



Press Release

August 8, 2022

Palau Visitors Authority

PATA Destination Marketing Forum in Songkhla, Thailand reaffirms Palau's position on Tourism: Community and Sustainability

Since 2017, Palau Visitors Authority (PVA) has been working collaboratively with respective state governments and communities through the Alii Pass program to develop sustainable tourism through our communities. Attending the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Destination Marketing Forum in Songkhla, Thailand reaffirms Palau's position on tourism: community and sustainability.

The PATA Destination Marketing Forum (PDMF) is a yearly event hosted by Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) stemming from the need to help destinations in marketing and managing responsible tourism growth in order to be recognised as a leading tourism destination. The format of the event is collaborative yet informative, delivered through a two-day programme consisting of a one-day destination experience which provides delegates with an unprecedented opportunity to explore the region's natural landscapes and cultural treasures and a one-day forum and networking events.

On August 2-4, 2022, Palau Visitors Authority (PVA), Angaur state Governor Kennosuke Suzuki and Special Advisor to Melekeok State Governor, Mr. Demei Elechuus participated in the PATA Destination Marketing Forum in Songkhla, Thailand as invited members of PATA International and Micronesia Chapter. The last forum was in 2019 where PVA and Ngatpang state Governor, Ms. Francesca Oiterong attended the event.

This year PVA selected two states in the Alii Pass program, Angaur and Melekeok state to attend. PVA representatives who were in attendance were Human Resource Manager, Mr. Aiyumu Takada, State & Community Manager, Ms. Katarina Mad, and Marketing & Programs Manager, Ms. Chloe Ysiki Yano.

The event brought together 330 participants representing 22 nations. The theme for PDMF 2023: "Building Back Sustainably through Cultural Heritage and Community-based Tourism" It featured various topics such as MICE, digital marketing, creative community-based tourism, and new trends such as gastronomic tourism. Many sessions emphasized the importance of driving community-based tourism and sustainable initiatives are the way moving forward. The forum also gave us a chance to witness Songkhla's culture, food, cultural treasures and hospitality. In Songkhla, there are several tours available where a visitor can learn from members of the community on how to weave, create body soaps, how to fish and so forth.



Over the years, Palau Visitors Authority has been heavily focused on developing states such as Angaur and Melekeok, to create tourism products that involve the community and is all-around sustainably sourced and managed. One PATA speaker, marketing expert Mr. Alan Merschen, founder of the Sigmund Project and Partner of MMGY Global, shares “Travelers would look at overcrowding to influence which destination they want to visit. Sustainability matters. Fewer clients spending more money works for everyone. Longer length of stay...not more arrivals and spending more money in the destination.”

Another speaker Fernanda Rodak who is the Sustainability & Social Responsibility Project and Research Coordinator of PATA, reminds, “Creative Community-Based Tourism: A solution to build back tourism stronger and better. We might be small, but it is beautiful and low impact. We might not be perfect but it is unique. We might be simple, but yet it is meaningful. Let’s work together for better tourism for all.”

The PVA team is currently working on a tourism plan for that reason, new travel insights and approaches post-covid are essential to marketing and developing a responsible and sustainable tourism destination. PVA believes in building capacity and empowering our communities, and hopes that bringing along state representatives will be inspired and take initiative on sustainable tourism growth in their communities.