



Laos lauded as world's best tourism destination

A delegation from the European Council on Tourism and Trade (ECTT) has arrived in Vientiane, where they will present Laos with the council's award for 'World's Best Tourist Destination for 2013.'



Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong (right) welcomes Prof. Dr Anton Caragea, who will present Laos with the EECT's World's Best Tourist Destination for 2013 award.

The delegation, led by the Council Chairman Prof Dr Anton Caragea, called on Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong and Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism Prof Dr Bosengkham Vongdara in Vientiane on Monday where they were warmly welcomed following their arrival.

The delegation also visited important tourism sites in Vientiane before departing for Luang Prabang World Heritage Site tomorrow to experience how amazing this city is and how traditional culture is preserved there.

The handover ceremony of the award will take place at Don Chan Palace hotel in Vientiane on May 9 which will be attended by Deputy Prime Minister Asang Laoly and other high-ranking officials.

Given the importance of the delegation's visit to award Laos, the government has allocated more than 700 million kip to prepare facilities and organise for the award handover ceremony.

During the ceremony, a video presentation showing the highlights of Lao tourism and tourists' impressions will be screened, followed by speeches from Prof. Dr Anton and Prof Dr Bosengkham and other art performances.

Among the reasons for awarding the title are Laos' promotion of free and fair tourism, the safety of tourists, the facilities offered, access to sites of historical and cultural significance, investment in the preservation of historical sites, and the benefits of tourism to grassroots communities.

The European Union Council on Tourism and Trade recently presented a report titled 'Laos: a Touristic and Cultural Paradise' proposing Laos as the winner of the council's world best tourist destination for 2013.

The aim of the recognition is to continue promoting a new concept of community based tourism in Laos, which is friendly to nature, has low ecological impacts and helps protect and preserve endangered species and natural biodiversity, especially rainforest eco-climates.

"Community based ecotourism is a way to share revenues and income, to support rural communities in prospering and presenting their foods and handicrafts to the world and provide a base for local development. Sharing tourism benefits all the population, and offering a kind of social tourism is a lesson that Laos is offering to the world," the report outlined.

Laos offers tourists not only an outstanding historical and cultural experience but also the possibility to explore nature, to contribute to ecological preservation and the opportunity to visit extraordinary places such as the Nam Ngum reservoir, Bolaven plateau, Four Thousand Islands, Khuang Xi waterfall and other attractions.

It is recognised that sustainable tourism can aid the preservation of outstanding historical and cultural sites such as Vat Phou Champassak, a UNESCO World Heritage Site from the 12th century, and the remarkable Plain of Jars site, offering an insight into Neolithic civilisation and a rare window into centuries old tradition.

Tourism is among the main income earners for Laos. Not only does it stimulate economic growth, but also generates income for the poor. In 2012, the number of tourist arrivals climbed to 3.3 million, an increase of 22 percent compared to the previous year.

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