

Tourism Malaysia To Woo More Wedding Tourists From India
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By Saraswathi Muniappan

NEW DELHI, March 7 (Bernama) - Tourism Malaysia, which is eyeing 780,000 tourists from India in 2013, is all geared up to woo more wedding tourism from the country, its Director, Amran Abdul Rahman said.

Last year, a total of 691,271 Indians visited Malaysia

"Indians spend lavishly on weddings, especially in the northern region. It is a great market indeed," he said, adding, spending between RM3 million to RM4 million for weddings is very common.

Tourism Malaysia, he said has identified places such as Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Lucknow, as the major markets for wedding related tourism.

"We started this tourism strategy just four to five years ago and really want to go big on it. The market is so huge that the package could also include chartering a whole aircraft," he told Bernama.

There have been a few weddings held to date in Malaysia and the favourite destination of wedding couples was Langkawi, Pangkor, Penang and Kuala Lumpur.

"Malaysia also offers exotic destinations like Sabah and Sarawak for Indians who are seeking locations closer to nature," said Amran.

On why there have been only a few weddings, despite the huge potential, he said, the segment is still at a very early stage of development.

"One reason why we receive less weddings in Malaysia compared to Thailand, is that the product owners, namely hoteliers are not ready to host such big weddings.

"Of course, they are used to having Malaysian weddings. But the requirements for Indian weddings are different, especially in terms of food, which a majority of the hoteliers can't cater for," he added.

However, a number of hotels now understand the market and are well prepared to host, "Big Fat Indian Weddings."

On the part of Tourism Malaysia, he said, India's leading wedding planners have been taken on hosted tours to Malaysia, to discover the best on offer.

"We have also tied-up with wedding related magazines to showcase our products as well as participate in wedding fairs," he said.

The aim, he added, is to attract more quality weddings and not just quantity.

Besides weddings, he said Tourism Malaysia also aims to promote high-end tourism like spas, eco tourism, golf, exotic destinations as well as event related tourism such as the Formula One, Moto GP, and International Shoe Festivals.

Amran said there is also a huge demand for "single women" outbound travelers, which Tourism Malaysia would tap on, by coming up with customised travel packages.

"Besides spa, entertainment and shopping, we are also promoting diving activities for them in places like Tioman and Redang.

"Indian holidaymakers will continue to spend this year despite the global economic strain.

"Hence, we will be promoting various attractive destinations in Malaysia through various media and other activities, including campaigns on television, newspapers, magazines and the social media," he added.

Amran said Tourism Malaysia also does joint promotions with local tour operators, airlines, other tourism boards and select brands, to entice the tourism traffic from India.

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