

Celebrations as tourism products



Recently on Aug 31, we celebrated the National Day, where a parade was held at the Merdeka padang. At that time we celebrated 50 years of independence. There was excitement and gaiety.

For most of us, this day marks an interesting aspect in our life, historically as it determined the direction of our development as a nation.

On the flip side of the coin, this day can be promoted as a tourism product as there are several interesting activities during this time that can be incorporated in a tour guide's schedule.

We have actually packaged several festivals as tourism products and have been quite successful in promoting them.

On 1 to 31 May, for instance, we will hear the beating of the gongs throughout the land. From each village, we will hear the hollow sound of these instruments beating out a hubbub that seem to spell out a triumph of sorts.

For this month, the people celebrate the end of harvest and express the hope of a plentiful harvest for the following year. This is the harvest festival, celebrated by the people of Sabah, regardless of ethnicity and creeds.

And for the whole month, the people will celebrate with gatherings, eating, drinking and dancing to the sound of the gongs.

The month long celebration can be taken advantage of by tour operators. They can team up with villages involved in the homestay programme.

The homestay may however have to hold a harvest festival that will enable tourists to join in, especially those who are staying with them at that time.

Nowadays, this month long revelry in the village and district level are ended with a State level celebration. During this time a gathering is held at the Kadazandusun Cultural Centre building, and various events are held. This includes a beauty contest.

During the same month, the Bamboo Festival is held in Tambunan district. Bamboo is prevalent in the whole of the State, but it is believed that it is concentrated in this area. A festival was therefore inceptioned a few years ago to celebrate the uses of this plant, as well as to ensure that young people carry the knowledge to the next generation. This is no doubt a very commendable event, for it ensures the perpetuity of skills. Your guests may be interested to look at the wide array of items made from bamboo and of its many uses.

In July, thousands of people flock to Sawangan Beach, Kuala Penyu. Gaiety is the order of the day. It is the Sago festival, an annual event held in Kuala Penyu, in conjunction with the Food and Fiesta Month. During this time, knowledge on Sago Palm its uses and utilisation are imparted on the visitors through demonstrations. You can even try eating the sago grubs.

The GATA (gasing and tamu) Festival in Sipitang is another must see. This is a very interesting event where the people of Sipitang, made up of Lundayehs, Bajaus, Muruts, Kedayans, Dusuns and some of Brunei-stocks, come together to show their handicrafts, traditional costumes and agricultural produce. The harmonious existence among the people makes it difficult to distinguish one ethnic group from the other. But this is a source of pride all the same. Taking your tourists there to visit is a good idea. This event is usually held in July.

Then there is the Coconut Fest in Kudat. This is a time when the uses of the Coconut tree in totality are expounded upon. It is amazing what one can do with the coconut. As we all know we can get food and drinks from this tree, but you will be amazed at what other items the tree can be made into. So during the festival bring your guests to Kudat. This festival is usually held in September.

One day in a year, in September the people of Kinabatangan district have a rip-roaring time. This is because the River Festival is held at that time. They usually line up a series of activities that are bound to be exciting, due to participations from tour operator operating in that area, homestay programme participants and residents.

This can be fascinating for your guests.

If you need more information on festivals of Sabah, visit Sabah Tourism Board in Kota Kinabalu for more information.



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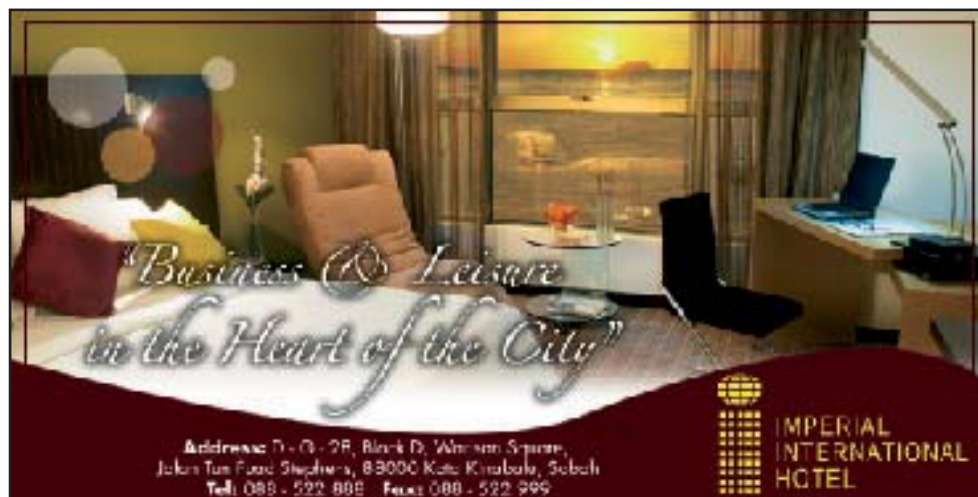


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