

Measures to Deal With Bad Effect by Seasonal Features on the An Giang Tourism

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An Giang has potentials for tourism development based on beautiful landscapes and historical relics, such as Sam Mountain, Bà Chúa Xứ Temple, natural caves in Két, Cồ Tô and Nước Mountains and Tức Dụp Hill (an old battlefield and resistance base), and many beautiful waterways. An Giang also has good weather and many gates to tourist attractions in Cambodia, which allow prolonged tours for visitors. From March to May every year, however, the water level rises high and sometimes causes floods, which produces bad effects on tourism activities.

The number of visitors to An Giang rose steadily over years, from 2.5 million in 2000 to 2.7 million in 2003 and 3.8 million in 2005 but they tend to visit An Giang in certain times of the year, such as Bà Chúa Xứ Festival in April or at the beginning of the summer time in June. Data from the An Giang Service of Tourism about the number of visitors in the years 2000-05 allow us to work out changes in the average number of tourists over months of a year.

Thus the peak season of An Giang tourism is from February to June with the highest peak in June. This seasonal feature affects all sectors and parties concerns.

- Tourism agencies: At peak season, tourism agencies couldn't provide their best services because of their limited human resource and facilities. In other months of the year, they usually suffer losses when overheads are higher than their incomes. This



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situation could lead to movement of laborers and difficulties in giving more training courses to agencies' workforce. Both overuse and underutilization of facilities could cause waste or harm to them.

- Tourists: As customers of tourism agencies, they have to receive bad services (transport, accommodation, food, etc.) during the peak season.

- Local authorities: The peak season poses serious social problems and diffi-

culties in ensuring order and security for local authorities when huge flows of tourists concentrate in a small district.

- Local residents: Their ordinary way of life is changed. New sources of income lead to more spending and waste.

The seasonal feature of the tourism business comes from many factors.

a. Natural conditions: These conditions affect many tourism products, such as excursions to

mountains and festivals and ecotourism. The number of visitors increases during the summer and dry seasons when it is sunny and clear. To deal with this shortcoming, the tourism agencies had better develop other products, such as health caring, cultural and business tours, which are relatively free from effects of weather.

b. Mental, social and economic conditions: When the living standards in big cities and other provinces, the number of visitors to An Giang increases in all months of the year, which will reduce intensity during the peak season.

Idle time of different groups also has its own effect: civil servants, peasants, students, teachers and workers for example, have their own idle time.

Month	Average (1,000 visitors)	Month	Average (1,000 visitors)
January	110	July	180
February	300	August	190
March	350	September	200
April	300	October	210
May	450	November	200
June	1,000	December	120

However, An Giang can only attract them during the summer time and traditional festivals. The tourism authorities had better pay attention to other groups, such as retirees and the elders. When the life expectancy and personal income are improved, these groups tend to enjoy more travel at any time of the year.

Tourists come from all walks of life but they tend to go during the peak season because of the following reasons:

- Limited disposable income forces them to buy tours during the peak season to enjoy cut prices offered to large groups of tourists.

- Lack of knowledge about local conditions makes them to choose tour during the peak season to enjoy the possibly best weather of the year. Moreover, the lack of knowledge also makes them to buy tours like others do, that is, their decisions are affected by herd instinct.

These common tourists tend to make the seasonal feature of the tourism business more serious. One of well-known measures is to offer cut prices before and

after the peak season and spend more money on advertisement of off-season tours and their attractive features.

These factors may affect separately or collectively, and sometimes effects of one factor could be reduced by others. For example, better facilities could reduce effects of the weather. Studies of the effects of each factor can help work out measure to make the peak season longer, develop new products and increase the tourist receipts.

To deal with negative effects of the seasonal feature on the An Giang tourism, the following measures may be useful.

The seasonal feature comes from instability of the supply of and demand for tourism products. The measure to deal with the seasonal feature must aim at meeting the demand during the peak season and generate it during off-season time.

To meet the increasing demand during the peak season, more tourist attractions must be developed around main destinations for tourists in order to make the peak season

longer. Sales promotion and pricing policy are good measures to generate more demand during off-season time.

These two measures imply the following contents.

- + Identifying possibilities of prolonging the peak season of a tourism product: Tourism agencies must estimate quantity and structure of potential tourist groups during the off-season time, such as business visitors, retirees, and so on, in order to offer them suitable tours or products.

- + Diversifying tourism products: Each product usually has its own peak season; for example, relaxing tours in the summer, festival tours in the spring, etc. To prolong the peak season, more products must be developed and offered in a tourism site. The new products must be based on value and ability to access tourism resources; sizes of existing and potential tourists; ability to host and serve tourists of tourism sites; supply of local labor; ability to combine with other products; and experience of tourism agencies.

- + Identifying conditions for the second peak season: Other peak seasons must be designed with a view to attracting tourists during off-season time. This could be done based on: attraction of tourism resources after or before the existing peak season (eco-tours besides relaxing ones for example); ability to exploit untapped resources; size and structure of potential tourists; quality and capacity of existing facilities; ability to make necessary investment in new facilities and tourism sites.

- + Dealing with shortcomings of services: To improve the services for tourists and reduce the gap between their expectation and satisfaction, tourism agencies must study needs of tourist groups. This aim could be achieved by improving the quality and capacity of facilities, offering more diverse tours, and ensuring one-stop service. In addition, tourism agencies must spend more money on advertisement and publicity for off-season products, offer more tours at lower prices, and even give certain free services. ■

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