministry of Tourism can issue a certificate to designate a project in the category of Hotel Industry.
- ii) Permission is not required for setting up a tourist project in the private sector.

- iii) Telephone, Telex and Fax facilities are provided to travel trade on a priority basis.
- iv) Plant, Machinery & Equipment (PME) not manufactured locally can be imported @ 5% custom duty.
- v) Initial depreciation is available @ 50% in addition to normal depreciation allowable @ 10% on all depreciable assets. This incentive practically operates as universal tax holiday as income may not generally be liable to tax for a period of five to six years because of the carrying forward of unadjusted depreciation loss.
- vi) Payment of withholding tax at the import stage in respect of plant machinery, equipment and parts has already been done away with through the inclusion of sub-clause (vii) in clause-56 of part (iv) of the second schedule to the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001.
- vii) Special equipment for adventure tourism activities like water sports, hand-gliding, trekking, mountaineering, angling, golf, indoor sports equipment, power boats, water rafts, canoes, water and snow skiing equipment provided by the travel trade as a service to the tourists is allowed to be imported on 5% customs duty.
- viii) The central air-conditioning equipment and apparatus of general utility in hotels are charged industrial tariff for electricity.

Foreign Exchange

- ix) Permission of the State Bank of Pakistan is not required for repatriation of profits from tourism projects.
- x) Foreigners/local and Overseas Pakistanis can open foreign exchange accounts.
- xi) Full repatriation of capital, capital gains, dividends and profits is allowed. However, the share of non-residents is required to be registered with

State Bank of Pakistan.

- xii) Foreign investment is welcome. However, it is the prime responsibility of all parties concerned to ensure that foreign exchange has been raised through legitimate transactions and not through money laundering etc.

Chartered Flights:

- xiii) Permission for chartered flights is given by Ministry of Tourism in consultation with Ministry of Interior. Chartered flights are allowed on point-to-point basis from Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Peshawar.
- xiv) Helicopter chartered flight service is allowed anywhere in Pakistan.

Work Visas.

- xv) Work visas are granted to foreign technical and managerial personnel for the purpose of transferring skills and know-how. Work visas can be issued for a period up to 5 years. The Ministry of Tourism's representative is a member of the team that issues work visas.

Visa Policy

- xvi) Pakistan's Visa Policy reflects Government's policy of liberalization and openness, with a view to making it tourist friendly country (TFC). It envisages Pakistan as a country where visitors are welcomed. Policy goes beyond the principle of reciprocity. It puts Pakistan far ahead of many countries in promoting tourism and investment.
- xvii) Tourist-friendly countries have been increased from 2 to 24 for grant of Visa On Arrival (VOA) for one month validity, and multiple entries for Group Travel through designated Tour Operators.
- xviii) Pakistan missions abroad have been authorized to grant tourist/visit visa for three months validity and stay with double entry.

- xix) Group tourists from India will be allowed 30 days visa instead of 14 days through designated Tour Operators.

Strengths & Opportunities

Pakistan is as diverse in its topography as it is in its demography, culture and traditions, offering opportunities for investment in the tourist sector with a capacity for providing solid infrastructure for the self-sustainable development of the local people. Pakistan has undergone a significant economic and political transformation. Sound macroeconomic management, backed by market oriented policies and a favorable incentive regime, together with political stability and an effective regulatory framework, have enabled Pakistan to emerge as a viable, investment-friendly destination. From the economic point of view, the facts mentioned below show the Pakistan's strengths as a target for investment in tourism.

Pakistan's GDP growth, exceeding 7.0 percent, is second only to Indonesia and Turkey. The three pillars of Pakistan's economy deregulation, liberalization and privatization have yielded encouraging results. These major economic reforms have made Pakistan a role model in the World Economic Forum's discussions, while the IFC and the World Bank have declared Pakistan the top reformer in the South Asian Region, and 10th in the World.

During FY 2000, the public debt was 96%, but this declined to 54 % in FY 2006. Export growth has accelerated to US\$ 17.011 billion in FY 2006-07 from US\$ 8.5 billion in FY 2000. The Equity market has had a successful time of it recently, with market capitalization to the tune of US\$ 47.5 billion as of December 20, 2006.

Pakistan provides exciting investment opportunities with a level playing field for both local and foreign investors. An effective regulatory framework with liberal policies has made Pakistan an attractive destination for investment, and has also

given a boost to investors' confidence.

One of Pakistan's strengths is its liberal investment policy, which includes 100 percent foreign equity in all economic sectors, with attractive incentives like remittances of capital, profits, royalty, technical and franchise fees without obtaining permission from the Government. Foreign investment is fully protected under the Foreign Private Investment (Promotion & Protection) Act 1976 and the Protection of Economic Reforms Act 1992.

The Government of Pakistan has launched an aggressive public investment program of \$7.3 billion (allowing it to grow by 32.2 percent in real terms) which constituted 28 percent of total expenditures. While macroeconomic imbalances enhanced demand pressures, they have stimulated economic growth to 7.4 percent on average over FY05-07.

Macroeconomic stability, one of Pakistan's main strengths, is being managed by a combination of policies and the availability of foreign inflows supported by enhanced investor confidence and the presence of global liquidity. With strong foreign inflows coupled with effective reserve management, Pakistan has over the last seven years built up its Foreign Exchange reserves, which are now close to US \$15 billion.

Pakistan has amplified and deepened its structural reforms over the last seven years. Keeping aside ideological or philosophical considerations and the Government's fiscal compulsions, industrial, trade and price liberalization has infused a high degree of competition, which augurs well for the efficient allocation and use of resources. Private ownership is allowed in sectors such as tourism, oil, gas, telecommunication and other service sectors on a competitive basis, which is supported by sound sector policies.

Economic activity in Pakistan has and will be further boosted by efficiency gains once the full impact of foreign investment is realized after the completion of projects

financed by FDI. During FY04-06, Pakistan has cumulatively attracted foreign investment flows of \$8 billion, 26.5 percent of which was the proceeds of the sale of public assets, and 49.2 percent from FDI, with the remainder coming from foreign portfolio investment. These foreign inflows have come primarily into banking, telecoms, tourism and the oil and gas sectors. The prospects are that Pakistan will attract about US\$6.0 billion in FY07 an all time high annual flow. Going forward, foreign investment is expected to be more diversified and will support infrastructure development, manufacturing, tourism and the hotel industry etc. The strong interest in Pakistan from investors stems from (i) growing investor confidence in the economy, (ii) reassurance to foreign investors that they will be treated on a par with domestic investors (and in some respects even better), (iii) high returns on investments, as evident from exceptional corporate and banking profitability, and (iv) supportive and stable policies. Besides full foreign ownership, investors can repatriate their capital, dividends and profits and there is no restriction on the level of royalty payments. Foreign investors are eligible for low import duties between five and 10 percent on plant and equipment and a first year tax allowance on profits of between 50 and 90 percent of the cost of plant and equipment.

In conclusion, with its vast untapped resources, Pakistan offers endless possibilities. The country is set to grow at a rate of 7.0 percent per annum, which should help to further raise its per capita income from US\$ 925 per annum to US\$ 1557 by 2015. Demand is expected to become stronger as incomes rise further, assuming current population growth trends persist. Pakistan's strategic geopolitical position, due to its proximity to India and China as well as to the oil rich Middle East and Central Asia's vast, untouched natural resources, carries potential opportunities which to date have not been properly exploited. The private sector stands to profit from the large infrastructure projects, which offer high

returns in the long term and would help enhance access and efficiency in the movement of goods inside Pakistan and abroad. If done correctly, Pakistan can easily integrate itself into the export value added chain of the region, as there is adequate room for further growth; investment in these sectors is thus highly feasible. Tourism has been declared an industry and holds great promise for prospective investors interested in exploring the true potential of a land as rich and diverse in its culture as it is in its geographical distribution. In Pakistan tourism has a huge growth potential with high returns and revenue for investors in projects like marine complexes, beach resorts, mountain resorts, theme parks, cultural tourism, entertainment centers and hotel construction (three star & above). The energy demand over the next five years is expected to grow at a rate of 7.4 percent per annum, and over the next 25 years it is expected to be seven times the present demand. Thus the country's industrial sectors, particularly those discussed above, remain attractive for foreign investors due to strong consumer



Minar-e-Pakistan, Lahore

spending patterns and rising industrial activity depicted by past trends and strong future demand.

Reasons to Invest in Pakistan - Capital Markets

The capital markets in Pakistan are being developed along modern lines with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank. These reforms have resulted in the development of infrastructure in the stock exchanges of the country. The establishment of the Securities and Exchange Commission has improved the regulatory environment for stock exchanges, the corporate bond market and the leasing sector.

Liberal Investment Policy

Pakistan provides exciting investment opportunities on a level playing field for both local and foreign investors. Effective regulatory frameworks with liberal policies have made Pakistan an attractive destination for investment.

Liberal Foreign Exchange

Pakistan has a liberal foreign exchange regime with few restrictions on holding foreign exchange and bringing it in or out of the country. There are no limits on the inflow or outflow of funds for remittances of profits, debt service, capital, capital gains, returns on intellectual property, or payments for imported inputs.

Investment Friendly Environment

Pakistan's strategic location makes it a regional hub, including the principal gateway to the Central Asian Republics, and strong and long-standing links with the Middle East and South Asian countries. Pakistan offers comprehensive duty-free facilities for investors.

Foreign Private Loans

The facility for contracting foreign private

loans is available to all those foreign investors who invest in the approved sectors.

Domestic Market

Large and growing domestic market includes 160 million consumers with growing incomes and a growing middleclass moving to sophisticated consumption habits.

Human Resources

Pakistan is a country of 160 million people. The people of Pakistan are its biggest asset. Strong human resources including an English-speaking workforce of over fifty million people, cost-effective managers and technical workers are available to all those foreign investors who invest in the approved sectors.

Infrastructural Development

Well-established infrastructure and legal systems in Pakistan are a deep-rooted enticement for investors. It includes comprehensive road, rail and sea links, good quality telecommunications and IT services, modern company laws and a long-standing corporate culture.

Transparency

There is a greater degree of transparency in procurement practices in Pakistan. International tenders are properly advertised and there is no sole sourcing, as contract specifications are not made according to any company's requirements, as was done in the past. Sanctity of



North West Frontier Province

contracts, however, remains a major concern for companies.

Import of Plant and Machinery

Plant, Machinery & Equipment (PME) for tourism projects not manufactured locally can be imported @ 5.0 percent custom duty.

Industrial Projects

Foreign investors are to participate in industrial projects, on the basis of 100 percent foreign equity, without any permission from the Government.

Tourism

Tourism has been declared an industry and thus it holds great promise for prospective investors interested in exploring the true potential of a land as rich and diverse in its culture as it is in its geographical distribution. From snowcapped mountains in the north, with vast fertile plains of the Punjab, rugged land of the south, deserts and a long seacoast, Pakistan, though underdeveloped, already has all the hallmarks of a major tourist attraction.

Full Repatriation

Full repatriation of capital gains, dividends and profits are allowed in Pakistan.

Remittances

Remittance of royalty, technology and franchise fees are allowed in projects concerned with social, services, infrastructure, tourism, agriculture and international chains food franchise.

Investment Opportunities in Tourism Sector

Hotels, resorts, theme parks, skiing, cultural tourism, trekking, adventure sports, entertainment & recreation and beach tourism. ■

Flourishing Tourism Offers Best Investment Bet



By **Maria Theresa P. Lazaro**
Ambassador of Philippines,
Bern, Switzerland

E-mail: info@philembassyberne.ch

A Southeast Asian archipelago of more than 7,100 islands, the Philippines is a cultural blend of the East and West. The country's greatest asset is its people and their unique culture. There are more than 100 ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines, each with its own cultural and linguistic traditions drawn from common origins, but distinctively shaped by their own physical environment and historical experiences. This diversity has produced a rich cultural landscape, essentially Asian-Pacific in character, but enriched by Hispanic-Latin and Euro-American influences.

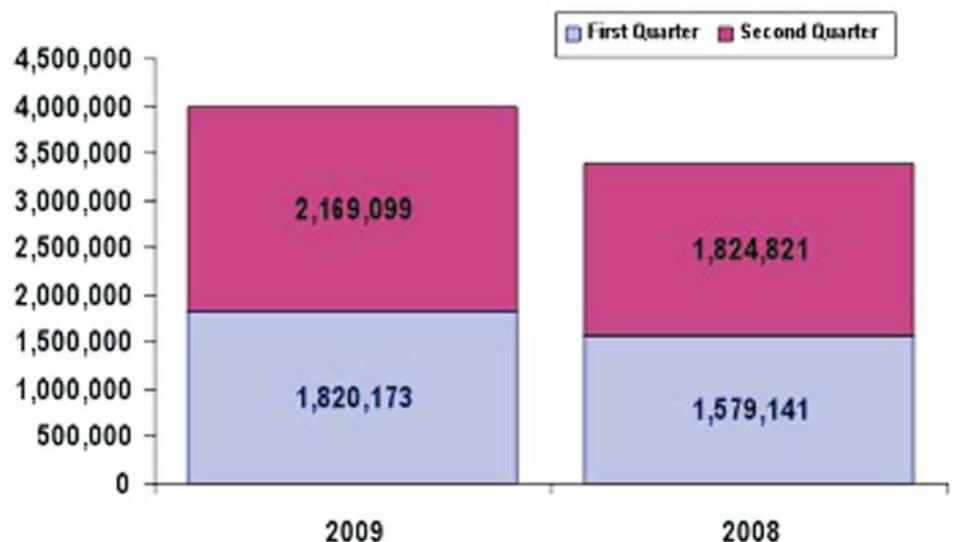
The Philippines, from its northernmost tip to its farthest southern island, is a beautiful country endowed with pristine beaches, bountiful lakes and serene lagoons, magnificent mountains and turbulent volcanoes, pastoral countryside and highly developed cities and urban centers.

With so much to offer, the Philippines is a frequent destination for travelers eager to discover its rich history and culture and its tropical landscape, and to experience the

renowned warmth and hospitality of its people.

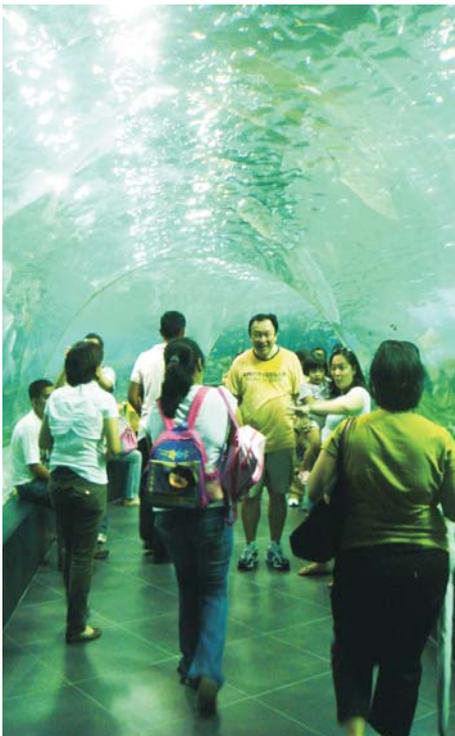
In 2008, the Philippines demonstrated the tourist industry's resilience in the face of internal and external pressures, as it attracted 3.14 million international visitors, an increase of 1.5 percent when compared to the 3.09 million arrivals in 2007, and an increase of 36 percent compared to 2004. This record-breaking ascent continued to gain momentum in 2009, which generated 0.8 million foreign arrivals in the first semester, a 6.4 percent increase over the previous year. The substantial increase in domestic tourism up by 20 percent in the first semester of 2009 has increased confidence from investors, and benefited the changing lifestyle and travel patterns of more Filipinos and Philippine residents, who now spend their Holy Week, long weekends and summer vacations in the various tourist areas which have developed.

As far as the Swiss market is concerned, tourist growth in the Philippines has



Grafik Tourist volume 1 semester 2009 compared to 2008

proved continuously lucrative year-on-year. In 2008 growth totaled 6.0 percent, and the Swiss market is the 5th biggest market in Europe for the Philippines. Despite the current global economic downturn, the number of tourists from Switzerland destined for the Philippines continues to increase. The public have become more aware of the Philippines as a holiday destination through articles published in Swiss trade journals and consumer media. Marketing activities and promotional campaigns focused on high-profile travel fairs for consumers, such as FESPO, and participation in MUBA 2009 the country's biggest products consumer fair, which featured the Philippines as guest country. Participation in important trade workshops, such as the Summer and Winter Destination Roadshows and the Asia Pacific Workshop also served to promote the Philippines as a holiday destination. The organization of a Mega Fam trip, which brought 101 travel specialists to the Philippines, and the launch of a new training tool for travel agents were useful marketing devices; we also pursued activities with Swiss Tour Operators and travel agencies. Using methods like this, Swiss travel agents and



Manila Ocean Park

tour operators have notably improved their knowledge of the country and people in recent months. At the same time, the significance of the Philippines as a holiday destination has increased as travel agents and tour operators have disseminated better information about the destination.

Growing Tourism Investment

Philippine Secretary of Tourism Ace Durano has said that more than 20 hotels and resorts are opening in the Philippines in 2009, with a total of 2,089 rooms valued at around CHF 1.1 billion. That amount is just the value of the properties, but the total value of the investment in tourism that has poured in over 2005-2007 is around CHF 11.7 billion. Among the largest investors in tourism over the past few years were the Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila, the Hilton Cebu Resort and Towers, Shangri-La Boracay, Eastbay Resorts Inc., Manila Ocean Park, Banyan Tree and Manila Airport Marriott.

Many tourist development projects in the world are currently on hold, but not in the Philippines, where investors have seen good performance over the past five years, and have realized the potential for growth. Thanks to their continuing presence, they believe that they are uniquely placed to succeed when the markets recover. Despite adverse developments in other sectors, tourism in the Philippines is still expanding in terms of investment and employment.

The Philippines sees tourism as one of the strongest drivers of the economy, and is seeking to intensify the impact of this industry on the economy by encouraging investment. The country offers lower costs in workforce, construction and tourist infrastructure development. Areas of investment in tourism include tourist accommodation facilities, resorts that include special interest activities, homestay, a retirement village, medical tourism, healthcare and wellness products and services.

The Philippines has also undertaken



Hilton Cebu Resort

diversification programs to offer new tourist products like adventure holidays, diving and bird-watching to increase awareness of the potential for the country's tourist sector.

The Philippine Government offers fiscal incentives to promote tourist ventures. In addition, the Philippine Department of Tourism signed an Agreement with the Philippine Economic Zone and Authority (PEZA) on the granting of Special Economic Zone status to tourist development zones or tourist estates.

The Agreement lists the tourist-related investments that can be registered and located within a Tourist Economic Zone as follows: hotel (deluxe/ first class), condominium hotel and serviced residence/apartment, resort, theme park, museum/art gallery, health and wellness facility (spa), sports and recreational center, international convention/trade center, airport, seaport and marina.

A growing international and domestic demand for Philippine tourist destinations augurs well for increased investment in the industry. The continued increase of capacity is keeping Philippine tourism prepared for the next period of growth, when major markets recover. ■

The Islands of Pristine Beaches & Beauty

As the Philippines has a huge range of sights for all kinds of tourists, we would like to present you with a selection of some of the best and most unique spots, which together make up all that a traveler could ask for.

Palawan - A World Nature Sanctuary



The island province of Palawan has been declared a world nature sanctuary, and for good reason. It is wrapped in a mantle of rainforests, outstanding diving sites, majestic mountains, primeval caves, and pristine beaches. It is surrounded by a coral shelf that abounds with varied and colorful marine life. It boasts exotic flora and fauna, like the mousedeer and the scaly anteater, that are found nowhere else.

A diver's paradise, it has miles of sub-surface coral and rainbow reef walls which surround the coasts and coves teeming with rich marine life.

The El Nido Marine Reserve in Miniloc

El Nido is a popular nature spot in the forest and covers an area of 96,000 hectares. It features a range of diverse ecosystems, such as rainforests, mangroves, white sand beaches, coral reefs, and limestone reefs, as well as a



variety of fishes, such as the manta ray and the sea cow or "dugong," the world's rarest marine mammal. It is now one of the country's premier destinations, blessed with amazing natural scenery, and is considered a sanctuary for various forms of wildlife.

Palawan is approximately 586 kilometers southwest of Manila, between Mindoro Island to the north, Borneo on the south, the China Sea on the west, and Sulu Sea on the east. Its total land area of 1,489,655 hectares spreads across the peripheral islands of Busuanga, Culion, Linacapan, Cuyo, Dumarán, Cagayanes, and Balabac.

Why Go There

To explore the wildlife and unique natural features, diving, to explore the rich and exciting history of the Philippines and its archaeological sites.

Climate

The province has two types of climate. The first, which occurs in the northern and southern extremities and the entire western coast, has two distinct seasons six months dry and six months wet. The other, which prevails in the eastern coast, has a short dry season of one to three months and no pronounced rainy period during the rest of the year.

How to get there

The easiest way to get from Manila to Puerto Princesa, the capital of Palawan, is by plane. Flights last one hour and ten minutes and there are several local airlines which offer regular flights to Palawan.

Where to stay

Palawan offers a wide range of accommodation opportunities. Please visit www.wowphilippines.com.ph for further information.

Boracay The Finest Beach in the World



The palm-studded island of Boracay with its white, talcum-fine beach, balmy weather, and warm, crystalline waters is a magnet for tourists. In this tiny, butterfly-shaped island at the northwestern tip of Panay in Western Visayas, days can be spent simply lazing on the beach, while nights are for indulging in the tropical party lifestyle. The best part of the island is the four-kilometer White Beach, which has been hailed as the "finest beach in the world." The code in Boracay is strictly informal. Even swinging discos have the beach for a floor, giving a new twist to dancing. Sailboating and kayaking are popular sporting activities, with Boracay playing host to the annual Paraw Regatta,

an international sailboat race that makes use of the native outrigger. Diving sites surround the island and are training venues for both novice and professional divers, guided by competent instructors from the many diving shops that operate in the area. Trekking and mountain biking bring the intrepid from the island's quaint interior villages to the edges' scenic rocky cliffs, who discover many hidden coves along the way, with isolated beaches far from the tourist crowd. And for golf enthusiasts, the Fairways and Bluewater Resort Golf and Country Club has an 18-hole championship course. During the day, tourists enjoying a soothing massage under the shade of a coconut tree beside the shoreline are a common sight. And from dusk to dawn, Boracay turns into one big party, where everyone is welcome to join in. Boracay Island belongs to the Western Visayas island-group along with the western part of the province of Negros, the island of Panay, and many smaller islands.

Why go there

Leisure, family-friendly environment, beach holidays, windsurfing, partying, relaxation

Climate

March to June are the summer months in Boracay, with temperatures reaching as high as 28 to 38 degrees Celsius. November to February have pleasant winds, cool nights, and occasional rainshowers. July to October are the wettest months.

How to get there

It takes only 45 minutes by plane from Manila to Boracay, which is to the South of the capital. You can choose from several local airlines, which offer regular flights to Palawan. Journey by bus is another possibility, but this takes approximately 12 hours in total.

Where to stay

Boracay offers a wide range of

accommodation opportunities. Please visit www.wowphilippines.com.ph for further information.

Bohol - The Lure of Chocolate Hills



Scenic Bohol casts an enigmatic charm, drawn from the many historic monuments spread throughout the oval-shaped island; from the Chocolate Hills and the tarsier, to 16th century watchtowers, and Jesuit Baroque mission churches. The Chocolate Hills comprise 1,268 perfectly cone-shaped hills, and are undoubtedly the most famous tourist attraction in the province. Two of these Central Bohol hills have been developed into top-class resorts. A rare animal found in the Philippine archipelago, the Tarsier is the smallest primate in the world. It is nocturnal, measuring from four to five inches, and has a tail that is longer than its body. Those interested in seeing the famous primate in its natural habitat up in the hills near the town of Corella are always welcomed by the Boholanos. A tropical haven of natural beauty, the coastline of the province is punctuated with gentle coves and white sandy beaches. You can find some of the country's great diving sites here, and if you are really lucky, you may find yourself swimming with a passing school of

dolphins. Bohol is about 700 kilometers directly south of Manila and about 70 kilometers southeast of Mactan Island. The province is thought to have been created as a result of the collision of the southwest Philippine plate east of Samar and Surigao with its neighbour millions of years ago.

Why go there

Exploring unique natural features, hiking, diving, exploring the varied history of the Philippines, beach holidays, relaxation

Climate

The province falls under the climate type IV, characterized by short rainy period and no dry season. It is usually warm and dry along the coast while cold and humid in the interior.

How to get there

There are numerous way of getting to Bohol. Beside domestic flights from Manila to Tagbilaran (1h 15min) or to Cebu (1h 15 min + ferry and bus), it is also possible to get direct flights from Singapore, Kuala Lumpur or Hong Kong. ■

Seeing is Believing: A Media Trip to Thai Growth Centres

After some successful research trips with Swiss entrepreneurs, the Thai embassy for the first time organized a similar one-week trip for the media, to see the realities of modern Thailand. The program boasted a wide variety of activities, from a visit to the new Swiss Ambassador to Thailand, to seeing the biggest food company of the country, the CP group, in action.

The aim of the trip was to get in contact with several officials from different areas of the Thai economy, and leading figures in the Government. We wanted to get an understanding of the actual situation in the country. It was helpful for the journalists from Switzerland, as well as for foreign correspondents who have been living there for a longer time. As Nike Nadas, South-East Asia Correspondent for Swiss Radio Romande, puts it: "It was a very good experience, and helped me to get in touch with several people who are hard to get in front of a microphone." That is especially the case with the Governor of the central bank of Thailand, Dr. Tarisa Watangase. She spoke about her

experiences of the worldwide crisis, and the lessons learnt by the central banks. "We put the main focus on risk control and will intervene much more quickly than before", she said. Exports dropped about 30 percent in the first half year, but she sees clear signs of recovery, with the banks in particular in much better shape than they were during the Asia crisis in 1997, when more than 50 financial institutes had to be closed. Some exporters worry about the strength of the baht, but for the governor this only becomes a problem in comparison with the US dollar rather than the regional currencies. She remains optimistic about her country's eventual recovery, pointing to the recent rise in

By **Stefan Waldvogel**

Head Editor of the Economic Department
Neue Luzerner Zeitung,
Lucerne, Switzerland

Email: stefan.waldvogel@neue-lz.ch



Thailand Presstrip Group Picture with Viceminister

domestic consumption. Also, the main share index has recently shown quite a strong performance, and it doesn't look like another bubble to her.

CP Group

For the biggest food processor and exporter, the CP group, the strong bath is an issue. "We have to produce higher quality goods more efficiently," says Pisit Ohmpornnuwat, president of C.P. Merchandising, which employs a total of 200,000 people. "There has been severe competition in the food market, but by producing poultry meat cheaper than in China, we feel we have an edge", he pointed out. "Well-educated people and higher standards of hygiene" are for him the main advantage Thailand has over China as a centre of food production. CP is strong on exports, also running an office in Zug. CP controls around a third of the country's agro-business, and serves more or less everything for lunch and dinner, as the president points out. The most popular products are chicken, duck, pork and shrimp. Having been in business for over 80 years, CP Food is among the top four animal feed and chicken producers in the world, and has vertically integrated interests in a variety of industries. The group's core activity is agricultural production, in which it plays a key role at every stage of production, from seed supply, animal feed production and livestock breeding to meat processing. They have always sold fresh meat, but are moving more and more into processed food.

Gemopolis

The visit included a trip to Gemopolis, where 120 companies benefit from a tax-free area and very good infrastructure, especially for the gem and jewelry business. A business can be rolled out within 40 days, and so far, 20,000 people are employed here. The space is huge (1.5 million square meters), but ideally located, close to the new international airport. The range of companies is diverse; there is the large jewelry company Pandora, which

produces one million earrings per week, but also the much smaller Swiss company Kymberli, which also profits from the jewelry industry. "We do help each other in this extremely international community", says Robert Lieto Cohen, director of a small company specializing in cutting very small stones. "We could only find such good employees here, and they have great passion for their work." Siam City Cement is another example of a successful Swiss-Thai company. The number two cement producer in Thailand has been for more than 11 years a joint venture between the Swiss company Holcim and the Teepsuwan family, who founded the company 40 years ago. "With just one plant, we produce the same amount of cement as the whole of Canada", explains Philippe Arto, Managing Director of the company. With around \$20 per tonne of cement, nobody produces more cost efficiently than we do, he explained to the journalists. Siam city cement also produces a kind of ersatz wood called "conwood", which consists of 80 percent used paper and 15 percent cement. Because of the economic crisis, the demand for cement dropped, but so far the company has not laid off anybody. "People react quickly and can adapt very easily they are very loyal", says the Swiss CFO, Andreas Leutenegger, who has worked for the company since 2004, and has seen "a lot of ups and downs in the market". "From outside it always looks more frightening, and people here learn to deal with it, they are young and well educated", he says. The company has invested about \$50 million to save energy and reduce the output of CO2 by about 100,000 tonnes a year. Interestingly enough, the technology they have bought comes from China.

The Board of investment (BOI) is trying to attract more foreign investors to the country, and they help in different ways. Depending on the area and the business focus involved, they can provide tax-free status for a different time period, as well as allowing 100 percent ownership as a foreign company and helping with work permits and all the necessary government

papers. "We are a one stop shop for foreign investors", says Duangjai Asawachintachit, Assistant Secretary-General of the BOI. One of the big Swiss investors is the watch company Eta, and one of its main goals is to attract more investment in the alternative energy sector. By the year 2022, 20 percent of Thailand's energy consumption should be produced through alternative sources. In 2010, 12 years before that, the first car using less than 5 liters per 100 kilometer should come onto the market. Thailand has no own car companies, but as a producer of international firms, it actually ranks fourteenth in the world and exports about 60 percent of local production. The secretary remembers that 12 years ago, during the Asia crisis, exporting was close to zero.

On the other hand, the country still needs to import a lot of its energy. Around 60 percent of energy consumption comes from abroad. With its huge gas reserves, Burma is an important source for the Thai industry. "We compete with other countries who are buying energy assets and that situation will last for a long time", says Supattanapong Punmeechaow, Executive Vice President of PTT, the number one energy company in Thailand. "We won't pay any price, but we need other sources of energy outside the country", he pointed out. Demand for energy dropped recently, but he is sure it will take off again as soon as the economy recovers, which the latest figures predict as happening rather soon. With its own power station constructed by the Swiss company Elektrowatt, Amata Industrial park has invested around \$300 million in getting enough energy for the huge park. Altogether the company has so far invested close to one billion, and attracted more than 540 companies. For the Ceo, Viboon Kromadit, this progress has only halfway fulfilled their aims. "Our goal is to have around 1,000 companies alongside a city which provides anything they need." Amata has also built a beautiful private golf course, independent from the industrial park, but keeping the same name. Some travel agents try to sell Amata golf to

tourists, but only members and their guests get a chance to play. They enjoy the very best service, starting from a personal name tag at the wardrobe to excellent caddies. One of the highlights is the island green of hole number 17. After a successful few rounds, a boat takes the golfers the short way to a 1,200 square meter island. Amata Spring Country Club in Chonburi will be showcased during the Royal Trophy Tournament 2010, January 9-11. The Royal Trophy is a "Ryder Cup" format competition involving eight-man teams

from Europe and Asia and is played regularly at Amata.

The Mission came to a climax with a meeting with Panich Vikitsreth, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. Vikitsreth started his job in early 2009 and has been traveling around to convince people that the political situation has stabilized and that tourists would be safe if they came to Thailand. The tourist industry especially suffered after the international airport was closed for a week, Vikitsreth insists that

other countries in the region lost about the same percentage of tourists. "The protests were not against tourism", he says, claiming that the figures can be brought up as quickly as they declined. The government quickly suspended the 1,000 Baht Visa fee in March 2009 for a year. The free trade agreement with Switzerland has taken longer to hammer out, he said. Answering a question from the delegation, he said that the agreement now has to go through parliament, and it is unclear how long that might take. ■

A Synonym for World's Most Popular Tourist Destination

Thailand is one of the world's most popular tourist destinations, attracting 12 million visitors a year, and with good reason. The varied landscapes offer something for everyone, from the hearty trekker to the adamant lounge lizard. From the infamous Golden Triangle region in the far north to the tropical islands of the south, Thailand offers a range of tourist options like no other country in Asia.

Culturally speaking, Thailand has drawn on the two giants to its north and south - India and China - as influences on many aspects of its identity. The influence of these two countries has fused with local traditions to give the country a unique cultural flavour. Apart from a separatist insurgency in the largely Moslem deep

south, the country has a politically loyal and largely unified population. Ninety percent are piously Buddhist, making Thailand the largest national grouping of this faith.

The country is a constitutional monarchy, with a stable and mostly peaceful democracy, though periodically interrupted by coups! The military maintains a powerful presence in the country, but the much-respected King - who is head of state - wields the most influence, despite remaining apolitical. The country is 514,000 sq km, bordering Malaysia to the South, Cambodia to the East, Laos to the North, and Myanmar (Burma) to the west. Agriculture, tourism, manufacturing and assembly are

Thailand's key industries, and it maintains a healthy export sector.

The monarchy is important to Thailand, and it has been governed by a succession of kings since around the 13th century, from capitals first in Sukhothai, then Ayutthaya, followed by Thonburi and now Bangkok. The current king, Bhumibol, has ruled for 60 years, and the abolition of the absolute monarchy in 1932 saw the drafting of the country's first constitution. All these historical locations still exist, and the ruins of the ancient capitals should be high on any history buff's travel itinerary.

Given that Thailand covers so much territory, there are many ethnic groups that fall under the jurisdiction of its



The Royal Grand Palace



Shivaratri Lalbagcha Raja



Phi Phi Don, Thailand

constitutional monarchy. One of the joys of traveling through Thailand is observing the different peculiarities and idiosyncrasies from province to province, evident in everything from language to clothing and cuisine. Minorities include groups with several main dialects, and the minority hill tribes who are found mainly in the north and add colour and character to the national identity.

The December 2008 Airport Occupation: A Summary

Tourism in Thailand represents 6.0 percent of the nation's GDP and the amplifying effect of the industry creates millions of jobs in Thailand jobs that are now under threat. Although it appears that the worst of the current round of political violence is over in the country, with even the worst of the Bangkok riots having relatively little impact on tourists, Thailand has sustained serious damage to its image as a tourist destination.

The Thai Tourism Authority (TAT), to its credit, has been quick to respond to new developments, but it will take a great deal more than soothing words from TAT officials to bring tourists back in a hurry. One of a range of strategic approaches is to bring media and tourist industry leaders from key source markets to see for themselves (as they did following the December 2004 tsunami) that Thailand is indeed a safe and tourist friendly destination. Indulging in spin won't cut it for Thailand's tourist industry right now.

The figures for October 2009 show an increase of 15 percent in arrivals compared to 2008. In total, 862,263

tourists visited Thailand in October. This positive development also counts for the other months of 2009.

Must-see sights in Thailand

Bangkok

Bangkok is Thailand's gateway and a proud capital blending the ancient and modern, with the Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaew being the country's number 1 attraction. A day tour usually includes taking in the giant reclining Buddha of Wat Po and the exotic pagodas of Wat Arun.

Other notable attractions include the all teak Vimanmek Palace and Dusit Throne Hall, as well as Jim Thompson's house and the impressive collection in the National Museum. Shopping, dining and of course the nightlife also attract people to Bangkok.

Phuket

Phuket, in the south, is the country's most popular coastal destination, with its excellent tourist infrastructure and lovely west-coast beaches. It's within an hour's drive of the stunning Krabi coastline, with the dramatic karst backdrops of Railay beach and Ao Nang gracing many travel brochures. The unique and world famous Phi Phi islands are offshore, while Koh Lanta to the south is a good island for a family getaway. The magnificent Pha Nga Bay is also in the area, representing another remarkable karst seascape.

Chiang Mai

For a thoroughly Thai experience, many

venture up north to the mountainous regions surrounding the ancient city of Chiang Mai. Characterised by a laidback atmosphere, pretty moat and numerous temples and ruins, it's also a good base for trekking and embarking on excursions to the Golden Triangle or adventurous Mae Hong Son Loop. The bohemian backwoods town of Pai is another hit, while Chiang Mai's inexpensive, good-quality shopping keeps people there longer than they planned.

Hua Hin

If you need something closer to Bangkok, Hua Hin is a royal favourite and a weekend escape for Bangkokians, less touristy and only two hours away. The hedonists and punters prefer Pattaya, on the east side of the Bight of Bangkok - the original tourist resort and more famous now for its naughty nightlife than its beaches. Venture further down the coast, and you come upon the small but delightful Koh Samet, another weekend favourite and home to Thailand's whitest beaches.

Koh Chang

Koh Chang is the country's so-called eco-island, near to the Cambodian border, a rugged and less touristy alternative. Nature lovers will also appreciate Khao Yai near Bangkok, one of Asia's biggest national parks. And finally, although it attracts fewer tourists, Isaan is the heartland of the country - a large rural region in the northwest hemmed in by the mighty Mekhong, and a true reflection of the real Thailand. ■



Sai Yok Noi Waterfall



Koh Chang



Emerald-Buddha-Temple

A Country in the Midst of Change for the Better

If you ask people who have holidayed in Vietnam what their reactions were, you may not get an immediate answer beyond a gleam in their eyes. Without exception, everybody who has had the chance to visit this country seems to use words such as 'fabulous', 'enriching', 'marvelous', etc.

Brief Look at the Country's History

Vietnam, like most countries in the region, has had a tempestuous history, dominated in the last century by war, colonialism and occupation. The influence of the French has been tremendous, even affecting the Vietnamese language the French changed their alphabet to one based on Latin characters. During World War II, the Japanese occupied Vietnam. At the end of the war, the French returned, but were forced out again in 1954 after losing the battle of Dien Bien Phu. In 1954, at a peace conference in Geneva, Switzerland, the country was formally divided into the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the

north and Republic of Vietnam in the South. Ho Chi Minh, the driving force behind the actions against Japan and France in the forties, became the first president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Until his death in 1969 he actively tried to unite North and South Vietnam. When looking at his biography, the amount of traveling he did in the West as well as the East is remarkable.

The years after 1955 were affected by chaos and corruption in the South of Vietnam until the Vietnam War was started by the US in an effort to bring down the North Vietnamese government. This disastrous war, which brought tremendous suffering, officially ended in 1973, with an armistice signed by Henry Kissinger and Le Dur Tho, successor of Ho Chi Minh. This act represented the end of the active involvement of the US in the war, but the North Vietnamese advance continued until the occupation of Saigon in 1975.

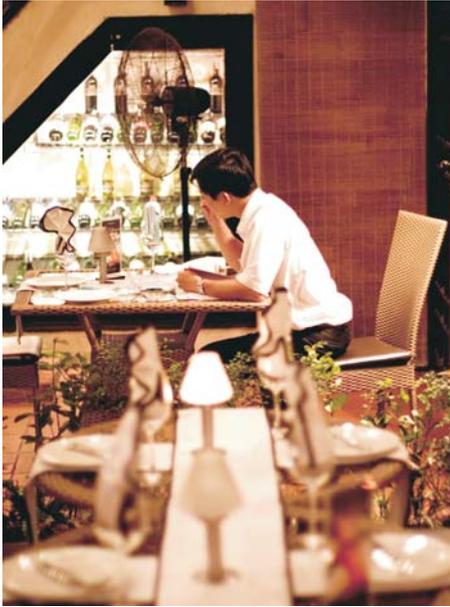
In 1976 the reunification of North and



By **Oliver Stern**
Freelance journalist and photographer
Lucerne, Switzerland
Email olivergustavstern@gmail.com



Boat of Paradise Cruises for overnight cruises at the Ha Long bay



fine dining in Hanoi

South took place, forming the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Saigon, the former capital of South Vietnam, was renamed Ho

Chi Minh City. The country enjoyed increasing stability, and in 1986 the Communist Party started the programme called Doi Moi (reformation) in order to implement economic reforms.

Nowadays

The nineties were good to Vietnam, which experienced rapid economic growth. It was also welcomed back into the international community of states. In 1995 diplomatic relations between the US and Vietnam were normalized, with the American trade embargo on the country coming to an end in 1996. In 2006, Vietnam became a member of the WTO.

Nowadays the US is Vietnam's most important trading partner, with a bilateral trading volume of more than USD8 billion in 2007. One fifth of all Vietnamese exports go to the US. If you ask Vietnamese people for their opinion of the US, you will

recognize their pragmatism, and their desire to put the past behind them. Most of them clearly differentiate the citizen from the country, and are very welcoming to the US, so much so that tours are often organized for US and Vietnamese veterans to get to know each other. The country is still classified as a country in transition and the average income per capita is USD 700 per year. Even now 20 percent of the population survives on just one dollar a day, although the gradual emergence of a middle-class is becoming more obvious. There is also a big difference between North Vietnam, where the capital Hanoi is, and South Vietnam, with Ho Chi Minh City at its heart. A traveler visiting Vietnam for the first time will notice that these regions do have a different speed of life, which reflects the different ways in which people do business. Despite this regionalism, even citizens of Ho Chi Minh City attest to the unrivalled charm and beauty of Hanoi.



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Development of Tourism

As mentioned at the beginning, every traveler is fascinated by the country's heritage and the Vietnamese people themselves. The country is very safe for people to travel around, although for safety reasons it is forbidden for foreigners to drive a car. Road traffic consists of motorcycles (80 percent) and cars (20 percent). Some people say that more than a million motorcycles are on the move everyday in Ho Chi Minh City (out of 7 million citizens). The country stretches along the coast of the gulf of Tokin, with the total coastal line North-South running to 1,650 km. Because of this, different regions have totally different climates. While the north of Vietnam is dominated by a moderate tropical alternating climate, with a cold season during winter and a hot season during summertime, the south of Vietnam is totally different, experiencing a tropical climate, with a rainy season between May and October.

Three-fourths of the country is mountainous, and the smallest part of the country is only 50 km wide. The country itself is divided into five regions, all of them worth a visit as they possess fascinating and unique attractions and are inhabited by one of the country's many ethnic minorities (53 in total).

Foreigners have only been allowed into the country without special permission since 1990. Today, only a simple visa is required to enter Vietnam, and statistics

show that in 2008 more than 4.2 million international arrivals were counted, up 44 percent on 2003. Most foreign visitors are Chinese, followed by South Koreans and then Americans. In 2007, tourism contributed 4.5 percent of GNP. The sector receives the third greatest amount of FDI, after heavy industry and urban development.

"We strongly believe in the future of tourism in Vietnam, as the country is ranked in the top 15 fastest growing countries in the world", says Ms. Thuy Tien, Managing Director of Asian Trails Vietnam. However, there are obstacles to overcome if we are going to reach the level of other countries in the region, like Indonesia or Thailand. Ms Tien explains "that one should not forget that the Vietnamese tourism industry has only had around 15 years of experience, whereas Thailand has been in the business for more than 40 years". Another obstacle is the high rate of inflation, which has reached more than 20 percent in recent years and this, along with Vietnam's infrastructure and educational opportunities, is of particular concern.

In fact, if a sense of humor is brought along, a traveler will hardly find anything to complain about while visiting the country. The friendliness of the Vietnamese people all over the country is truly amazing and their eagerness to learn and capacity for work is renowned amongst expatriates.

When it comes to the question of where to

go in a country with a population of 80 million, it is very hard to limit oneself to only one or two proposals. Mrs. Tina Senfter, MD of the Novotel in Ha Long, elaborates: "Vietnam offers a unique combination of natural beauty, cultural heritage and charming people and is probably more attractive than any other country in South-East Asia". No doubt as manager of the Novotel hotel, she knows what she is talking about. The hotel is situated in one of the most beautiful bays in the world. The Ha Long bay consists of more than 1,900 islands made up of limestone, on a surface of 1,500 sq km. It takes approximately three hours from Hanoi to get there, and a few years ago it became possible to stay overnight on board junks in the bay. Paradise Cruises is one of the pioneers in offering high-class adventures like this, a provider of luxury junks, equipped with all comfort you can dream of.

Hanoi itself is a town with great architectural and historical attractions. The French influence remains dominant and is utterly charming. On the other hand, the city is a storehouse of historical fact and information, with its museums and historical places. Commercially, Hanoi is catching up with Ho Chi Minh City. This year Moevenpick is also present, having opened a hotel in Hanoi. "Vietnam has not only gained in terms of investment in tourism, but also in terms of investment from international companies that see Vietnam as a country with high potential in terms of manufacturing".

Every traveler will confirm this on arriving at Ho Chi Minh City, the country's "business capital". Immediately after entering the city one is surrounded by crowds thronging the streets. Zurich is rated as quiet and slow in comparison by those who know both cities. A lot of foreign companies have settled in Ho Chi Minh City in recent years. The labour costs are less than in China and the Vietnamese are characterized as clever and hardworking by expats. The city itself is an impressive example of how fast life can be. For travelers, however, the central Vietnamese provinces, as well as the South (Mekong delta) and the coastal strip are



Paddy field in the Hanoi province

good starting points on any journey. A traveler is spoilt for choice in selecting a destination. Depending on his needs and wishes a trip could lead him to the highlands of Da Lang, a region which has a similar climate to Switzerland and breathtaking natural features. The coast offers various spots with endless beaches and top-class resorts, such as the Sealinks resort in Phan Thiet, a fishing village five hours from Ho Chi Minh City. This is a five star resort with a state of the art golf course and a hotel complex which will open in February 2010. The Mekong delta fascinates with numberless sights, intriguing ethnic minorities and, of course, the river Mekong itself.

Golf - a Driving Factor in Vietnamese Tourism?

"Yes", says Mr Blair, Managing Director of the Vietnam Golf and Country Club, one of several clubs located near Ho Chi Minh

City. "There is huge interest in golf, which has grown exponentially in the last couple of years. More and more local Vietnamese are taking up the game, which is great for the growth of golf in Asia and in Vietnam. I continue to see an increase in European tourists here as well as Japanese and Korean golfers in the winter months". Already, more than 20 courses exist in Vietnam, spread over the whole country. This is a great opportunity to combine golf and culture on a holiday.

Trends in the Near Future

"Currently the major investment goes into tourism real estate. In 2008, FDI in Vietnam increased tremendously to over USD 22 billion. However, Vietnam also needs more investment in infrastructure such as roads, bridges, transport, etc. Another interesting and promising investment in tourism is human resources, i.e. traineeship and student exchange programs with European hospitality

schools, for example in Switzerland, which is famous for its hotel management schools, says Mrs Tien. Asked about opportunities for foreign investors she answers: "hotspot areas in tourism such as Danang / Hoi An still have high potential, but "off the beaten track" areas such as Sapa or the central highlands are also looking interesting. Eco tourism is definitely on the move in Vietnam. Another hotspot is the capital of the country, Hanoi. According to the City's government, Hanoi needs 13,000 rooms to accommodate an expected 2.5-3 million foreign guests in 2012, compared to 8,500 rooms and 1.3 million foreign travelers today.

This is definitely an ambitious target for the government, but if you had the opportunity to visit the country and see how fast it is developing, you would realize that the goal will probably be reached sooner rather than later. ■

Expanding Investment Avenues for Swiss Firms in Vietnam

Vietnamese Minister of Planning & Investment Vo Hong Phuc paid an official visit to Switzerland with a delegation of Government & Business officials on from 5 to 7 May, 2009. During his visit, he addressed the Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce in Lausanne on "Exploring Investment Opportunities in Vietnam".

In his speech the Minister highlighted the importance of bilateral trade and the strong economic relationship between our two countries. With a registered invested capital of US\$955 million in 2008, Switzerland is the 17th largest investor in Vietnam and ranks an impressive fourth among European investors, ahead of large EU countries such as Germany, Italy, Sweden and Belgium. Last year's bilateral trade volume reached around US\$ 600 million, with a trade surplus of some US\$

97 million for Vietnam.

Since its accession to the WTO in 2007, the Vietnamese economy has developed tremendously, and foreign investment has risen threefold.

The Director-General of the Foreign Investment Agency gave an excellent presentation on Vietnam's political and economic history, and a comprehensive insight into its trade development strategies and investment promotion policies, explaining the procedural requirements associated with these policies.

With its fast-growing economy, its overwhelmingly young and well-educated population of 86 million, its stable political environment and its large, hardworking and skilled labour force,

Vietnam presents a significant and attractive business and investment destination for Swiss businesses, particularly small and medium size enterprises.

A Round-Table luncheon on Investment & Business Opportunities in Vietnam held in this context the New Suisse Romande Chamber's First Event.

This Round-Table luncheon held by SACC's new chamber in the French speaking part of Switzerland was a success and we have been encouraged to organize similar events in the region in 2010 and beyond.

(Some of the documentation given out at the meeting is available from our Chamber's Secretary General, Mrs Barbara Möckli-Schneider) ■

The 4th Ambassador's Golf Cup Where Businessmen Interact with Diplomats

The 4th Ambassador's Cup golf tournament was held at Golf Sempachersee on 9 September 2009. The event is uniquely popular with the Swiss business community with interests in South East Asia, Korea and Pakistan, as it offers a unique opportunity to meet ambassadors and diplomats in a casual atmosphere. Since the first tournament in 2006 the number of participants has grown steadily. This year's Cup featured 35 contestants, and 15 further guests attended the dinner held after the tournament. The participants had luck with the weather, with the sun improving people's tempers when swings happened to go off course. The crowd enjoyed a warm welcome from Barbara Moeckli-Schneider who, while not yet quite a golfing champion, proved her ability to organize first-class events. However, she took the first step in realizing her golfing potential with an enjoyable lesson on the driving range. Comments from the participants ranged from appreciative reflections on the sunshine to admiring

evaluations of the tournament as a unique opportunity to get in contact with the people that matter in South-East Asian business circles. The latter thought reflects the philosophy behind this tournament precisely; we conceived of it as the perfect forum for bringing those interested in doing business in Asia, and together with high-ranking diplomats or other businesspeople.

Special thanks go to the South-East Asian, Korean and Pakistani Ambassadors for taking the long trip from Berne to Golf Sempachersee. Most of them were already familiar with this event and were very pleased to have the opportunity to meet the business community and to see the progress in bilateral economic matters between Switzerland and their countries for themselves.

The event was kindly co-sponsored by MKS Finance SA and Zurich Financial Services. Prizes were donated by Continental Automotive Switzerland AG



By **Oliver Gustav Stern**
Freelance journalist and photographer,
Lucerne, Switzerland

E-mail: olivergustavstern@gmail.com



Group of players on hole 16

and Credit Suisse. Some of the prizes donated for the final ceremony surprised the winners. At the end of the day each participant had the chance to take a souvenir, generously offered by the sponsors of the event, back home with them.

Ranking list

Gross (overall)
Marco Nebiker - 25 points

Net Ladies

1. Romy Padun 28 points
2. Renata Siagian 27 points
3. Esther Kaufmann 26 points

Net Men

1. Patrick Kriesemer 43 points
2. Peter Schildknecht 41 points
3. Chul-Kyoon Chang 37 points

Special prizes

Longest Drive (Men)
Bernhard Schober

Longest Drive (Ladies)
Romy Padun

Nearest-to-the-Pin (Men)
Ivo Böschenstein

Nearest-to-the-Pin (Ladies)
Romy Padun



Urs Lustenberger is handing over the price to Marco Nebiker, winner overall



Dinner after the competition in the clubhouse

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Yes, we would like to become a member of SACC. Please send us detailed information about your business activities including your company profile.

I / we apply for Membership as

- Individual Member, annual fee of CHF 300
- Small Company, up to 250 employees, annual fee of CHF 600
- Medium Sized Company up to 1000 employees, annual fee of CHF 1000
- Large Company, over 1000 employees, annual fee of CHF 2000
- Company Abroad in Southeast Asia and Korea, annual fee of USD 150

SACC - Journal

- The two year subscription fee of the SACC-Journal is CHF 20.-

Invitation Upcoming Events

- Please send me an invitation for the next event

Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce



Visit our Website: www.sacc.ch

The **Swiss - Asian Chamber of Commerce (SACC) for ASEAN, Korea and Pakistan** was formed by a merger of the Swiss - South East Asian Chamber of Commerce SEA and the Swiss - Korean Chamber of Commerce SKCC on Tuesday, May 24, 2005, in Zurich, Switzerland, as a private non-profit association. Its main purpose is to promote economic and business relations between Switzerland, Southeast Asia, Korea and Pakistan based on the principle of reciprocal benefit.

The Chamber serves as a forum for all firms, institutions, government bodies and individuals interested in the bilateral relations between Switzerland, Southeast Asia, Korea and Pakistan. The Chamber is a non-governmental association and receives no grants of financial aid of any kind. To maintain an efficient and member-oriented activity serving the interest of Swiss, Southeast Asian, Korean and Pakistan business, the Chamber depends on the financial support of a strong and growing membership base.

The Chamber's activities cover the following Asian countries:

Brunei	Laos	Pakistan
Cambodia	Malaysia	Singapore
Indonesia	Myanmar	Thailand
Korea	Philippines	Vietnam

SACC offers its members a comprehensive range of services at preferential terms:

- **Business Contacts** - SACC provides assistance in establishing business contacts in Southeast Asia, Korea and Pakistan or Switzerland and in locating suitable agents, representatives, manufacturers and suppliers. SACC acts as a contact point for Swiss industry whenever questions arise with regard to the bilateral economic relations. SACC offers Company Pools through its partners in Southeast Asia, Korea and Pakistan: In order to realize large projects, small companies which do not compete with each other can join in a pool and benefit by sharing infrastructure.

- **Business Advice** - SACC gives you unique access to people and institutions which affect your business and offer you opportunities to meet with professional staff to discuss general or specific issues on the Southeast Asian, Korean and Pakistan markets. Chamber luncheons let you meet, learn from, and

interact with CEOs of major corporations or with decision makers from the public sector.

- **Exchange of Experience** - SACC helps you to establish business relations with business people and official bodies in Southeast Asia, Korea and Pakistan. SACC offers its experience to link Swiss and Asian companies for rewarding business opportunities.

- **Information Services** - SACC offers you diversified, up-to-date information and documentation services including database access, enquiries about and from Southeast Asia, Korea and Pakistan.

- **Publication** - SACC members and subscribers benefit from the SACC Journal, a regular publication, which gives practical information about the way business is done in a country or economic sector in Southeast Asia, Korea and Pakistan. Each edition focuses on a specific and current topic. Members can publish their company news and experiences related to Southeast Asia, Korea or Pakistan and take advantage of advertising space at reasonable costs.

- **Government/Economic Relations** - SACC keeps regular contact with Swiss, Southeast Asian, Korean and Pakistan government agencies, economic organizations and private firms. Members may benefit from this network by obtaining access to these organizations through our Chamber.

- **Delegations** - SACC assists trade delegations from and to Southeast Asia, Korea and Pakistan in their visits and gives support to Swiss business people going to Southeast Asia, Korea and Pakistan. The Chamber is open to all kinds of business sectors and Swiss/Southeast Asian, Korean and Pakistan business activities not only exports to and imports of Southeast Asian, Korean and Pakistan products, but also investments, license production, services and R&D. As part of its membership, a company is incorporated into a comprehensive network of contacts to which it may refer at any time.

- **All services of SACC** - are also available to non-members who will be charged with a time based fee

SACC is headed by a board of directors representing most sectors of the Swiss Industry see page 34.