

MEKONG TOURISM NEWSLETTER

Issue: December 2023



“ A Fond Look Back at Mekong Tourism in 2023

As 2023 draws to a close, let's take stock of the year's biggest moments for Mekong Tourism and our stakeholders across the Greater Mekong Sub-Region.

In February 2023, MTCO proudly launched its new website (www.mekongtourism.org). The revamped site features a fresh, modern design, enhanced navigability, and a host of new features, offering an enriched user experience for visitors.

We all gathered in Preah Sihanouk Province, Cambodia, from April 25 to 27 for the Mekong Tourism Forum 2023, themed 'Rethinking for Resilience and Digitalization.' The event successfully resonated with over 250 delegates from 19 countries and regions.

In September, we launched the Mekong Tourism Internship, which serves as an internship finder platform for students and recent graduates in the GMS member countries.

We also launched Mekong Voices, showcasing over 30 interviews with regional visionaries, offering fresh insights into sustainable tourism, women empowerment, and digital transformation. Additionally, Mekong Hidden Gems highlights lesser-known destinations, revealing under-explored areas poised for growth and connection.

Finally, we're going strong with our #MemoriesinMekong social media campaign that showcases the region's unforgettable flavors and adrenaline-pumping escapades. This was accompanied by the launch of our Mekong Stories Map – an interactive tool that helps travelers explore the region's captivating cultural encounters to adrenaline-fueled adventures.

Together with our GMS Member Countries and industry stakeholders in the Mekong region, we are looking forward to what 2024 holds!

Regional Spotlight: Meuang Feuang, Lao PDR

Renowned as the “Guilin of Lao PDR”, Meuang Feuang introduces visitors to a bustling life on the waters of the Nam Lik River. You'll stay at a houseboat with unobstructed views of the natural landscape. And as the sun rises, Local Buddhist monks queue along the houseboats to receive alms, a local tradition known as “tak bat”. Scenery, culture, and nature: what's not to love about Meuang Feuang? ([Tourism Laos](#))



Photo: jclao.com

Sustainable Tourism News



Going green in Thailand

The Tourism Authority of Thailand has laid out plans to attract even more visitors in 2024 with a host of new sustainability initiatives.

[Read more.](#)



Nature reserve reports historic number of wintering rare cranes

Yunnan China has recorded its highest number of black-necked cranes since 1990, with 2,342 of these first-class protected species spotted, reflecting the success of recent conservation efforts.

[Read more.](#)



Đà Lạt strives to become “Green Paradise” through sustainable tourism development

To better position Đà Lạt as the focal point of Lâm Đồng Province, the city must take fundamental, creative, and sustainable steps.

[Read more.](#)

Upcoming Festivals

1-3 December 2023

Sea Festival, Cambodia.

Kep Province takes the reins for this year's Sea Festival (which rotates annually between the provinces of Sihanoukville, Koh Kong, Kampot, and Kep). The celebrations bring a series of beach and water sports activities, cultural performances, fireworks displays, and even Khmer kickboxing. ([Khmer Times](#))



Photo: Khmer Times

14 - 18 December 2023

Wonderfruit Festival.

Thailand. The annual festival is held every December at The Fields at Siam Country Club, Pattaya, Chonburi Province of Thailand, not far from Bangkok. The festival features rock, indie, hip hop, electronic dance music, and other genres, as well as many art installations, workshops, tastings and banquets prepared by famous chefs. The 4-day event attracts about 10,000 attendees. ([Wonderfruit](#))



Photo: Wonderfruit.co

22 December 2023

Dongzhi Festival (Winter Solstice Festival).

China. The cherished Chinese winter solstice celebration features ancestral worship, traditional foods like dumplings and tangyuan, and embodies rich cultural traditions and family reunions.

([China Highlights](#))



Photo: chinahighlights

News from the Greater Mekong Subregion

Cambodia

- ◆ Battambang becomes the first-ever Cambodian city to join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.
[Read more.](#)
- ◆ SME Bank to allocate \$50 million in funds for Siem Reap tourism boost, coinciding with government tax breaks for businesses.
[Read more.](#)



China

- ◆ China trials visa-free travel for six countries from 1 December to 30 November 2024.
[Read more.](#)
- ◆ Huawei 2023 Sustainability Forum on Smart Tourism kicks off in Heshun Town, Yunnan.
[Read more.](#)

Lao PDR

- ◆ Y421 cross-border tourist train service begins from Beijing to Vientiane.
[Read more.](#)
- ◆ Visit Laos Year 2024 campaign officially launches, in anticipation of 2.7 million foreign tourists in 2024.
[Read more.](#)



Photo: laotiantimes



Myanmar

- ◆ Nearly 2 million tourists visit Bagan archaeological zone in the first 10 months of 2023.
[Read more.](#)
- ◆ Modernization of China's border region with Myanmar brings mutual growth, aids in preservation of Wa ethnic culture.
[Read more.](#)

Thailand

- ◆ "Longer stay, more events, more fun on the nightlife scene": Thailand plans more visa waivers, events to lift tourism revenue.
[Read more.](#)
- ◆ Thailand's "Meaningful Relationship" campaign encourages tourists to build connections in the Kingdom's key tourist destinations.
[Read more.](#)



Photo: TAT



Viet Nam

- ◆ Visit Vietnam Year 2024 will highlight Dien Bien Phu victory.
[Read more.](#)
- ◆ Hanoi introduces 15 night-time tourism services, including night tours of the Temple of Literature and the Vietnam Museum of Literature.
[Read more.](#)