

Vietnam region's new tourist hotspot, Thailand still at top

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Hanoi : Vietnam has fast become one of the most popular destinations in Southeast Asia, as tourists enjoy the county's diverse landscapes, beaches, mountainous rice terraces and bustling cities.

According to a report by Google Destination Insights, Vietnam was the seventh most searched destination from March to June, and the only country in Southeast Asia in the top 20.

The popularity of Vietnam is showing in the number of international arrivals. The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism announced in June that the country had welcomed over 5.5 million foreign visitors in the first six months of 2023, already exceeding the total number of international arrivals in 2022.

Vietnam's tourist sector has set a target of 8 million visitors for the

remainder of 2023, however, the tourism bureau has since predicted the numbers will likely rise to 10 million.

Reports cited that the boost is coming mainly from Chinese, Indian and Korean tourists. The use of social media and the influence of large travel groups have also helped boost Vietnam's international popularity.

Hanoi recently approved a new visa policy for international visitors arriving in the country, tripling visa waivers from 15 to 45 days for selected countries.

For visitors from countries eligible to apply for an electronic visa to Vietnam, visas will now be valid for up to 90 days with single or multiple entries.

The changes will come into force on August 15.

One of Vietnam's selling points is that it's a lesser-known destination, and it offers both tourism and business opportunities, reports cited.

Thailand still holds top spot

However, international arrivals into Vietnam are still way off pre-pandemic levels. In 2019, there were nearly 19 million international arrivals.

It means Vietnam has still some way to go if it is going to rival tourism in Thailand.

Reports cited Vietnam must improve in several areas to fully maximise its potential.

Tourism is an integrated economy, the coordination between ministries and sectors must be close. The infrastructure, including the system of highways, railways, and roads, does not meet the development of tourism, said reports.

It is necessary to retrain and train new personnel working in the tourism industry to meet the quality of services provided to tourists, reports added.

Thailand expects to reach 20 million visitors by the end of 2023. However, Thailand's tourism industry is aiming for a return to 2019 levels, when the country welcomed a record 39 million international

arrivals.

Thailand has reclaimed its place as the most visited country in the region and the dominant tourism nation in the region.

However, before the pandemic, Vietnam was really seen as not necessarily a challenger, but certainly an emerging force. Vietnam was seen as the next big thing in tourism in Southeast Asia and it still is, concluded reports.