Short-haul travel will continue to dominate tourism in Asia

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Short-haul travel will continue to dominate tourism in Asia for the next 10 years, by Euromonitor International

Short-haul travel within Asia Pacific is more popular than ever, with 90% of all outbound departures from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Macau, going to destinations within the region, according to research from Euromonitor International. Not only does the short-haul market dominate departures in Asia, it is also growing rapidly, with departures up by 20% between 2000 and 2005, compared to long-haul's growth rate of 12% over the same period.

Price, familiarity and changing consumer lifestyles all benefit short-haul
The popularity of short-haul travel in Asia is set to intensify further over the next ten years, thanks to a combination of positive factors fuelling growth, according to Euromonitor International. Parita Chitakasem, Asia Pacific Travel and Tourism Manager at Euromonitor International explains, â€œThe appeal of short-haul travel is plentiful. A cheaper ticket price, the shorter travel time and the perception of short-haul destinations being more familiar territory, are all key factors which encourage Asians to stay within their region when they travel. If you add to this the growing popularity of weekend breaks and the increasingly hectic lifestyles of consumers across Asia Pacific, which is restricting time available for longer breaks, we forecast that short-haul travel will witness strong growth over the next five-to-ten yearsâ€•.

Industry developments support short-haul growth
Furthermore, the past year has seen a hype of activity in the travel industry, which Euromonitor predicts will spark yet more growth in the number of short-haul trips within the region. Firstly, Asian Tourism Boards have been concentrating many promotional efforts on neighbouring countries, encouraging regional travellers to visit their country more frequently. Secondly, the development of the â€œopen-skiesâ€• agreement and visa-free regime between all ASEAN countries in July 2006, is making travel within the region easier.

Transportation developments are also helping to drive growth in short-haul travel. Euromonitor International forecasts that the continuing boom in low cost carriers, the development of the new Boeing 787 Dreamliner and the continued progress on the historical Iron Silk Road rail network between China and India will open up new entry routes for visitors throughout the Asia Pacific region.

Long-haul travel developing as Asians grow in confidence
Although short-haul takes the lion's share of the departures market in most Asian countries, Euromonitor International predicts that long-haul travel will develop over the next five years as Asians become more independent and confident in travelling further a field. Currently, the main barrier to the development of the long haul market in Asia is the lack of awareness and familiarity Asians have with destinations outside of their region, according to Euromonitor International. Parita Chitakasem explains, â€œTourism boards from Europe and the Americas still have a much lower profile in Asia than their Asian counterparts in terms of promotional campaigns across the region. More aggressive marketing tactics are needed to ensure travellers are drawn to long-haul destinationsâ€•.

Long-haul destinations also have a long way to go in catering adequately to Asians, with Euromonitor International identifying that most visitors may still face severe language barriers and red tape at immigration. Euromonitor's Chitakasem comments, â€œThose markets which invest the most in developing services tailored to Asian tourists are likely to be the first to win the highest growth in visitors from the region over the short-termâ€•.

Future outlook: short-haul will secure stronger share
Euromonitor International estimates that increased frequency in outbound travel amongst Asians will ensure growth in both short and long-haul sales, but the lack of adequate resources from long-haul destinations, as well as the prevailing importance of weekend breaks and limited time availability will mean that short-haul will come out on top in terms of growth over the next five-ten years. However, of the long-haulers, Japan and South Korea will continue to represent the most important source markets, and China and India will witness the fastest growth.

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