

2.5 million tourists expected to visit Sabah this year

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KOTA KINABALU: Sabah expects to exceed its 2.2 million tourist target this year by 300,000 arrivals, said State Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Christina Liew.

She said Sabah had recorded 2.1 million tourist arrivals with an estimated RM4.42 billion in tourism receipts as of October this year, and based on the number of arrivals in the previous nine months, it is expected to reach 2.5 million tourist arrivals by year end.

To achieve the said goal, the State Government is committed to implementing various initiatives and inclusive tourism programmes as a promotional effort and marketing to make Sabah a destination of choice for domestic and international tourists in this post-pandemic period.

"Therefore, efforts to expand the air travel network continues to be the most important agenda this year with various incentives and initiatives designed as an effort to support and encourage airlines to restart routes that were stopped, open new routes, and have special chartered flights to Sabah," she said when launching the Regional Tourism Satellite Account (RTSA) Sabah 2022 at Shangri-La Tanjung Aru here on Thursday.

Christina's text speech was delivered by her Assistant Minister Datuk Joniston Bangkuai.

She said with the reopening of the country's borders, a positive impact was seen in promoting the recovery of Sabah's tourism sector as it had recorded 1.73



Joniston (centre) and Mohd Uzir (third right) holding the Regional Tourism Satellite Account (RTSA) Sabah 2022 publication.

million tourist arrivals in 2022, which is a 365.5 percent increase compared to only 371,187 arrivals the previous year.

Christina said as for this year, Sabah had recorded 384 domestic flights with 63,519 seat capacity and as many as 105 direct flights with 18,962 seat capacity to Kota Kinabalu on a weekly basis, stressing the importance of air travel network in connecting Sabah to potential destinations in the region.

"I am confident that Sabah will be able to meet its arrival target this year and it will intensify the recovery momentum next year," she said.

Meanwhile, Christina explained that the RTSA was implemented to measure the performance of Sabah's tourism sectors, and the data obtained via the initiative is inclusive which include surveys on various tourism aspects such as main attractions for tourists.

She said the results of the RTSA Sabah are vital in determining the state's performance in tourism and it will also be used in the formation of policies to boost tourism

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Datuk Christina Liew

activities in the state, and she hopes industry players can take advantage of the findings.

"With this publication, it will be able to assist many parties including the government, researchers, academics and industry players in drafting and planning the development of the tourism industry in Sabah," she said.

RTSA Sabah 2022 was developed by the Department

of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) in collaboration with Sabah Tourism, Culture and Environment Ministry and Sabah Tourism Board (STB) to prepare statistics to not only measure the development of Sabah's tourism sector but also its contribution to its gross domestic product (GDP).

Some of the findings from the RTSA is that the main factors influencing tourists to come to Sabah are ease of access, visiting tourist attractions, and recommendations from friends and family, with most of them saying the main attraction for them are the state's islands and beaches.

Other findings of the RTSA include that the tourists comprise 57.6 percent male and 42.4 percent female, around 70.9 percent of them stay at hotels during their visits, and some of their most bought items here include local food, dried seafood, frozen seafood, and local handicrafts.

Also present was Chief Statistician Malaysia Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin.