

# Mekong Tourism NEWSLETTER

Issue: August 2024



## By Relaxing Visa Policies, Mekong Countries Are Preparing for Surge in Tourists

Around the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), governments are implementing visa relaxation policies – all to the benefit of incoming tourists, who appreciate the lowered barriers and come in greater numbers as a result.

Consider China PR, which has resumed and expanded its [144 - hour visa - free transit policy](#) to additional ports, making it easier for travelers from 54 countries to visit.

Thailand, for its part, has [extended visa stays](#) to stimulate its economy, effective from 15 July, 2024. Meanwhile, Lao PDR has [eased its visa policies](#) to attract more international visitors, while [Myanmar has lifted the last of its COVID - era restrictions](#).

By simplifying visa procedures and extending the duration of stays, GMS tourism authorities are fostering a more accessible and welcoming environment for tourists, in turn setting the stage for a higher volume of international travelers.

These proactive measures represent a collective effort across GMS borders that not only strengthen regional cooperation, but also promotes the sustainable growth of tourism in the Mekong region, contributing to economic development and cultural exchange.

Read the rest of this newsletter, and find out about the latest visa relaxation policies, and positive news about tourism in the GMS!



## Regional Spotlight: Tonle Sap, Cambodia

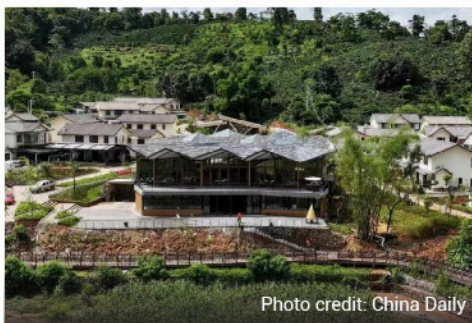
The rainy season makes Tonle Sap a great place to visit – from May to October, Southeast Asia's largest freshwater lake dramatically expands, revealing the rich biodiversity nestled between its floating villages and submerged forests. Over 300 fish species and 100 types of waterbirds call these waters home, creating an ecosystem that produces over half the fish consumed in the Kingdom. In Tonle Sap, you'll experience a local way of life intertwined with the lake's rhythms. ([Tourism Cambodia](#))





### Transforming Thai Tourism: Amazing Green Fest 2024

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in collaboration with The Cloud will host the Amazing Green Fest 2024 and The Hotelier 2024 forum to promote sustainable tourism by inviting travellers to embark on their journeys with responsibility. [Read more](#)



### China's Yunnan Govt Collaborates with Starbucks on New Coffee Center

Spanning 1,700 square meters, the center aims to boost local coffee production, integrate coffee and tourism, and promote ethnic cultures, highlighting Yunnan's commitment to sustainable development. [Read more](#)



### Cambodia Tourism Board Drives Sustainable Tourism Development with New Action Plan

The Cambodia Tourism Board has unveiled a comprehensive action plan to foster sustainable tourism development, focusing on international market engagement, cultural exchanges, and infrastructure improvements. [Read more](#)

## Upcoming Festivals



### 2 - 4 August

#### Amazing Beach Life Festival, Thailand.

As August kicks off, this beach festival starts its Phuket leg at Patong Beach between 2-4 August, with activities like water sports, music concerts by famous Thai artists, and DIY workshops such as beach paintings on wooden trays and key chains. Other activities include a fair for local art and craft products, food truck, beach bar and fashion items. [tatnews.org](http://tatnews.org)

### 12 - 19 August

#### Taungpyone Festival, Myanmar.

This festival commemorates two brothers that are venerated as Nat spirits. Held at Taung Pyone village north of Mandalay, the festival sees the whole village transformed into bazaars hawking food, flowers, toys, clothing, and trinkets; food stalls selling traditional Burmese fare; and theaters for Burmese traditional drama. [\(Myanmar Ministry of Hotels & Tourism\)](#)



### 18 August

#### Vu Lan Festival, Viet Nam.

In Taoist tradition, August is Ghost Month, when the world of the spirits is more open to humans. Vu Lan, or the filial piety ceremony, pays special tribute to ancestors and family. Locals visit their neighborhood temples to make offerings in honor of their ancestors. In Hoi An, local custom is to light small lanterns for our loved ones and set them afloat on the Hoài River. [vietnam.travel](http://vietnam.travel)



# News from the Greater Mekong Subregion

## Cambodia

- Real-life "Temple Run" trend a tourism boost for Angkor Wat and Ta Prohm. [Read more](#)
- Cambodia launches tourism marketing and promotion board, aiming to better reach international markets. [Read more](#)

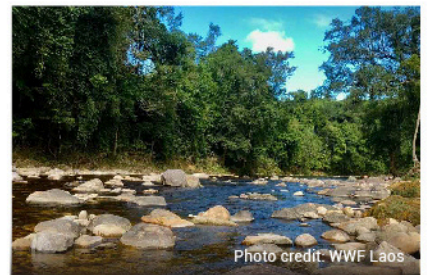


## China PR

- China PR expands visa-free access, covering 144-hour visits to tourist hotspots in Yunnan. [Read more](#)
- China-South Asia Expo kicks off in Kunming, set to bolster regional cooperation between China PR and South Asian countries. [Read more](#)

## Lao PDR

- Lao PDR and Viet Nam signed a cooperation agreement to enhance vocational tourism education. [Read more](#)
- A new decree upgrades Xesap protected area in Salavanh and Sekong provinces to national park status, aiming to protect biodiversity and support global conservation goals. [Read more](#)



## Myanmar

- Myanmar has officially lifted all COVID-19 entry health measures to promote tourism and trade development. [Read more](#)
- Tourism Development Plan announced for Yangon Region, inviting cooperation from multiple stakeholders. [Read more](#)

## Thailand

- Thailand announces longer visa stays to boost economy, including 60-day visa exemption and Visa on Arrival (VOA) schemes, taking effect from 15 July 2024. [Read more](#)
- Thailand emphasizes forest restoration and sustainable management to combat deforestation through community participation and innovative fiscal policies. [Read more](#)



## Viet Nam

- Travel + Leisure's Luxury Awards Asia Pacific recognizes Viet Nam's Hoi An among Asia's best cities. [Read more](#)
- Cam Ranh town in Khanh Hoa will host its first lobster festival from August 3-11 to promote local trade and tourism. [Read more](#)