



MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY
News Release

Tourism is Everybody's Business!

PERRY JOHN P. TENORIO
MVA MANAGING DIRECTOR

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For further information, contact:
Perry John P. Tenorio, Managing Director
Marianas Visitors Authority
Telephone: (670) 664-3200/3201 Facsimile: (670) 664-3237
mva@mymarianas.com
www.mymarianas.com

NMI May 2012 Visitor Arrivals Up 20%

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

According to the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA), arrivals to the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota registered 28,193 visitors in May compared to 23,451 in May 2011. Overall, visitor arrivals are up 12 percent so far this fiscal year to 256,898 visitors.

Arrivals from Japan were 29 percent higher to 9,727 in May, another month of rebound following the East Japan Earthquake of March 2011 and subsequent drop-off in travel from the primary source market. The significant increase in May was thanks to additional flights launched by Asiana Airlines during Golden Week, as well as increased agent promotions and media exposure for Saipan, Tinian, and Rota in the run-up to the anticipated launch of Saipan Air on July 1, which was subsequently cancelled.

Arrivals from Korea posted a fourth month of double-digit increases, up 24 percent to 9,052 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. The supply of air seats to the Northern Marianas out of the Korea market is expected to continue to steadily increase this summer due to planned charter flights from Incheon to Saipan during the summer peak season, with eight charters already scheduled from Aug. 1 to 25 using an Asiana

Airlines Airbus 321 with 171 seats.

Brand USA, the first federal organization in the United States to market the country to the world as a tourism destination, kicked off activities in Japan and Korea in May with a major television advertising campaign, and is now setting up a Japan and Korea representative office to launch large-scale promotions for the U.S. as a whole. These Brand USA promotions in Japan and Korea will include the NMI under its umbrella, and as a result, the NMI will benefit from on-going large-scale Brand USA promotions in both Japan & Korea during the coming years. The MVA will participate in the first-ever Brand USA Pavilion at JATA World Travel Fair in September.

Arrivals from China increased 33 percent to 6,685 visitors in May, continuing a steady growth pace this fiscal year compared to last. So far this fiscal year, the Northern Marianas has received 88 percent more visitors from China as the same period last year due to additional flights, which include six total weekly flights from Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Meanwhile, arrivals were also up 33 percent from Russia to 431.

“May 2012 continued to show recovery compared to last year from our primary source markets of Japan and Korea and our secondary market of Russia, all of which had been negatively affected by the East Japan Earthquake of March 2011,” said MVA Managing Director Perry Tenorio. “So far this fiscal year, we have seen double digit growth from Korea, China, and Russia, with arrivals from Japan nearly even to the same period last year. It’s a step in the right direction.”

Arrivals were also up in May from the Philippines (23 percent to 53) and Other Areas (3 percent to 242). Other markets posted lower arrivals, including Guam (5 percent to 1,317), the United States (46 percent to 649) and Hong Kong (90 percent to 37).

Japan and Korea Economic Highlights

Japan’s Cabinet Office raised its economic assessment for the first time in nine months, from “picking up slowly” to “on the way to recovery at a moderate pace,” citing improvements in both domestic consumption and exports. The government continues to focus its efforts on earthquake reconstruction, and together with the Bank of Japan, will persist in battling deflation

and an unfavorably strong yen. In May, the yen continued to strengthen to close the month at 78.74 to the US dollar, a high not seen since mid-February.

Online reservation website Expedia.com conducted a survey to determine the trends of two generations in Japan: those just entering the workforce (aged 22-25) and baby boomers (aged 55 and up). All demographics that were satisfied with their incomes listed “travel” as one of their top three uses for disposable income, and women were even more inclined to travel. The most preferred international destinations for men were the mainland USA, followed by Saipan, and in third place, Guam.

The Korean economy is showing signs of delayed improvement compared to the previous month as the growth rate of exports slowed mainly to the European Union. According to Statistics Korea, the monthly average income of Korean households with two people or more reached 4.124 million won in the first quarter advancing 6.9 percent from a year ago. In real terms (adjusted for inflation), it grew 3.8% during the same period, marking the fourth straight year-on-year rise.

According to the KTO (Korea Tourism Organization), the number of Korean outbound travelers in April was 1,018,645, an increase of 17.4 percent compared to the same month (867,487) in 2011. The total number of Korean outbound travelers from January to April was 4,388,713, up 7.2 percent from the same period (4,095,816) in 2011.

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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