



PRESS RELEASE
MINISTRY OF TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE

ASEAN TOURISM MINISTERS' RETREAT

29 September 2025, Melaka – The ASEAN Tourism Ministers' Retreat concluded today in the historic city of Melaka, bringing together ASEAN Member States, Timor-Leste, and the Secretary-General of ASEAN to discuss strategies for strengthening the future of tourism in the region.

In his opening remarks, YB Dato Sri Tiong King Sing, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Malaysia, underscored that the Retreat is not a casual gathering but a vital platform for Ministers to engage, deliberate, and make key decisions. He noted that the Retreat should become a formal part of the ASEAN calendar, providing Member States with a regular forum to review progress, exchange best practices, and chart future directions together.

The Minister also highlighted the importance of embracing the creative economy as a new engine of growth. By leveraging ASEAN's rich culture, youthful talent, and digital capabilities, the region can inject fresh dynamism into its tourism sector while enhancing ASEAN's visibility on the global stage.

The discussions today focused on two main priorities:

- (i) First, advancing **sustainable, inclusive, and resilient tourism** by integrating climate adaptation into planning, empowering local communities, and ensuring that both rural and urban areas benefit fairly.
- (ii) Second, strengthening **regional and global connectivity** through better infrastructure, seamless travel facilitation, and digital innovation to position ASEAN as one single, integrated destination.

As an outcome of the Retreat, ASEAN Member States agreed to strengthen regional tourism cooperation with a strong focus on sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience — key drivers to boost visitor arrivals and stimulate economic growth. Ministers identified opportunities to expand business events (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions – MICE), community-based tourism, and cruise tourism, while also enhancing air, land, and sea connectivity across the region.

The meeting further emphasized the importance of advancing digital solutions, including the development of a single payment gateway for cross-border transactions and stronger linkages between national cashless systems, such as Singapore's PayNow, Thailand's TAGTHAi, and Malaysia's DuitNow. Ministers also underscored the need to facilitate more seamless travel by streamlining immigration procedures and expanding the use of e-gates and QR codes for faster entry, ensuring ASEAN remains competitive and attractive to global travellers.

The Retreat, initiated under Malaysia's Chairmanship, was recognised as an important platform for Ministers to engage openly on key tourism issues. Member States expressed support for its formalisation as an annual meeting, ensuring continuity in cooperation and delivering concrete progress continuously.

These outcomes reaffirm ASEAN's collective commitment to strengthening the tourism sector, creating jobs, driving economic growth, and showcasing the region as a vibrant, world-class destination. This momentum will continue when the Philippines hosts the next ASEAN Tourism Ministers' Meeting in Cebu in 2026.

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