



# Tourism Scan

Vol. 3 Issue 8 October 2006

*This is a communiqué of the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism  
9/1RattanakosinRd..T. Watget Muang Chiangmai 50000 Thailand  
Tel/fax. No. +66 53 240026. E-mail:contours@ecotonline.org*

Director: **Ranjan Solomon**

Editorial Consultant: **Julia Schönhärl**

## CONTENTS

- Coup will negatively affect tourism, says FPO
- Peru Government prohibits flights over Machu Picchu
- Gocta Waterfall will become Peruvian National Preserve
- Thailand Hat Yai Bomb Blast Send Tourism Home
- IIPT Partner Launches World Peace Passport
- Olive Picking Program 2006
- WANDERLUST
- The real costs of cheap flight tickets
- TourBench? What's that?
- Another tourism disaster- Reflections on an impending disaster by Julia Schönhärl.

“The Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism is a Chiang Mai; Thailand based coalition of Regional Ecumenical Organisations and over seventy secular and faith-based groups. It seeks to unite people around collective efforts that negate the undesirable effects of modern tourism and, in its place, institute socially responsible and ethically oriented tourism. It believes that tourism must be based on justice and sustainability for host communities and that, therefore, tourism planning and practice must be democratised. ECOT advocates respect for the protection and dignity of the human rights of women, children, indigenous peoples and workers in the tourist trade. It opposes tourism projects that create environmental devastation.”

As it turns out, this is my last issue of Tourism Scan as its Editor since I will be leaving ECOT at the end of this month. I am going for personal and health reasons and hope to be involved in whatever ways I can in time in the future following a time of healing and recovery.

This issue of Tourism Scan already marks some changes. ECOT's new staff person-Julia Schönhär! from Germany who will work on issues of Sustainable Tourism/International programmes/Networking with ECOT from January 2007 joins us as an Editorial consultant. Readers and network partners will hear more about her in the next months and years. In this issue of Tourism Scan, Julia has helped us with researching a few articles and has contributed a reflective-analytical piece on an impending disaster offshore of Dubai.

My preparations for leaving Thailand coincide with the army achieving a stranglehold over the country in the aftermath of a military coup that took place last month. Although peaceful in most part, the coup raises issues for us in the network. There has been the usual travel advisory mostly from western nations- asking their citizens not to travel to Thailand. In the first weeks, many travellers who had made plans to be in Thailand either cancelled or postponed them. Local communities who have been made dependent on tourism have borne the brunt of this.

The issue, however, is not about whether the tourist numbers increase or decrease. The real question is about the attitude of the tourist. Do they care at all about what happens in Thailand? Did the coup which they hardly seemed to notice make any difference to their understanding of being global citizens?

The coup leaders have promised stability and freedom after years of corruption under the Thaksin regime. Many hundreds of community radios in the North have been closed down for fear that the people will mobilise to protest martial law. The press is stifled and no one really knows enough about how power is being managed to suppress the will of the people. The ouster of Thaksin was widely expected and welcome. However, the relentless suppression of any political activity is worrying.

The tourism movement has to encourage the tourist to become truly engaged with reality and not be in indifferent indulgence to it. The tourist simply cannot be complacent and smug and, instead, be consumed by the sole desire to enjoy their holidays with little or no care for what the people they visit aspire to.

We need to drive home an important message here. And that is that there needs to be a meaningful correlation between self fulfilment and social responsibility. In the context of the coup in Thailand, it simply means this: that the tourist must be enabled to understand the social-economic-political reality of the context they are in and discern forms of solidarity they can provide to those who seek a genuinely free, participatory and just society in Thailand. This is the essence of global citizenship. It must form the essence of what responsible tourism is.

Ranjan Solomon

## **Coup will negatively affect tourism, says FPO**

BANGKOK, Sept 20 (TNA) - The bloodless coup d'etat staged Tuesday by the Administrative Reform Council comprised of top military leaders will affect Thailand's economic posture, particularly regarding tourism, according to Fiscal Policy Office deputy director-general Somchai Sajjapong.

Mr. Somchai said the situation needed to be closely monitored following the power seizure by the council.

However, he conceded that the military takeover will impact on the economy, especially tourism, as the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia had already warned their tourists to avoid travelling to Thailand.

He said it needed to be seen what the council would do in the next step. However, he believed the coup would not affect foreign investor confidence because it is staged with clear justification and intention.

But should the council take control of the country for too long, it might affect the climate of investment because foreign investors view military rule negatively and it would dampen confidence.

Because of this, Mr. Somchai said he wanted to see the general election held as soon as possible. If the election was delayed by another three months, it would have a greater impact on the economy, he said. (TNA)-E005

*Source: MCOT News*



## **Peru Government prohibits flights over Machu Picchu**

The Peruvian government declared the air space over the archaeological sanctuary of Machu Picchu as a "no-fly zone", reversing a decision to allow flights over the Inca ruins after an outcry from environmental groups.

The decision was announced after a meeting between representatives of the Ministry for Transports and Communications, the National Cultural Institute (INC.) and the Institute for Natural Resources (INRENA).

David Ugarte Vega, director of the INC. in Cusco, warned that airplane sounds and vibrations would cause the disappearance of rare species like the condor, the spectacled bear, deer and birds such as the Andean cock-of-the-rock. Unique flora species such as orchids are also affected.

The ruling revokes current flight permissions for helicopter companies, for example "Helicuzco" which offers fly-over round trips in the area including the "Sacred Valley of the Incas" with historical sites such as Pisac, Ollantaytambo, Salapunko, Limatambo, Curahuasi and Choquequirao.

The license for helicopter tours was granted just a few days ago.

Machu Picchu, also known as the lost city of the Incas, was declared a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1981. It is Peru's biggest tourist attraction.

*Source: Travel and Tourism | 7 August, 2006 [16:03]*

## **Gocta Waterfall will become Peruvian National Preserve**

The area surrounding Peru's Gocta waterfall, the third (or fifth) highest in the world located in the Amazon rain forest, will be declared a National Preserve to protect flora and fauna, informed the Amazon Tourism director Freddy Gomez Lopez.

“This location is not yet prepared to receive an abundant flow of tourists. We inspected the area and found that there are already signs of human depredation”, he warned.

He voiced his particular concern for the 121 identified bird species inhabiting the vegetation near Gocta, in addition to sightings of yellow-tailed woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix flavicauda*) and various orchids.

However, he clarified that the declaration of a natural preserve should not be perceived as anti-tourism. A special form known as eco-tourism similar to other Peruvian parks could be promoted.

“The only thing we want is to avoid that this attractive area is affected by tourist activity we cannot handle. For example, during holiday weekend celebrating Peru's Independence the place was visited by 250 people daily”, he commented.

Initial cost estimates for a preserve amount to about to 1.9 million Soles and the regional government has the last word on the matter.

“We hope that the declaration is a fact and that the budget takes shape next year”, he added.

Gocta is located near Cocachimba, district of Valera, in the Bongará province.

Visitors will get to the waterfall from Chachapoyas by car (two hours) and an additional 3 hours on foot.

The cataract's altitude is about 771 meters and was discovered last March by German citizen Stefan Ziemendorff after exploring the area for several months. However, comments made by Ziemendorff in press conference as to the waterfalls' ranking have been widely disputed.

The world's highest is Angel Falls in Venezuela (972 meters), followed by the Tugela Falls in South Africa with 948 meters.

*Source: Travel and Tourism | 7 August, 2006 [ 16:03 ]*



## **Thailand Hat Yai Bomb Blast Send Tourism Home**

Tourism will definitely be impacted in Hat Yai district of this southern province, a popular holiday and shopping destination among tourists from Thailand's neighbouring countries of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and as far distant as Brunei, following Saturday night's bomb blasts which rocked five prime locations, all of them in the business area.

Local business leaders are expecting revenue to fall in the wake of tourists going home--and deciding to go elsewhere--after the blasts. The powerful explosions killed three Thais and a resident Canadian teacher, and wounded 59 others, according to local police. The victims were sent to nearby hospitals for treatment. The general atmosphere in Hat Yai Sunday morning was quite and subdued as many Malaysian tourists who came to this city for weekend holidays were seen to be checking out from their hotels and returning home. Songkhla Hotel Association president Somchart Pimtanapoonporn said the incidents would immediately have an impact on tourism as about 80 per cent of hotel rooms in the district were occupied by tourists. And as tourists gradually checked out from their hotels early this morning and decided to return home out of concern for their safety, it is expected that tourism activities in the district will be affected for not less than three months, Mr Somchart said. Many tourists were expected to visit Hat Yai and nearby areas during the annual Chinese vegetarian festival and the fasting month of Ramadan for Muslims late next month. Saturday's incidents will cause the city to lose several hundred million baht, Mr Somchart said. Hat Yai, 45 kilometres from the Thai-Malaysian border was last hit by explosions on April 3 last year, when bombs were exploded at the international airport. The airport bombing caused tourists to stay away from the town on fears of safety.

*Source: TNA*



### **IIPT Partner Launches World Peace Passport**

World Peace Passport is a grassroots movement to promote peace through education and tourism. Created by the American Hospitality Academy (AHA), the World Peace Passport, a non-profit organization, is a global peace education movement designed to foster a spirit of tolerance, respect and understanding among all races and cultures. "As a reflection of this mission," says Cindi Reiman, AHA President, "there is great value placed on creating multi-cultural learning environments that inspire and encourage tolerance, respect, and the celebration of diversity. The World Peace Passport will provide educational books and materials for both elementary schools and the travel and tourism industry, designed to inspire and challenge both children and adults to choose an attitude of peace."

Designed to help dispel the myth that "different" is dangerous, the World Peace Passport is a fun and informative cultural journey, featuring four "peace stamps" that must be acquired by travelers in order to pass through customs: Understanding Culture, Breaking Down Stereotypes, Respecting Cultural Differences, and Celebrating Diversity.

It is our hope," says Reiman, "that via the teaching and sharing of these four simple concepts, the World Peace Passport will help students, educators, and travelers learn how to choose and demonstrate an attitude of peace."

World Peace Passport was created by the American Hospitality Academy, one of the world's largest and most respected cultural exchange programs within the travel and tourism industry. For the past 20 years, AHA has been inspiring young adults to be caring world citizens through their college internship program. More than 1,000 students from academic institutions around the world participate annually in the AHA's training program graduating as Cultural Ambassadors for both the U.S. and their home country.

World Peace Passport was inspired by AHA's Cultural Ambassadors who taught one another that although their cultural customs and traditions differed, they had the same hopes and dreams for a peaceful future

## Olive Picking Program 2006

For the fourth consecutive year, the Joint Advocacy Initiative of the **East Jerusalem YMCA** and **YWCA of Palestine** (JAI) is partnering the **Alternative Tourism Group (ATG)** in organizing an Olive Picking Program in Palestine between the 26<sup>th</sup> of October and 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2006. The annual olive harvest is of special significance to the Palestinian economy, where all energies and efforts are mobilized during this period.

Since the beginning of the Intifada in 2000, the olive harvest has been overshadowed by the Israeli policies of repression, closure, blockage of streets, confiscation of agricultural lands, as well as repeated attacks against Palestinian farmers by Israeli settlers. Now with the construction of the Separation Wall through rural villages, many farmers are separated from their lands.

Building on the experience from previous years, the organizers have planned a program of international civil action in solidarity with the Palestinian olive farmers. The objective of this program is to mobilize as many people as possible, from around the world, to help with the harvest. An international presence will often assure the safety of Palestinian farmers and provide a clear route for mediation if illegal settlers or the occupying military attempt to interfere with the harvest.

Despite the ruling of the International Court of Justice regarding the illegality of the Separation Wall, the Israeli authorities continue to divide villagers from their land and water resources. Many farmers feel that this year will be their last chance to harvest their produce. You are cordially invited to help them defy the illegal occupation of their land.

Over the past three years, volunteers from across the globe have come together in a spirit of friendship and solidarity, and all leave with a shared memory of an exceptional experience.

Besides picking olives, the program features social gatherings, talks by local ecological experts, tours of historic West Bank cities and free time in the evenings to enjoy the abundant hospitality of your hosts, or quiet time to reflect as you prefer.

The program is based in Bethlehem, a vibrant, modern city of some 35,000 inhabitants, famed for being the birthplace of Jesus, just 10km south of Jerusalem

*Source : Alternative tourism Group / Joint Advocacy Initiative*



## WANDERLUST

Some 48.000.000 Germans travelled in 2004 , one third a trip in Germany. As no other economic sector the travel and tourism industry depends on a intact nature and often travellers have a negative impact on the environment/nature is often negatively impacted by the travellers by themselves.

The trend for cheap flights, not just in Germany , but in all Europe, is raising. Every seventh flight in Germany is done with a cheap flight operator. Thus, the increase of cheap flight is immense... at the height of 10.000 meter, the climatic impact is particularly critical. Apart from CO2 other climate gases like oxides or the creation of condense strips has to be considered. In a time of climate change and global warming it is surprising that the choice of means of transport is still limited on planes and cars. Not just flights do impact the environment, but also travelling to holiday destinations by cars.

Tour operators are presenting their destinations in colourful images, give advises on attractions and offerings as well as descriptions how to go and travel there. But often this is limited to car travelling. Holidays without a car is still not sufficiently considered within the tourism industry in Germany. Apparently, the argument "protection of the environment" seems to challenge tourist, especially, because all holiday offers are linked to "ecology" and "environmental protection" in order to have a market value. However, there is an increasing number of people who really care about the environment during their vacations.

This has become obvious in the last years as tour operators with ecologically sustainable offers did note an increasing demand for the products. However, it still seems that the tourism industry does not communicate environmental concerns to customers - just as an added value of the particular product.

However, the VCD-Project „Wanderlust - new ways of vacation" shows (in addition to concrete campaigns) that travellers are ready for "vacations without a car". 25 percent of all German holiday makers do make holidays without a car, and 20 percent of all German household don't even have a car! So, we ask: where are the offers meeting the demand of these (potential) travellers?



### **The real costs of cheap flight tickets**

Cheap tickets are subsidised with money from taxpayers.

The one who travels to London for 19 Euro or for 29 Euro to Venice, is paying such more in reality - when doing his tax return declaration. Because cheap flights are subsidised with huge amounts of given as presents by the public administration. This is highlighted in the latest issue of the German travel magazine GEO SAISON. In total, the money involved just at German small-scale airports accounts to a few thousand Europe per year, as experts have found out.

Especially airports fair away in the province are trying to get cheap flight airlines with special tax financed benefits, according to the magazine. There appear in special terms as "marketing support costs", "passenger volume depending discounts", etc.

Many communities are subsidising their airports with direct subsidies or considerable discounts of fees and charges.

The association of tax payers is cited with a very drastic statement: the Airport Dortmund is owned by the city's supply department which is using the earnings of energy, gas and water supply to recover the loss of the airport maintenance. Thus: we are flying economically, but later all are paying this with their tax statement.

*Source: Report by Julia Schoenhaerl*



### **TourBench? What's that?**

TourBench is a freely available, practical and easy-to-use web-based, multilingual monitoring and benchmarking instrument that enables you to scan your accommodation with reference to/on the basis of environmental issues. It helps you to determine the environmental impact of your accommodation over a period of years, based on the input of your company's consumption of (and costs for) energy, water, chemicals and waste production. Furthermore, it enables you to compare this impact with other, similar accommodation in your country or similar accommodation all over Europe. The input of data and the comparison with other accommodations is treated in confidence by the project partners.

### **What are the benefits?**

The strengths and weaknesses of your accommodation with reference to their environmental impact are quickly made clear by the comparison with similar accommodation. In other words: what is the saving potential? Based on your own input, TourBench provides the necessary information to enable you to determine which investments might be profitable for you. Furthermore, TourBench informs you about success stories and gives tips on how to apply for national and international environmental certificates for the European Ecolabel\_(the EU flower) or for EMAS, the

By saving the environment, you will save costs!! TourBench helps you to improve the sustainability and the quality of your business.



### **Another tourism disaster- Reflections on an impending disaster**

It's supposed to be the 8th Wonder of the World - but at a closer look for now there are just lorry caravans carrying the 40,000 workers to their work site each morning. Some 3500 lorries, jeeps, and construction machines work there to realise the biggest artificial island on the offshore of Dubai: "The Palm Jumeirah" (with the three separated island "The Palm, Jebel Ali", „The Palm, Jumeirah“ und „The Palm, Deira“). Time is running for the construction companies to provide the planned 32 Hotels, 1800 Villas, 7000 apartments, theme parks, shopping malls and all else on time, i.e. in early 2008.

Ten years ago, Sheikh Maktoum, Emir of Dubai and owner of the biggest construction company there, announced his plan to create three islands in form of palm trees and an archipelago in the form of a world map. Architects laughed about it, but today, the first island is almost completed. No wonder, looking at the superlative building projects in Dubai: the world's highest building, the most expensive hotel, the longest underground journey without a driver...!!!

Isn't it incredible to imagine that on the same territory some 100 year ago Bedouin tribes lived their nomad lives? Today, Dubai's population is growing by 100,000 per year; golf courts and duty-free shopping malls together with international financial services providers are now making more profit than the diminishing petrol sources...

At the new project, Dubai is expecting some 15 million tourists in 2010. In order to provide a paradise-like setting, however, Dubai had to find ways to provide extended land and beaches: for the Jumeirah-Palm project, some 78 kilometres of new beaches have been created by a Dutch specialist company (they have the experience from the Netherlands!) in total, the coastal line is now extended by some 120 km. However, as a desert beach was not appropriate, some 94 million cubic meters sand have been pulled out of the ocean and pumped on to the artificial construction site.

As builders were afraid of protests from environmental groups they made an attempt to compensate the damage in the underwater world and created new underwater platforms (reefs) where the refugee fauna and flora is supposed to start a new life as their natural habitat (a pristine underwater ecosystem!) has been completely covered by sand and severely damaged. This has also been done to satisfy the demand of the expected tourists and residents looking for an unique and rich scuba-diving experience!

European tour operators, for instance TUI, have invested in hotels on Jumeirah (a Robinson Club and a Iberotel). That clients will feel safe is guaranteed by the planners: privacy part of the deal and high security means and guards block the apartment blocks and hotel sites to ensure that no "non-client" can enter, or get close.

Anthony Kendall, in his article "Your Own (Man-Made) Private Island" ([www.damninteresting.com](http://www.damninteresting.com), on January 31st, 2006 at 9:32 am), adds a few interesting thoughts about the palm island project. He notes that humans have engaged in engineering on a massive scale for thousands of years, but only recently gained the ability to alter the face of the Earth. Mr. Kendall explains that humans have been building islands and expanding coastlines for thousands of years: starting with the crannogs of ancient Scotland and Ireland, the floating islands used as homes by the residents of Lake Titicaca (Peru), and Tenochtitlan (Mexico), the capital of the Aztec empire, which was surrounded by a flotilla of small floating islands.

In more recent times, artificial islands have been constructed to expand urban living and working spaces in Europe and Japan (e.g. the Kansai International Airport in Osaka Bay, Japan). But also cities including Chicago, New York, and Hong Kong have expanded into their waterways.

The changing of the Earth's surface dramatically raises environmental concerns as the natural living habitats of fisherfolks are changed and projects close to the ocean usually do alter ocean currents and change the surrounding marine environment. Despite newly created reefs as in Dubai, the ecological diversity will undoubtedly suffer.

I do agree with Mr. Kendall that humanity will continue to seek new living space in the seemingly limitless open space of the ocean; and that soaring property values in both wealthy and rapidly developing nations will increasingly make island construction more attractive. But what kind of impact will those projects have for the local people, not to think about those depending on their changed or damaged natural environments? This is a challenging question.

Can artificial island be the solution for no more forced migration? Can we compensate the destruction of (underwater) ecosystems by creating a few more snorkelling sites?

I doubt it. The latest Tsunami in 2004 has shown that damage and destruction of natural coastal ecosystems is hazardous for the civilization. How can artificial islands - as tourist or residential areas - be protected from Tsunamis, cyclones and see earth quakes? Bare in mind Mr Kendall's words: "But in our ongoing effort to reshape our world, let us hope that we learn our lessons well, for Nature's forces can be powerful enemies."

## **Acknowledgements**

- MCOT News
- Travel and Tourism
- TNA
- Alternative tourism Group / Joint Advocacy Initiative

Layout: Roselle Figueiredo Solomon