



The Chao Phraya Declaration

November 2013

*Presented by PATA Thailand Chapter, Skål International Bangkok
and the Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce in Thailand*

WE, the representatives of the travel and tourism industry sectors in Thailand, pledge to enhance the Safety and Security of all business and leisure travellers in Thailand by implementing sound and effective policies in partnership with Government Ministries and Public Bodies.

Whereas the Tourism Committee of the Joint Foreign Chambers in Thailand, in conjunction with Skål International Bangkok and the PATA Thailand Chapter, organised the Safety & Security Forum on 14 November 2013 with the following objectives:

1. Position Thailand as a safe, secure and desirable country to visit.
2. Reduce negative economic impact
for all tourism stakeholders in such destination(s).
3. Encounter erroneous perceptions habitually
created by negative media coverage.
4. Correct, and strive to dispel, such perceptions
with realistic insights and observations.
5. Provide assistance for the safeguarding of inbound
and domestic tourism traffic.
6. Assist stakeholders to minimise the impact of
such residual, negative perceptions.

Delegates representing government agencies, the tourism industry and supporting bodies/agencies, convening on the bank of the Chao Phraya River, resolved to support, enhance and implement the ideas formulated at the brainstorm sessions on 15 October 2013.

Recognising that

- a) the actual, and perceived, safety and security competence in a tourism destination can adversely impact tourism flows and, with it, the sustainability of economic growth and employment creation in Thailand.

- b) there is a need for all Thai tourism stakeholders to cooperate across all sectors and together with international tourism bodies ensure the speedy dissemination of accurate information on the status of safety and security capabilities.
- c) the outcome all must seek is the rapid implementation of communication strategies, followed by effective promotional strategies, to stimulate the continuation of tourism flows to Thailand.

The Forum recognised that in order to

a) Enhance awareness for risk and crisis management in Thailand's tourism industries it is herewith stated that:

1. Government, tourism industry operators and tourists must be involved in risk awareness and crisis management.
2. The Government needs to create an environment in which tourists feel safe and secure, with all stakeholders across the broad spectrum of tourism and travel working in harmony to ensure that visitors to Thailand, acting responsibly, are made aware of the potential risks.
3. Much more work is required by the public and private sector to ensure that Government ministries, agencies and commercial tourism operators are better prepared to manage the next Crisis Event.
4. Standards of safety and security must be improved and enforced by all parties to ensure that the vast majority of business and leisure travellers to Thailand experience a safe, secure, enjoyable and memorable stay. (By delivering on this objective, there is an immediate cost benefit in terms of lower overtime costs for employers).

b) Educate and alert tourists before and during their stays it is herewith suggested that we:

1. Ensure that business and leisure travellers are aware that the laws in Thailand are there to protect everyone.
2. Communicate this key message in an effective manner through all channels in all source markets in order that visitors may make educated decisions regarding their well-being during their stay in Thailand.

3. Institute a new campaign that addresses the needs of 'Educating and Alerting Tourists' before they come to Thailand.
4. Work within the current campaigns operated by the TAT and Tourist Police to ensure that they are meaningfully and effectively deployed.

c) Cooperate with public sector stakeholders it is herewith suggested to:

1. Enhance the exchange of information and knowledge between the public and private sectors through existing information portals such as Asia-Pacific DRR Project Portal, PreventionWeb and Relief Web.
2. Consult with the public and private sectors through existing mechanisms such as the Asian Ministerial conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Regional Consultative Committee on Disaster Management, Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction and Asian Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.
3. Advocate clear public policies for incentivising public/private partnerships.
4. Advocate the need for clear roles for the private sector in any national/provincial disaster risk management legal framework.

d) Cheating the Cheaters, the recommendations are to:

1. Implement a wide-ranging communications programme, with key messages/warnings/advisories, that embraces social media, smart phone apps, websites, video messages for airlines and hotel in-room channels, printed leaflets for distribution at airports/border crossings and by DMCs, travel agents, car rental agencies and others.
2. Engage with reputable travel bloggers to assist in communicating balanced, objective messages.
3. Conduct a survey, using the services of an independent academic body, to generate substantive feedback from a cross-section of international business and leisure travellers in Thailand. Questions would be compiled to ascertain the top 10 concerns in the minds of visitors to Thailand. Survey results, in addition to providing PR material for distribution via local and international media, would provide a clear picture of the level of current appreciation and understanding amongst international visitors of the scams operated on a daily basis by these 'cheaters'.

CONCLUSION

Improvements to Safety & Security for tourists in Thailand

The Forum recommends the follow actions as a matter of priority:

1. To create a safer and more secure environment for all international visitors to Thailand through the introduction of robust risk management and crisis communications strategies for the nation's tourism and MICE sectors.
2. To encourage meaningful and effective collaboration and cooperation between the public and private sectors to ensure that Thailand's tourism industry is well prepared to manage the next natural or man-made crisis or catastrophe.
3. To take action against criminal elements that target visitors for the purposes of monetary gain through misleading and illegal practices and who damage Thailand's tourism reputation.



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