

## 500-strong Thai groups tour Britain

### 1500 THAI VISITORS HELP SUPPORT TOURISM INDUSTRY THIS AUGUST

[London, 6 August 2009] British tourism businesses will benefit this month as Britain is the prize for 1500 employees from Amway, a major manufacturer in Thailand, as three, 500-people strong groups spend a week each in Britain between 7 and 27 August 2009. Every year they send their successful direct sales representatives on an international trip as a reward for their achievements and have chosen Britain for 2009. National tourism agency VisitBritain believes emerging markets like Thailand will help cement the future health of Britain's visitor economy.

Organised by destination management specialist Motion Europe ([www.motion-europe.com](http://www.motion-europe.com)), the visit comes soon after a similar trip by 1300 Chinese holidaymakers and is further evidence that Britain continues to be a world-class destination and one that is become even more affordable in recent months. The relative strength of the Thai Baht against Sterling has resulted in the cost of visiting Britain declining sharply over the past year. As recently as June, it remained on average 14% cheaper compared to June 2008.

The first itinerary begins on 7 August and is repeated weekly with three groups totally 500 people touring attractions and destinations.

Luca Masseroli of Motion Europe, says: "We are very proud to have been chosen to organise this trip and it is thanks, I believe, to our 13-year reputation for attention to detail, customer satisfaction, the quality of our itineraries and our aim to always be the very best we can. I want to ensure that the groups have a very pleasurable stay, enjoy some great British service and get a taste of what the UK has to offer, and that they want to come back again!

"Motion Europe prides itself in providing a superior standard of service with all the functionality of an experienced destination management company, ready to welcome all groups whether they take part in business, educational or holiday itineraries. Our success means that today 40% of all our clients are referred to us by 'word of mouth' and Motion Europe continues to grow in this developing market, helped by long-established relationships with Sunway and other Thai agencies."

The tour reflects the appeals of Britain for Thai visitors who are curious about the royal family and Britain's reputation for tradition, history and culture. They also enjoy shopping and major British brands such as Harrods, Marks and Spencer, Twinings, Next, and Fortnum & Mason are seen as prestigious. Over the course of the seven-day itineraries and at different times, the groups will visit historic monuments and attractions such as St Paul's Cathedral and Buckingham Palace to see the Changing of the Guard.

A trip on the River Thames will take them past historic Tower Bridge and the Houses of Parliament and they will visit the Tower of London, Madame Tussauds and indulge in culture at the Natural History and British Museums, and at a theatre performance of the Lion King. They will also enjoy a quintessentially English performance from the Mary Poppins stage show, which is sure to delight these visitors during a special gala dinner at London's Brewery.

They will also see how the contemporary sits beside the historic on London's Southbank with a flight on the London Eye and a photo-stop beside City Hall. As well as dining out, they will experience a West End theatre and have some time to shop. Beyond the capital, they will visit Windsor Castle and enjoy a walking tour of the town and afternoon tea, as well as a day trip to Bath's Roman Baths, stopping at Stonehenge too.

Keith Beecham, overseas network director for national tourism agency VisitBritain says: "Despite a global economic downturn, Swine Flu and increasing competition from rival destinations, this is our chance to give a warm welcome and demonstrate that Britain has much that appeals to Thai travellers including experiences, attractions and destinations with a unique blend of historical and contemporary culture. Large 'incentive' trips such as this contribute to local economies and help support small and medium-sized businesses, jobs and local communities. By showing them a fantastic welcome we can help them encourage many more of their countrymen to visit us in the future."

Thai visitors have the potential to be increasingly important to Britain's visitor economy as year-on-year growth rates of emerging markets are often out-performing those of more traditional ones: 24,000 Thai nationals came to Britain last year and spent £17 million here. On average, they spend £722 on trips of 14 nights' duration. The UK is a favourite long haul destination for travellers from Thailand, no doubt influenced by a large non-Thai ex-pat community who contribute a further 26,000 visits and £18 million to the UK's economy.

Britain's landscape, parks, gardens and countryside have strong appeal to Thai visitors, while studying English is a key motivator for Thais to visit Britain with Oxford and Cambridge University key attractions. Premier League football enjoys a massive following in Thailand and Manchester United, Liverpool and Arsenal each command a large number of supporters. Everton too became better known among Thai people when Chang Beer became the club's official partner.

However, visits and spending by Thai visitors declined in 2008 for the first time in three years and the UK's popularity as a destination has fallen five places since 2004 to 15th place in 2008 behind the USA and a number of Asia-Pacific destinations. This is no doubt influenced by the global economic climate but also visa policies which make it increasingly challenging to take advantage of the full potential of this emerging market.

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