

Swedish Tourism Situation

Thailand is suffering a significant slump in tourism – one of its important revenue streams. The total tourism to Thailand dropped over 21 per cent for the month of November 2008. That was the month where the internal disturbances peaked in Bangkok with the airport closure spilling also into early December.

By Joakim Persson

More figures for the months since then are yet to become official, but they are widely expected to be reflecting the negative impact of the riots in Bangkok and Pattaya during Songkran 2009 and the Easter holidays.

But the explosion in Swedish tourism is not likely to reverse or slump dramatically, key industry players tell Thai Sweden Review. Their view is that the Swedish tourism to Thailand is so far very much intact.

Sweden's increasing share of Thailand's inbound tourism pie started in the second part of the 1990's. In 1996, 84.000 Swedes visited Thailand. In year 2000 this visitor group had increased to 209.000 and had nearly doubled again to the astonishing figure of a bit over

378.000 visitors for the year 2007!

Looking at the latest available statistics, Thailand had 21 123 arrivals from Sweden during October 2008 (down 9,47 per cent from the same period the year before) and 41 434 during November (down 13 per cent).

"In brief I can say the recession only affected our Thailand market marginally during the passed winter," says Peter Hellström, Communications, Press & Corporate Citizenship at Fritidsresor.

"As trips abroad usually get booked fairly well in advance, a large part of the trips were already book when we entered the recession," Peter Hellström explains.

"How things will be for the next high season is yet too early to say since we have only just released

our complete programme for the winter 2009/2010. We are expecting bookings to be delayed (this applies in general for all travel and not specifically for Thailand), but the appetite for travel is still there. It is also the fact that Swedes who did in fact not lose their jobs often times have just as much money in the wallet now thanks to reduced taxation, lower rents and price of oil etc."

"Regarding the recent disturbances in Thailand, in principal they had no effect at all. We received very few reactions from travellers on trips to Thailand – and the same regarding forthcoming travellers," continues Peter Hellström.

Those who did contact Fritidsresor were only concerned if it would affect their trip in any way, to which the tour operator replied it would not.

A bit over 50 per cent of Fritidsresor's travellers are from Sweden and most of them travel to Phuket and some to Krabi, which is part of the explanation as the turmoil was isolated to Bangkok and not affecting tourism areas popular among Scandinavians.

Fritidsresor has own charter trips to Thailand all the year round since 2008.

Magdalena Öhrn at Ving, another large player, points out how the Swedes and their preference to Thailand is really unique.

"During the disturbances both in December and during Easter we could see no cancellations at all. On the contrary; people continued booking trips to Thailand as usual."

