



MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY
News Release

Tourism is Everybody's Business!

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NMI August 2012 Visitor Arrivals Rise Sharply by 20%

Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands (NMI) – August 2012 visitor arrivals to the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI) were up 20 percent compared to August 2011.

According to the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA), arrivals to the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota registered 40,225 visitors in August compared to 33,503 in August 2011. Overall, visitor arrivals are up 15 percent so far this fiscal year to 359,003 visitors.

Arrivals from Japan reached 17,969 visitors in August, 17 percent higher than August last year, as the Japan market continues to stabilize, and re-establishes its position as the Northern Marianas' number one source market of incoming tourists. Delta Air Lines launched an additional four weekly flights from Narita on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday beginning July 14 and continuing through Sept. 24. Asiana Airlines began operating daily flights from Osaka on July 16 continuing through Aug. 31. In addition, Asiana Airlines launched seasonal charter flights from Narita to Saipan from Aug. 16 to 22. These additional flights all significantly boosted the number of Japanese visitors to the Northern Marianas during the peak summer season versus last year. From September, however, the challenge will be to continue this growth momentum in the face of an uncertain airlift situation out of the Japan market.

Arrivals from Korea posted a seventh consecutive month of double-digit increases, up 22 percent to 12,810 visitors. Asiana Airlines re-launched a second weekly service from Busan to Saipan on June 13 which had been suspended since June of last year due to lack of available aircraft. So far this fiscal year, visitor arrivals from Korea are up 19 percent to 118,361 compared to the same period last year. The supply of air seats to the NMI out of the Korea market is projected to continue to increase in the final quarter of the year, with Asiana Airlines boosting its Busan-Saipan service from two to four flights a week beginning Nov. 20, and ensuring continued strong growth in Korean arrivals through the end of the year.

Arrivals from China have shown tremendous consistent growth each month this year compared to last year, jumping another 32 percent in August to 6,762 visitors. So far this fiscal year, the Northern Marianas has received 73 percent more visitors from China as the same period last year due to the launch of new flights, including six weekly flights from Shanghai and Guangzhou. Continuous significant growth in Chinese arrivals is projected through the end of the year thanks to China's National Day holidays in October, the launch of new flights from Beijing in November, and on-going major media and travel agent promotions launched by the MVA's new China office.

Meanwhile, arrivals were down 15 percent from Russia to 359 in August. Arrivals from Russia have increased 11 percent so far this fiscal year, compared to last. Bi-weekly charter flights by AviaCharter DV commenced from Vladivostok today (Oct. 26), providing 150 seats per charter flight.

Arrivals were up in August from Guam (up 16 percent to 1,293), the United States (up 50 percent to 727) and Other Areas (up 9 percent to 234), but lower from the Philippines (down 25 percent to 40), and Hong Kong (down 81 percent to 31).

Japan, Korea and China Economic Highlights

The Japanese Cabinet Office's August economic report assessed that the country's recovery continues at a moderate pace, spurred on by reconstruction demand. The Japanese yen to U.S. dollar exchange rate remained stable throughout August, ending trading at 78.39 yen to the U.S. dollar. The number of Japanese outbound pax in July reached a preliminary total of 1.6 million, for an increase of 8.85 percent over 2011. Travel agent JTB's nonprofit think-tank the

JTB Foundation made a prediction that outbound travel from Japan will climb to as high as 19 million in the 2012 calendar year, an increase of 11.8 percent from last year.

Meanwhile, the Korean economy shows recent signs of overall weakening with the fall in exports caused by worsening external conditions and moderate growth in domestic demand. The won/dollar exchange rate rose 4.73 from previous month to finish at 1,133.4. According to the Korea Tourism Organization, the number of Korean outbound travelers in July was 1,305,418, an increase of 5.1 percent compared to the same month in 2011. According to the Office of Travel & Tourism Industry, the number of Korean visitors to the U.S. in May was 97,309, an increase of 1.2 percent compared to the same month in 2011.

China's Ministry of Finance reported tax revenues grew 8.2 percent year-on-year to \$168.77 billion in July. China's Foreign Exchange Trading System said the nation's currency the Renminbi, or yuan, weakened 29 basis points to 6.3478 against the U.S. dollar on August 20. According to Xinhua.net, China's economy will experience continued slowdown and the government will need to implement more economic stimulus programs. China's GDP expanded by 7.6% in the second quarter of 2012, the first time the world's second largest economy's growth had fallen below 8 percent since the fourth quarter of 2009.

China's Ministry of Public Security reported that 38.6 million mainland Chinese citizens traveled outside the country's borders in the first half of this year, a nearly 20 percent rise over the same period last year and close to double the number in 2007. With this year's surge, Chinese tourists are on track to make around 80 million overseas trips during 2012. The figures should give cause for optimism to destinations and consumer brands worried that China's slower economic growth would reduce spending on travel.

The Northern Mariana Islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota are a chain of idyllic islands in the West Pacific, offering a friendly, fun and exciting vacation in paradise. They are an excellent destination for families, adventure and sports-minded travelers, as well as business people looking for a tropical haven. Adventurous travelers from Asia, Australia, Europe and elsewhere looking for new travel discoveries will find them in the Mariana Islands, just three hours travel from most cities in Japan, and four from Asia and Australia. The Northern Marianas are served from Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka in Japan by Delta Air Lines and Asiana Airlines. From Korea, Asiana provides direct flights from Seoul and Busan. China is served regularly from Shanghai, Guangzhou and seasonally from Beijing. For more information visit www.mymarianas.com.

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