

Measures to Develop the Tourism Industry in Cần Thơ up to 2010 and 2020

by PHẠM THỊ TUYẾT ANH

Cần Thơ has just been separated from Cần Thơ Province and turned into a city directly responsible to the central government, the only one in the Mekong Delta. It is also a center for tourism included in the triangle comprising HCMC, Cần Thơ and Phú Quốc because it has a convenient location and the best infrastructure in the Delta. In addition, it is also a transit place for tourists who want to visit other provinces in the Delta or go to Cambodia by boat. Its cultural and ecological features as a rural area in the South is still preserved.

1. Flow of tourists to Cần Thơ

- International tour-

rate of this group was 11.3% a year.

- Domestic tourists: The flow of domestic tourists is many times bigger than the international one because tourism resources and infrastructure in Cần Thơ are more suitable for them. Most of these tourists come from other provinces in the Mekong Delta, while tourists from HCMC and other zones represent a small percentage and most of them go to Cần Thơ on business. Data from the Cần Thơ Tourism Service show that the volume of domestic tourists rose from 164,590 in 2000 to 327,470 in 2004 and 362,000 in 2005. The growth rate of this group in 2000-05 was 17.48% a year.

more tourists but also investors in the coming years because most of its potentials are not tapped properly.

The tourism business enjoys some growth because Cần Thơ is an economic and scientific center of the Mekong Delta and not far from HCMC. Cần Thơ infrastructure is more developed in comparison with neighboring provinces (hotels, telecommunications, roads and waterways, port, airport, branches of major banks, etc.) Cần Thơ could develop many new tourism products because its landscape hasn't been exploited, the ecosystem is acceptable with many waterways bordered by fruit orchards that supply various kinds of fruits

Although the number of tourists made some increase, their stay is rather short (1.29 days on average for international tourists and 1.23 days for domestic ones). This means that tourism products and services are not diverse and attractive enough to persuade them to stay longer.

2. Visions of Cần Thơ tourism up to 2010 and 2020

a. Visions for the year 2010: Cần Thơ tourism authority has decided to obtain a turning point for this business in the years 2006-2010 in order to build a basis for development in the next decade. For the time being, the local government plans to build two

Table 1: Tourists visiting Cần Thơ in the past five years

	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
	Number		Number	Growth	Number	Growth	Number	Growth	Number	Growth	Number	Growth
International tourists	60,580		72,700	20.01	90,490	24.45	80,070	-11.51	87,530	9.32	100,000	14.25
Domestic tourists	164,590		190,370	15.66	209,650	10.12	287,900	37.32	327,470	13.74	362,000	10.54
Total	225,170		263,070		300,140		367,970		415,000		462,000	

Source: Cần Thơ Service of Tourism

ists: At present, not many international tourists visit Cần Thơ (some 3% of tourists visiting Vietnam) but this group tends to increase over years: from 60,580 in 2000 to 87,530 in 2004 and some 100,000 in 2005. In the years 2000-05, the growth

Generally, the flow of tourists, both international and domestic, shows an upward tendency. The flow of domestic tourists increased rather fast and with a reasonable strategy to develop the tourism business, Cần Thơ will attract not only

all year round. International tourists can enjoy eco-tours that allow them to take part in local life, taste fruits picked directly from trees or study local ways of living. Moreover, the political stability ensures them freedom from terrorism or social unrest.

or three tourist attractions, a recreation ground, a golf course, a four-star or five-star hotel, and the Tây Đô Cultural Center. In addition, the tourism agency will develop new products, and open various local and international tours as required

by tourists when the Cần Thơ Bridge is finished and Trà Nóc Airport comes into operation. Local government will increase investment in the infrastructure building, work out policies to attract investment in this business and cooperate with the Vietnam Tourism Bureau to build and run a tourism service high school.

b. Visions for the year 2020: The local authorities must complete the plan to develop the tourism industry and expand the space for tourism from inner city to suburbs. In the inner city, centers of eco-tourism, spas, health caring centers and recreation ground could be built along with the Tây Đô Cultural Center. In addition, there is a plan to build facilities for international conferences, office buildings and hotel of four- or five- star standards, revamp and preserve historical and cultural relics, and upgrade and modernize

existing facilities for tourism. The development of tourism must be linked with protection of the environment. In suburbs, some hotels of one- to three-star standards will be built in order to bring tourists nearer to rural areas and help them visit fruit orchards and other famous places, such as the Bàng Lãng Garden for Heron, Tân Lộc Islet, Sông Hậu and Cờ Đỏ State Farms, traditional handicraft villages, etc. Other tasks are to train an army of professional guides and coordinators, and carry out long-term tourism promotion programs. The target is to turn Cần Thơ into a safe, friendly and ideal destination for tourists; and a center of Mekong river civilization.

3. Measures to develop the Cần Thơ tourism industry

a. Investment: The central and municipal governments should spend a satisfactory part of public invest-

ment building the infrastructure needed for tourism development, especially in tourism sites and centers in the inner city. Tourism authorities had better adopt policies to encourage and help all classes to invest in this industry, such as simplifying administrative procedures, supplying supporting services to potential investors, giving equal treatment to both foreign and local; and public and private investors.

b. Diversifying tourism products: Besides helping tourist travel by boat and visit fruit orchards or serving as a transit station, Cần Thơ could diversify its products, such as islet tours, visits to floating markets, stay at health care centers, and recreation activities in the inner city. Authorities must provide tourists with more services, such as information about tourism sites, guiding service, health care, and transport, etc. Local au-

thorities could help restore traditional handicraft villages Ô Môn, Thốt Nốt and Cái Răng in order to turn them into new tourist attractions. Holding trade fairs, seminars and conferences, and festivals is also a measure to make Cần Thơ more remarkable and attractive in the eyes of tourists.

c. Tourism promotion: A center of information of Cần Thơ Tourism must be opened, and other branches or rep offices could be established in potential markets at home and abroad. The website of the Cần Thơ Service of Tourism must be enhanced in order to introduce images of Cần Thơ to the public. Catalogs and guidebooks are also useful vehicles for promoting Cần Thơ tourism business and its services.

d. Human resource: All employees of tourist agencies must be trained in food hygiene, local history and culture, foreign languages, etc. In the long run, their services and occupation must be standardized along with the salary scale.

e. Protection of the environment: Environmental resources should be considered as a factor that determines survival of the tourism business. Environmental issues in Cần Thơ haven't been serious but the pollution has shown an upward tendency. All facilities serving tourists must observe regulations on this matter and waste treatment works must be built as soon as possible. ■

Figure 1: Tourists visiting Cần Thơ in the past five years

