

CHAPTER 9

TOURISM

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9.1 Tourism in the NBR

9.1.1 Tourism Resources and Products of NBR

Thailand is reputed tourism destination with 8 million international tourists, increased by annual rate of 6%. Nevertheless, the NBR is attracting limited number of international tourist. Major international tourist flows in the northeastern region of Thailand are east – west route (Nakhon Ratchasima-Ubon Ratchathani) and south – north route (Nakhon Ratchasima-Khon Kane-Udon Thani) that uncross the Study Area as shown in Figure 9.1. Major tourist attractions in the NBR are explained below by province.

(1) Nakhon Phanom

Phra That Phanom temple, located 50 km south of provincial capital, built in AD 500, attracts thousands of domestic tourists from all over Thailand. A lot of devotees participate in homage paying fair held during 14th – 20th January, every year. 50-m high pagoda is the most revered shrines in the northeastern region and regularly attracts pilgrims. Several temples are also scattered in the periphery of the province. Wat Okatsribuaban, Wat Srihep Praditthaaram, Wat Phra That Renu, Phra That Srikhun (Na Kae), Phra That Tha-Uthen, Phra That Prasit (80 km northwest) have respective attractions.

Illuminated Boat Festival, held annually marking the end of the Ok Phansa (Buddhist Lent) by the launching of illuminated boats, calls thousands of domestic tourists. Colorful street procession and cultural performances are made in the festival.

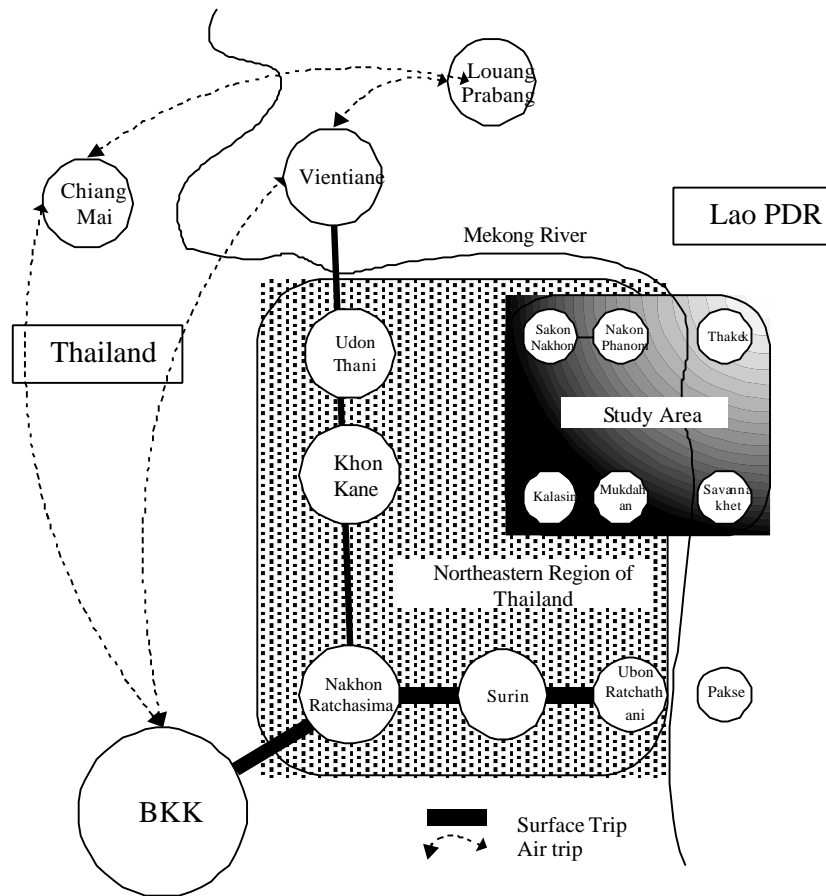
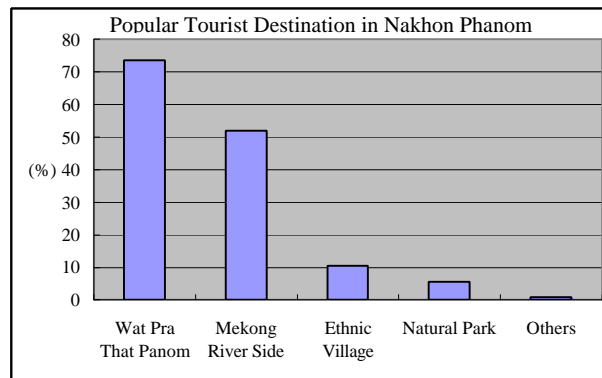


Figure 9.1 Major International Tourist Route in the Northeastern Region

Renu Nakhon is located 52 km south of the capital and famous of Phu Thai ethnic minority group who still retain their ancient culture, namely form of dances and custom of the Bai Sri-Su-Kwan welcoming ceremony. Local products including woven cotton are the attractive souvenirs.

Mekong River promenade is scenic points for sunrise and water front view. Renovation of promenades and development of a festival park are being conducted by the provincial authority.

Phu Lungka National Park, located 92 km northwest of the capital near the border of Nong Khai province, is attracting Thai natural lovers by numerous wild flowers, orchid, trees, and Tad Kham waterfall.



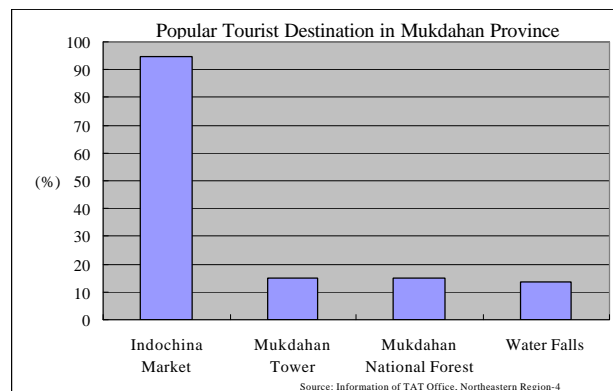
Source: TAT

Figure 9.2 Tourism Destination of Nakhon Phanom

(2) Mukdahan

There is an Indochina market in the center of the city at Mekong riverbank. Various commodities and souvenirs such as silk, cotton, local products of Laos, carved ceramics from China and Vietnam as well as glassware and mechanical equipment from Russia, etc. are sold not only for local people but for tourists. Renovation of the market, development of market center, is scheduled to implement during 2001 - 2004 by TAT.

National Parks, Mukdahan National Forest (17 km south of the city), Phu Sa Dok Bua Forest Park (20km southwest of the capital), Phu Mhu Forest Park (20km south of the capital), are presenting natural scenery attraction for tourists from local and neighboring provinces. Natural waterfalls and cave are also observed in the province. Access to the national parks/forests is well developed. Mukdahan Tower built in the center of the city is a new attraction for domestic tourism.



Source: TAT

Figure 9.3 Tourism Destination in Mukdahan

(3) Sakon Nakhon

There are three famous temples, Wat Phra That Choeng Chum, Wat Pa Su Thawat, and Wat Phra That Narai Cheong Weng in the Capital City, attracting pilgrims and domestic tourists. Wat Phra That Choeng Chum is major sacred temple where pilgrims visit. Wat Phra That Narai Cheng Weng has Hindu temple with carved lintels portraying Siva and Vishnu built in 10-11th Century.

Sakon Nakhon City is famous for the wax castle festival attracting numerous domestic tourists. Four-day festival shows wax castle processions, competitive boat racing in Nong Han Reservoir as well as traditional northeastern cultural performances.

Phu Phan National Park is covering parts of Sakon Nakhon, Nakhon Phanom, and Kalasin provinces, spreading over the mountainous area on provincial border.

Kud Na Kham Royal Art and Craft Center, located 75 km northwest of the provincial capital, is a training center for artisans of Sakon Nakhon. Under the auspices of Queen Sirikit's foundation, handicraft training is done. Training is demonstrated to the visitors.

(4) Kalasin

Phu Thai minority village is the new destination as the village tour for the domestic and international tourists. The village, located 70 km east of the provincial capital near the boundary of Mukdahan province, preserves the old life style, using peculiar language and clothing.

Phrae Wa, a fabric-weaving group and famous as the producer of the characterized silk weavings, is receiving visits of domestic tourists. They live 40 km north of the provincial capital.

Local people visit on an artificial earth dam of Lam Pao for the recreational purpose, located 20 km north of the provincial capital.

Dinosaur Museum, located 30 km north of the provincial capital, presently decorates 6 dinosaurs fossil and becomes a new destination for the Thai tourist. Construction project of 72 imitation dinosaurs is under progress celebrating His Majesty of King's 72 years birthday anniversary.

The distribution of major tourism resources in the NBR is summarized in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 Summary of Tourism Resource in the Study Area

Province	International Tourist Spot	Major Domestic Tourist Spot	Domestic Tourist Spot
Nakhon Phanom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mekong River Scenery Renu Nakhon minority village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wat Phra That Phanom Illumination boat festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other temples Phu Lungka National Park
Mukdahan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mekong River Scenery Indo-China Market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mukdahan National Park: natural art stone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mukdahan tower Other national forest/parks: cave, waterfall
Sakon Nakhon		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wax castle festival Temples: Wat Phra That Chum, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phu Phan national park Kud Na Kham Art & Craft Center Nong Han Lake
Kalasin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phu Thai minority village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dinosaur museum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phrae Wa Fabric-weaving group Lam Pao Reservoir (Dok Khet Beach)

9.1.2 Tourism Market

(1) Thailand

Thailand is the second biggest tourist destination in the world with the development of beach resorts such as Pattaya, Ko Samui, Hoa Hin/Charm and Phuket, urban resorts such as Bangkok and Chaing Mai, and historical tourism products such as Sukhothai and Ayutthaya. Its tourism demand shows strong and steady growth as shown in Table 9.5. International arrivals is 8,650,000 tourists (Figure 9.4) and tourist-nights is 68,300,000 nights (Table 9.2) in 1999, generating large foreign currency earnings of US\$5.9 billion.

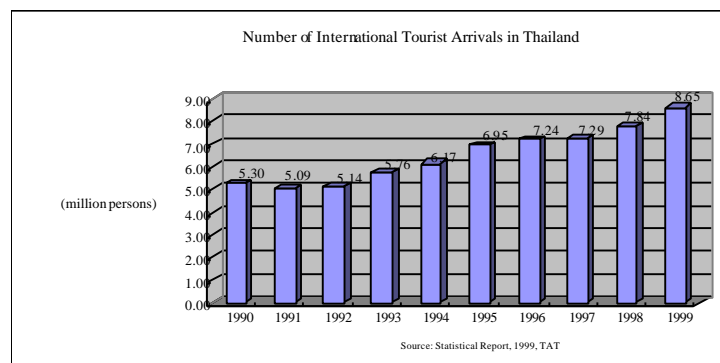


Figure 9.4 International Tourist Arrivals in Thailand (1990-1999)

Tourism market of Thailand are widely distributed in the world, but mainly Asian countries such as Japan, Malaysia, China, Singapore, etc, European Countries and

the USA. European and American Tourists tend to stay longer length and higher tourism receipt as shown in the tables below

Table 9.2 Tourism Market of Thailand

Top Ten Market by Tourist Nights (in 1999)					Top Ten Market by Tourist Arrivals (in 1999)		
Nationality	Tourist-Nights		Length of Stay (day)	Receipts (million US\$)	Nationality	Tourist Arrivals	
	Nights	(%)				Persons	(%)
1 Japan	6,533,321	10%	6.1	498	1 Japan	1,064,539	12%
2 Germany	6,168,600	9%	15.8	428	2 Malaysia	991,060	11%
3 UK	6,075,985	9%	11.8	445	3 China	775,626	9%
4 China	5,194,214	8%	6.4	420	4 Singapore	604,867	7%
5 USA	3,989,289	6%	8.6	376	5 Taiwan	557,629	6%
6 Malaysia	3,497,136	5%	3.5	354	6 Hong Kong	429,944	5%
7 Taiwan	3,424,797	5%	6.5	342	7 UK	425,688	5%
8 Singapore	2,294,331	3%	4.3	284	8 USA	417,860	5%
9 Korea	1,767,050	3%	5.2	140	9 Germany	375,345	4%
10 Hong Kong	1,134,924	2%	4.6	303	10 Korea	338,039	4%
Total	68,293,242	100%	8.0	5,934	Total	8,651,260	100%

Source: TAT, 1999 data

(2) Tourist Arrivals in the NBR

Concerning the NBR, domestic tourist is predominant as described before. Each province of the NBR is receiving approximately 50,000 – 200,000 accommodated tourist arrivals from the domestic market as shown below, while 1,000 – 2,000 international tourists arrives in the province.

Table 9.3 Current Tourist Arrivals of the NBR

	Study Area			
	Nakhon Phanom	Mukdaharn	Sakon Nakhon	Kalasin
1 Accommodated Guest Arrival (Tourist)				
1) Thai	270,000	80,000	630,000	150,000
2) Foreigner	2,170	1,362	n.a.	1,200
3) Total	272,170	81,362	-	151,200

Source: Foreign tourist of Mukdaharn & Kalasin is as of 1998 from the information of TAT Office Northeastern Reion 3 and 4.

The other data is as of 1997 based on "Northeast Tourism Development Plan, TAT, 1997"

Figure 9.5 shows the trend of accommodated tourist arrivals of Nakhon Phanom Province. Tourists recently increase by annual rate of 14 % during the past 5 years.

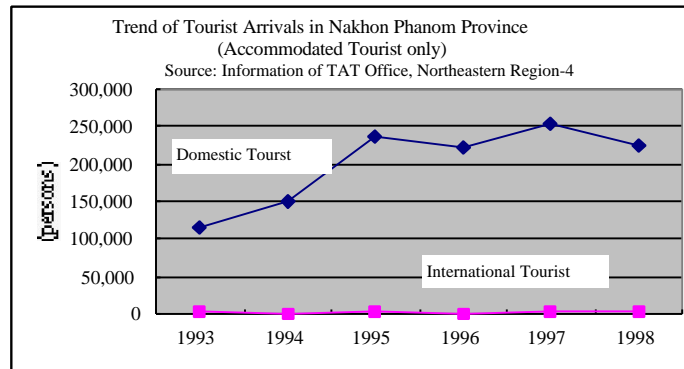


Figure 9.5 Number of Tourist Arrivals in Nakhon Phanom Province

Approximately 80,000 domestic tourists accommodate in hotel/guest house, while more than 12,000 stays relatives/friend houses as shown in Figure 9.6.

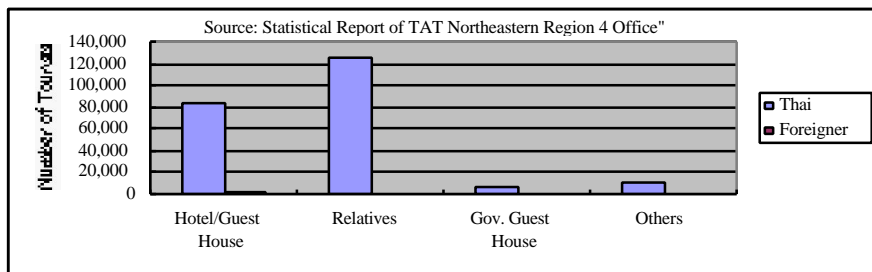


Figure 9.6 Guest Arrivals by Type of Accommodation (Nakhon Phanom)

9.1.3 Tourism Facilities and Services

(1) Accommodation

There are several accommodations in as shown below. There is at least one hotel with the international standard in each province.

Table 9.4 Present Accommodation in the NBR (as of 1996)

	Nakhon Phanom	Mukdahan	Sakon Nakhon	Kalasin	BKK	Nakhon Ratchasima
1) Establishments	8	11	24	5	207	35
2) Rooms	595	790	767	286	55,381	3,131
3) Occupancy Rate (%)	33.3	28.0	n.a.	42.9	54.8	40.6

Source: Sakon Nakhon: Northeastern Tourism Development Plan, TAT, 1997

Others: Statistical Report 1998, TAT and Information of TAT Office, Northeastern Region-3,4

(2) Transportation Facility

Transportation services in NBR are in general well developed and convenient for the international tourists with reasonable price. There are two transport modes accessed the NBR from Bangkok.

- Air: Two domestic airports, Nakhon Phanom and Sakon Nakhon, are used for civil aviation. From Nakhon Phanom, approximately 1.5 hour drive is enough to reach Mukdahan by Route 212, which are well paved for speedy drive. Khon Kaen airport is also utilized to access to Kalasin.
- Road: Road network is well developed in the NBR. Routes 22, 212 213, and 2042 with all weather pavement connects four provincial capitals in the Study Area. It is also easy to access to major domestic airports of Khon Kaen, Ubon Ratchathani, and Udon Thani through Routes 22, 213, 209, and 212 from the NBR. However, in case of traffic demand increase, road traffic congestion will be foreseen on routes of 209, 212, 213, and 2042, which are developed as 2-lane carriage with limited traffic capacity. Road distance is shown in Table 9.5 and present transportation network in the northeastern region of Thailand is illustrated in Figure 9.7.

Rail service is not available in the NBR. Although two railroad services are available in the northeastern region; one is north direction line connecting BKK with Nong Khai through Nakhon Ratchasima, Khon Kaen, and Udon Thani, the other is east direction line from BKK to Ubon Ratchathani through Nakhon Ratchasima, it is necessary to access the NBR by road transport from these railroads. It results in few tourists using railway to the NBR.

Table 9.5 Road Distance Table

BKK	Nakhon Rachasima																		
260																			
450	190	Khon Kaen																	
565	305	115	Udon Thani																
615	355	165	51	Nong kai															
457	198	256	373	422	Surin														
520	260	77	193	245	184	Kalasin													
645	390	205	160	210	312	128	Sakon Nakhon												
740	480	300	253	305	350	220	93	Nakhon Phanom											
640	383	185	278	329	246	166	199	104	Mukdahan										

(Unit: km)

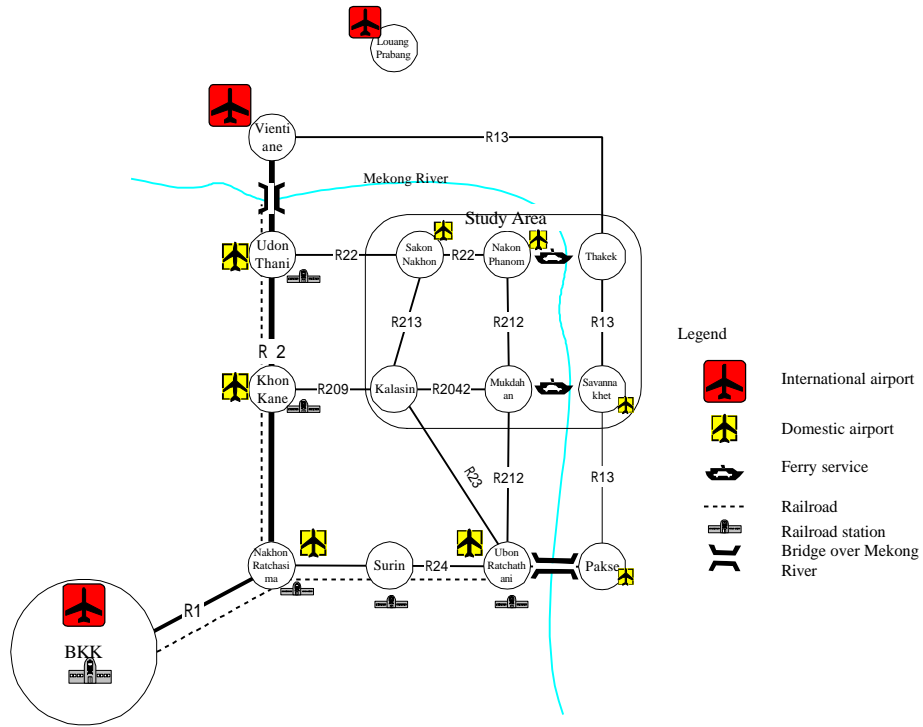


Figure 9.7 Present Transportation Network in the Northeast Thailand

Utilizing the well-developed road network in the Study Area, 97 % of domestic tourists arrive to NBR by private cars and 21 % by bus, while only 2% utilize air service. 23 % of the international tourists, on the other hand, utilizes air transportation and less bus share is seen in Figure 9.8.

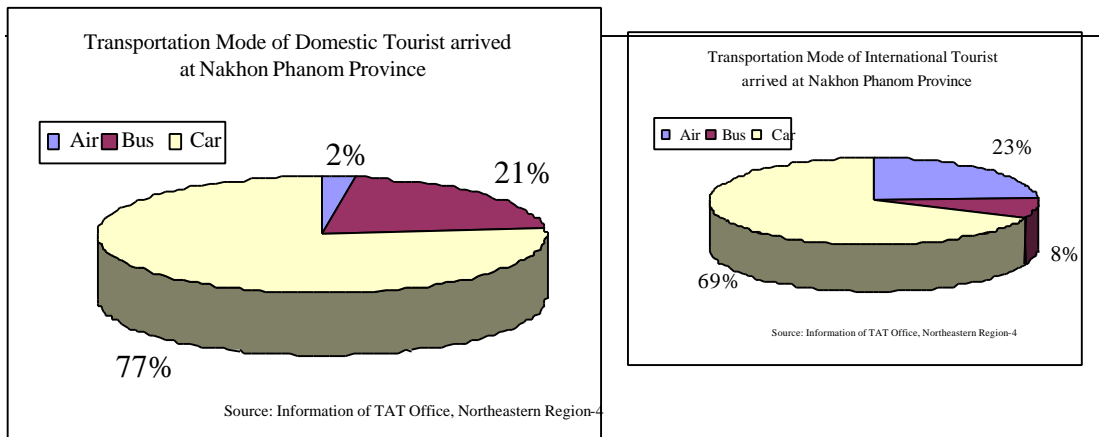


Figure 9.8 Modal Share of Tourist in the NBR

9.1.4 Existing Tourism Development Plans for the NBR

(1) Tourism and Employment Creation Plan under Social Investment Project (SIP)

This project has more than 100 sub-programs servicing not only for major tourism destination but also rural area under the cooperation of JBIC financial assistance. Following projects are being carried out by TAT:

- Piers rehabilitation in the Mekong River in Mukdahan;
- Road Construction and Landscape Improvement of Mano Phirom Beach in Mukdahan;
- Piers rehabilitation in the Mekong River in Nakhon Phanom;
- Rehabilitation and environmental conservation of national park in Nakhon Phanom; and
- Rehabilitation of Indo-China market in Mukdahan in the next stage.

(2) Northeast Tourism Development Plan, TAT, 1997

This tourism master plan studied a framework of tourism development in the northeast Thailand. Several projects/programs as shown below are proposed to be implemented for the promotion of the tourism industry in the northeastern region.

Two projects were already implemented presently and marketing promotion is partially carried out.

Table 9.6 Projects/ Programs Proposed by Tourism Development Master Plan in Northeastern Region by TAT

Items	Details	Location	Cost (Baht)	Completion
New tourism site 1 Mekong World Project	Science Museum	Nong Khai or Mukdahan	More than 1,000mi.	completed
2 Dinosaur Park	Science Museum	Khon Kaen	60 mil.	
3 Science Park		Central province of the Isan	50 mil.	
4 Cultural Arts Center		Udon Thani		
Plan of Creating Characteristic Tourism 5 Manual of Isan Tourism 6 Training Guideline for Isan Tourism 7 Development of Phra That Phanom	Promenade, information center, car parking etc Cultural Village	Nakhon Phanom	20 mil.	Completed
8 Dong Mun Village	Cultural Village	Surin	5 mil.	
9 Phu Thai Village	Natural Study Facility	Sakon Nakhon		

10 Phu Rua Park		Loei	3 mil.	
Tourism Route Improvement 11 Loei-Nong Khai-Nakhon Phanom Route 12 Mekong River Boating	R221, 212 Improvement 50-80 capacity boat cruising			
Isan Civilization Route 13 Ban Chiang World 14 Khumer Cultural Route		Udon Thani		
Village Culture Tourism 15 Handicraft Village Route		Surin		
Renovation of Tourism Spot 16 Dok Khur Beech 17 Pa Nang Koi Waterfall 18 Pu Phra Park 19 Observation stand for boat festival		Kalasin Kalasin Mukdahan		
Tourism Facility/Activity Development 19 Kong Beech 20 Road Improvement 21 Indochina Tourism Center	Beach Utilization in dry season R211,212,209,2042,2116			
Tourism Marketing				Under implementation

Source: Northeastern Tourism Development Plan, TAT,1997

9.2 Tourism Development Potential of the NBR

9.2.1 Evaluation of Tourism Development Potential of the NBR

Tourism development potential of the NBR is evaluated based on the present situations. There are several tourism development potentials such as festival/event, eco-tourism/agro-tourism and amusement type tourism. In particular, tourism utilizing Mekong River, which seems to be the largest tourism resource in the NBR and SKR, might be most promising potential in the NBR. Meanwhile, SKR in Laos has limestone mountains with good scenery and rare caves, which strengthen tourism potential of the NBR to increase a variety of tourism products.

Table 9.7 Evaluation of Tourism Development Potential of Thai Study Area

(Tourism resources & product)

Item		Major Attraction	Tourism Development Potential	
1)	Religious facility	Pilgrims visit sacred temples from all over Thailand.	NP & SN	(Potential as major domestic tourism) Wat Phra That Phanom in Nakhon Phanom & Wat Phra That Choeng Chum in Sakon Nakhon attracts Thai pilgrims from all over the country.
2)	Heritage	10-11 th Century built Hindu temple of Wat Phra That Narai Cheng Weng in Sakon Nakhon has carved interior.	SN	(Potential as local domestic tourism) Khmer archeological relics, scattered on the bottom corridor from Phimai near Nakhon Ratchasima of Thailand to Wat Phu near Pakse of Lao PDR, are the most attractive tourism resources in the northeastern Thailand. Wat Phra That Narai Cheng Weng is located isolated from the corridor.
3)	Festival	Illumination boat festival in Nakhon Phanom and wax castle festival in Sakon Nakhon attract a lot of <u>the domestic tourists</u> .	NP & SN	(Potential as international and major domestic tourism) Illumination boat and wax castle festivals have the potential as international tourist destination by upgrading and networking with the dragon boat race festival in Nakhon Ratchasima and the elephant carnival in Surin, famous festival for the <u>international and domestic</u> tourism market in the northeastern Thailand.
4)	Natural resources	National park, forest, waterfall, cave, and dam lake are attracting local domestic tourists from neighboring provinces.	SN, K, M	(Potential as local domestic tourism) A relatively hilly environment in the northeastern Thailand can attract domestic tourists from neighboring provinces.
5)	Eco-tourism	Village tours on ethnic minority group, weaving group are carried out in Nakhon Phanom and Kalasin.	NP, K	(Potential as international and major domestic tourism) Village tours on ethnic group will be promotable for the international tourists and BKK residents in future.
6)	Amuse-ment	Indochina market in Mukdahan is the destination not only for domestic but international tourists.	M	(Potential as international and major domestic tourism) Indochina market will become one of the most attractive tourism destinations for the domestic and international tourists.
		Dinosaur Museum is a new destination of domestic tourists.	K	(Potential as major domestic tourism) Dinosaur Museum will continue to be a destination of domestic tourists.
7)	Others	Mekong River side promenade is developed in the Nakhon Phanom City.	NP, M	(Potential as international and major domestic tourism) Nakhon Phanom and Mukdahan and Nong Khai cities are facing Mekong River scenery in the northeastern Thailand.

(Tourism Facility)

Present Condition	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hotels developed in the Mekong riverfront can cope with the domestic tourists from BKK area as well as international tourists. Transportation facilities such as road network and air service are developed well in the Study Area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service and facilities should be improved gradually in accordance with the tourism demand increase and quality upgrading requirement. Improvement of transportation facilities, especially local road network, will be necessary in accordance with the tourist traffic increase.

Note: NP – Nakhon Phanom SN – Sakon Nakhon K – Kalasin M - Mukdahan

Overall evaluation result concerning the present tourism condition of NBR is summarized by SWOT analysis as below.

(1) Strengths

- Tourism products, services and facilities are well developed for domestic tourists and could be the seed of further promotion of tourism in NBR.
- Peculiar social resource such as the northeastern culture and ethnic minority group could be the attraction for prospective eco-tourism.
- Transportation infrastructure such as highway and airport necessary for tourism promotion is well developed basically in and around the Study Area.

- Renowned Mekong River is the attractions for the international tourists, although it is niche market.

(2) Weaknesses

- The NBR is excluded from major international tourist route of the northeastern region.
- Tourism resources in the NBR have insufficient competitiveness for international tourism market except for the name of Mekong River.
- The NBR is not well known as tourism destination by domestic and international tourism markets.
- Capacity of air transportation is not sufficient in future.

(3) Opportunities

- The NBR is located on the GMS East-West Corridor. After the development of Mekong Bridge at Mukdahan City, the international tourists on Mekong tour are expected to pass through the area.
- Eco-tourism will expand as the new stream. The international tourists as well as residents of the capital area will popularize village tour on ethnic minority group, weaving group.
- Domestic tourism demand will be increased steadily in accordance with the growth of Thai economy and domestic tourist arrivals in the Study Area will also be increased accordingly. Religious facility, festival, Mekong river scenery will call a lot of pilgrims, lovers of festivals and events.

(4) Threats

- Competition among remote areas in Thailand with a similar tourism promotion concept.
- Inadequate tourism related business and tourist service businesses in the NBR.
- Rural villages collapse their traditional culture and heritage due to decrease of young generation.

9.2.2 Projection of Tourist Arrivals in the NBR

Two opportunities are foreseen in the projection of future tourist demand. 1) increase of Thai domestic tourist arrivals, 2) increase of international tourist arrivals.

(1) Thai Domestic Tourist

The domestic tourists arrived at the NBR will sharply increase depended on the economic growth of Thailand as well as domestic tourism promotion by TAT. Present 1,100,000 domestic tourist arrivals in NBR is projected to be doubled by the target year 2020 as explained in Table 9.8.

Tours on festivals, religious facilities, natural attractions, etc. will be more popularized by domestic tourists.

(2) International Tourist

After the GMS East-West Corridor is opened, the international tourist crossing Vietnam to Thailand through Lao PDR will visit on the tourist destination in the NBR. Despite limited annual 4,000 visitors at present, approximately 30,000 - 40,000 international tourist arrivals is projected in 2020 as shown below.

Table 9.8 Projection of Future Tourism Demand in CBR

Item	Present Tourist (1997)	Future Demand in 2020	
		Demand	Assumption
Domestic Tourist	NP: 270,000 Md: 80,000 SN: 630,000 Ka: 150,000 Total 1,130,000	NP: 630,000 Md: 190,000 SN: 1,050,000 Ka: 350,000 Total 2,200,000	Projected on the basis of "National Tourism Development Plan, TAT, 1997" Average increase rate 2000-2006: 4.3%/Y 2006-2020: 2.1%/Y
International Tourist	App. 4,000 tourists in 1998	App. 36,000 tourists in 2020	<u>E-W Corridor Mekong Tour</u> 1998 13,000 (estimated potential)/ ¹ 2020:50,000 (3.8 times: increasing rate of 6.2 %/y / ²) 25,000: half of 50,000, is assumed to accommodate in Thai side <u>Increase of existing int. demand</u> 3,000 x 3.8 times: increasing rate of 6.2 %/y =11,000 <u>Total</u> International tourist arrivals in 2020: 36,000 (25,000+11,000)
Total	App.1,130,000	App.2,200,000	

Note: /1 According to the statistics of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), it is estimated that approximately 40,000 tourists from France, USA, UK and Japan, made excursion from Viet Nam to Thailand by air presently. Assuming 1/3 of the excursion moves by Route 9 starting from Hue of Viet Nam to BKK through the Study area, 13,000 international tourists are projected to enter into the Study area.

/2 Assumed that 6.2 % of average annual increasing rate of the international tourist arrivals in Thailand, PRC, Myanmar, Laos, Viet Nam Cambodia during 2000-2007, projected in "Pre-Investment Study for the Greater Mekong Subregion East-West Economic Corridor, ADB Study Team" will continue.

/3 NP: Nakhon Phanom Md: Mukdahan SN: Sakon Nakhon Ka: Kalasin

9.3 Tourism Development Strategies

9.3.1 Development Goals

Tourism development in the NBR aims at the following three goals:

- To provide opportunities for economic development
- To contribute social development
- To create positive incentives on cultural, historical and natural conservation

(1) Economic Development

Tourism has large employment generation function and considerable ripple effect on local economy, which expects to appear more quick than the other businesses. NBR needs to create certain volume of non-agricultural job opportunity for young people in urban area, so tourism development is expected to play such role in short term.

On the other hand, agricultural market is the largest bottleneck for agricultural restructuring. It is of great necessity to secure markets for local products. Tourism development is expected to create new markets in the NBR as well.

(2) Social Development

Tourism activities can provide opportunities of interchanging local peoples and tourists. Cultural exchange with tourists gives local peoples a new insight/sense of value to improve their society better.

(3) Creation of Positive Incentives on Cultural, Historical and Natural Conservation

Tourism utilizes local culture, history and nature as tourism products. It largely contributes to conserve their culture and nature.

9.3.2 Target Groups

On the basis of the project of future tourist arrivals, the domestic tourist will continue to be major tourist target in the NBR, therefore tourism development will be a focus firstly on the promotion of the domestic tourist.

Large number of international tourists will not be expected even in future, some special interest groups who are interested in eco-tourism/agro-tourism should be focused on for tourism development.

Target Group: Domestic tourists
Special interest groups of international tourists

9.3.3 Strategies

In order to achieve the goals with target groups, the following five (5) strategies are necessary for tourism development in the NBR:

- Development of new tourism products;
- Local participation;
- Improvement of tourism environment;
- Joint tourism promotion; and
- Establishment of tourism tree zone.

New tourism product provision shall be also advantageous for the increase of domestic tourist arrivals. In this sense, traditional festival/event tourism, and temples should be more utilized. Prospective increasing Thai tourist, for instance, will request the crossing tour of the Mekong River and visiting on religious facilities and untouched natural beauty in Laos side. Indochina East-West Corridor as well as 2nd Mekong International Bridge should be utilized for new tourism products. For that purpose, an introduction of new tourism products in the corridor will be inevitable.

Local participation is the key strategies to vary tourism products as well as hospitality.

For strengthen and diversify tourism products in the NBR and SKR, it is necessary to improve tourism environment like ease of crossing countries.

Integration and cooperation method between Thailand and Laos (and Vietnam in future) in the field of tourism promotion should be realized in the Tripartite Technical Cooperation Scheme the Study Area¹.

Tourism Free Zone (TFZ) will be one of contribution for the international tourist promotion.

¹ According to TAT, a VISA Free Zone at the Golden Triangle, inclusive of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Nan, and Payao provinces in Thai side, has being studied by TAT. The ASEAN NTOs Fund has been established for the purpose of joint activity and cooperation in the tourism promotion.

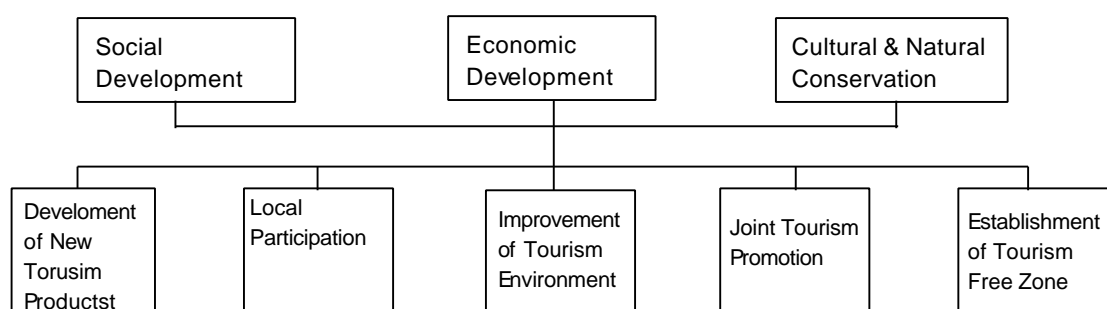


Figure 9.9 Strategies for Tourism Development in the NBR

9.4 Tourism Development Plan

9.4.1 Development of New Tourism Products

(1) Promotion of Northeastern Festival Week in November

The following table shows festival/event calendar performed in the northeastern Thailand. Elephant carnival in Surin, long boat race in Nakhon Ratchasima, illuminated boat show in Nakhon Phanom, and Wax castle festival in Sakon Nakhon are celebrated during 10 day period on November annually. This period could be promoted as the intensive festival season when major festivals can be enjoyable in the northeastern Thailand. To become one of the major festivals, Nakhon Phanom illumination boat festival and wax castle festival in Sakon Nakhon shall be upgraded and enhanced to call tourists from the capital area of Thailand. Joint cultural performance with Lao PDR and Vietnam, which have varieties of ethnic folk dances and songs, will be effective measures for the upgrading and expansion of the festival.

Table 9.9 Major Festivals/Events in the Northeastern Thailand

Period	Place	Performance
14-20 Jan.	Pra That Phanom Temple	Annual seven-day fair for devotees with local entertainment
11-13 April	Khon Kaen	Part of Songkran, northeastern folk entertainment
15-21 July	Ubon Ratchathani	Carved beeswax candle exhibition
Nov. at the end of Buddhist Lent	Sakon Nakhon	Wax festival and competitive boat racing, traditional northeastern cultural performances
Nov. at the end of Buddhist Lent	Nakhon Phanom	Illuminated boat, colorful street procession, cultural performances
12-14 Nov.	Nakhon Ratchasima	Long boat race, local art and culture performances
18-19 Nov.	Surin	Elephant spectacular carnival

Note: /1 Date of festival/event accounts for the year of 2000.

/2 Following festivals and events are the destination for the domestic tourists.

(Kalasin)

1. Pong Lang (a kind of musical instrument) and Phrae Wa (handwoven cloth and embroidery) Festival, and the Red Cross Fair

2. Phrae Wa: Queen of Silk Fair
(Nakon Phanom)

1. Phra That Phanom Homage Paying Fair, Phra That Phanom Temple

2. Khong River Triathlon, Hat Sai Thong Si Khotrabun

3. Phra That Ranu Nakhon Homage Paying
(Sakon Nakhon)

1. So remembrance Festival

2. Phra That Choeng Chum Homage Paying Fair
(Mukdahan)

1. The Red Cross Fair and the Gathering of Thai People in Mukdahan and Sweet Tamarind Fair

2. Mukadahan Song Phang Khong Songkran Festival

Following measures will be significant for the success of festival:

- Excursive tourism product visiting on major festivals of Elephant carnival in Surin, long boat race in Nakhon Ratchasima, illuminated boat show in Nakhon Phanom, wax castle festival in Sakon Nakhon shall be prepared;
- Festival should be promoted by the local participation. A number of illuminated boats to demonstrate in the festival shall be increased by the cooperation of community, school unit, local enterprise, etc;
- Festival should be principally participated and enjoyed by the local community, who are proud of the local culture; and
- Chances to participate in a part of festival is necessary for tourist.

(2) Development of Thai-Lao-Vietnam Tour

If the festival and pilgrim tours in the NBR, nature sightseeing as well as religious tour in Savannakhet and Khammouan, and heritage tours in Hue/Da Nang of Vietnam are integrally produced as shown in Figure 9.10, a high value added tour can be planned. The realization of this cross boarder excursion will be advantageous for the increase of tourist arrivals in the NBR. Tourism Free Zone covering those three areas will make this excursion easy, safely, and free as described hereinafter.

(3) Promotion of Eco-tourism

Tour visiting on the ethnic minority village and silk weaving group in Kalasin and Nakhon Phanom provinces should be promoted further considering that the eco-tourism is becoming popular among the international tourists as well as urban residents of Thailand. Although village tour is niche market, it will be effective for the income generation of villagers. Careful attention should be paid for preservation of their culture when the village tour is promoted.

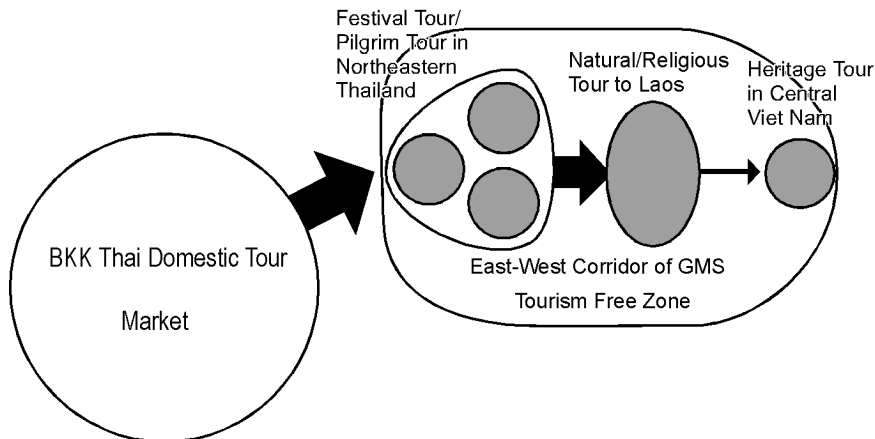


Figure 9.10 Concept for Excursion Crossing Three Tourism Area

(4) Promotion of Pilgrim Tour

Pilgrim tour in Thailand will be expanded in accordance with the increase of domestic tourism demand. Nation-widely famous temples, Wat Phra That Phanom in Nakhon Phanom, Wat Phra That Coeng Chum in Sakon Nakhon, are the destinations for pilgrims from whole country. Pilgrim tour can be expanded by means of following development of tourism products:

- Joint tour with festival tour; and
- Excursion visiting on temples located in Lao side.

9.4.2 Local Participation

(1) Village Tourism based on One Village One Product

Traditional products should be more sophisticated as a scheme of "One Village-One Product". Village tourism should link with "One Village-One Product" to show production process in natural atmosphere. It is suitable for not only domestic and international tourists but also social study tour for school children.

(2) Roadside Tourism Service Facilities (Station on Road)

Roadside tourism service facilities should be developed to be tourism center with functions of:

- Tourism information center;

- Restaurant and rest facilities;
- Traffic safety instruction;
- Direct sale of local products; and
- Introduction of local guide.

In the facility, direct sale of local products, which are produced under “One Village One Products”, will be carried out. It creates job opportunities in local people as well as new markets of local products.

(3) Local Guide for Eco-tourism in Phu Phan Mountains

The person who has adequate knowledge on forest, environment as well as folktales in NBR will be registered as local guide for eco-tourism in Phu Phan Mountains. It eases participation into tourism for local people and create additional value on the tourism products.

9.4.3 Improvement of Tourism Environment

(1) Immigration Control

It is desirable that the immigration control should be more flexible, in order to promote the international Mekong Tour.

- Integrated immigration examination could be made at the entry point of TFZ of the East-West Corridor. Passport control including Lao PDR as well as Viet Nam, for instance, will be done at the one stop service office for the convenience of the international tourist.
- Visa-wainer entry is also attractive for international tourists. At least, multi-visa issuance for the Mekong tour international tourist should be simplified.
- Deregulation concerning activity of Thai tour operator in Laos is also important.

(2) Tourism Support Facilities Improvement

Upgrading essential tourism supporting facilities very much improves impression and appreciation of tourists over the CBR:

- Clean and Comfortable Restrooms: Rating and awards for cleanliness;
- Restaurants: issue “tourists certificate”;

- English signboard; and
- Car parking, public toilet etc.

(3) Core Facilities Development

1) Water front event park and promenade in Nakhon Phanom

Although the province in Nakhon Phanom City is developing the water front event park and promenade, it is insufficient for upgrading and expansion of festival. As explained in the demand projection paragraph, double of present tourist arrivals is expected to come to the festival and supporting facilities will be insufficient to receive the large number of tourists. Improvement and development of festival-park, observation place/stand for illumination boat, wax castle float, promenade for cultural performance parade, etc. will be necessary.

2) Indochina market in Mukdahan

Improvement project of the Mukdahan Indochina Market planned by TAT is the most important for the promotion of the international tourist arrivals and domestic tourists. Development of car parking, public toilet, event center, amenities, as well as promenade with English signboard, etc. will renovate the inconvenient condition of the present situation of the market.

Improved Indochina Market will play significant role in the international tourist promotion.

3) 2nd Mekong International Bridge Memorial Park in Mukdahan

There are many bridges which are good tourism products such as golden gate bridge in San Francisco, Rainbow Bridge in Yokohama, Sidney Bridge in Sidney so on. In this sense, 2nd Mekong International Bridge across Mekong River is the new tourism product in Mukdahan. Large modern concrete structure creates good scenery with natural landscape. Accordingly, it is recommended to develop river front park at the foot of the bridge.

4) Road improvement

In addition, road improvement will be necessary to cope with the peak traffic of tourists during festival season. Mekong river side roads, Route 212 and east-west road crossing Mukdahan, Kalasin, Khon Kaen, Route 209 and 2042, should be upgraded and increase the traffic capacity.

9.4.4 Joint Tourism Promotion

(1) Joint Publicity Campaign

CBR Tourism Promotion Committee, National Tourism Organizations of Thailand and Lao PDR will jointly work out the marketing activity for the promotion of the international tourist arrivals of Mekong Tour. Possible joint programs are:

- Familiarization trip for travel writers and tour operators;
- Introductory seminar of GMS East-West Corridor Mekong Tour in Bangkok and Vientiane;
- Enhancement of advertisement;
- Joint Tourism Information Booklet; and
- TV programs, novels, history books, movies associated with the CBR.

(2) Creating New Tourism Centerpiece

Create symbolic events twice or three times a year that will be new tourism centerpieces in the CBR. For example,

- International Bicycle Race: "Tour De GMS". (i.e. Danang-(R9)-2nd Bridge-Bangkok)
- Mekong River Fireworks Festival (could be international competition)
- Dragon Boat Racing
- Craft Village



(3) Development of Joint Web Site for Tourism Information in NBR and SKR

Since the NBR as well as SKR targets special interest groups of international tourists, use of inter-net web site is economical and effective way to promote the NBR and

SKR. It is strongly recommended to develop web-site for tourism promotion of NBR and SKR. This Web Site should be connected to TAT's web-site, which many tourists hit to get tourism information

(4) Joint Tourism Promotion Committee

As the joint promotion body, NBR-SKR Tourism Promotion Committee (Sub-group of Cross-Border Business Development Forum) should be established. The committee is for carrying out promotional activities together and for coordinating with own governments separately. Members of the committee will consist of:

- Private sector (hotels, restaurants, travel companies, transporters, chamber of commerce)
- Public sector (provinces and municipality in NBR and SKR)
- TAT and NTA (National Tourism Authority of Lao PDR) as observer

9.4.5 Establishment of Tourism Free Zone

Tourism Free Zone (TFZ) covering GMS East-West Corridor can be proposed as shown Figure 9.11 for the purpose of the promotion of the international tourist arrivals. Following measures can be proposed for the TFZ.

Considering that tourism sector requires sustainable private participation, foreign direct investment (FDI) is the most important and additional incentives to be applied for tourism FDI will be effective to accelerate FDI in the GMS East-West Corridor Tourism Free Zone. Especially, the development of accommodations and supporting facilities will require the incentives for the tourism FDI. A certain condition concerning investment value or development scale and quality should be discussed for entitle of incentives.

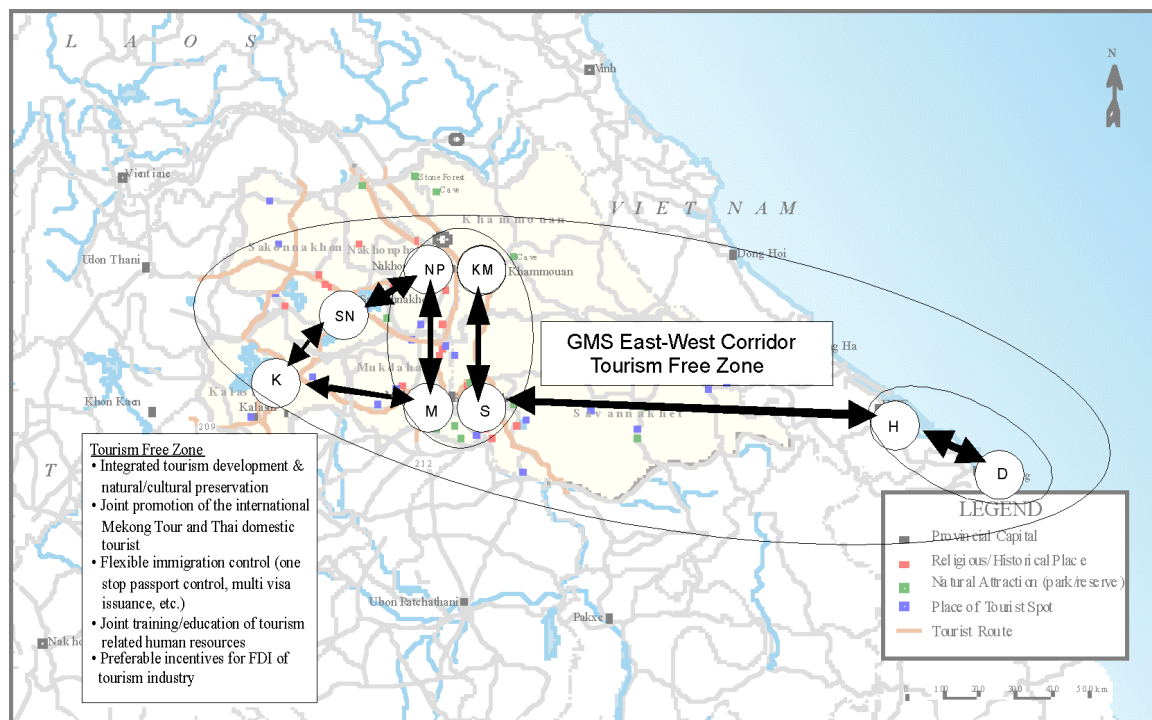


Figure 9.11 Concept of Tourism Free Zone