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THE CURRENT STATE AND PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND

Thailand, known as the «Land of Smiles», is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Southeast Asia due to its natural beauty, cultural richness and the hospitality of the local people. Tourism is one of the key sectors of the country's economy, and its importance is constantly growing. Thailand attracts millions of tourists from all over the world, offering a wide range of tourism products, from beach holidays to cultural, medical and environmental tourism. The current state of tourism in Thailand:

1. Popular tourist destinations. Thailand is known for its variety of tourist locations, attracting both mass tourists and those looking for a unique experience. The most popular places to visit are:

1.1. Bangkok is the capital of Thailand, famous for its temples, royal palaces, nightlife and huge shopping malls.

1.2. Phuket and Krabi are popular beach resorts offering beautiful scenery, coral reefs and developed infrastructure for water sports.

1.3. Chiang Mai is a cultural center in the north of the country, where historical monuments, ancient temples and places for active recreation in the mountains are concentrated.

1.4. Pattaya is a famous resort with entertainment for every taste, which attracts tourists with its beaches and rich nightlife.

2. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thailand's tourism sector has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 – 2021, the number of tourists dropped sharply due to closed borders and travel restrictions. However, the country is actively working to restore tourism by implementing safe tourism programs, such as the

«Phuket Sandbox», which allowed tourists to visit Phuket without quarantine provided they were vaccinated and followed safety measures. This helped gradually restore the flow of tourists and put the country back on the international tourist map.

3. Variety of tourist products. Thailand offers a wide range of tourist services:

3.1. Beach tourism: the developed infrastructure of resorts in Phuket, Samui, Krabi and other islands makes Thailand one of the best places for beach holidays.

3.2. Cultural tourism: numerous temples, festivals and historical sites, including the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok or Wat Phra Singh in Chiang Mai.

3.3. Ecotourism: Thailand's national parks, such as Khao Yai, offer tourists opportunities to enjoy nature, wildlife viewing and trekking.

3.4. Medical tourism: Thailand is becoming a center of medical tourism due to the high quality of medical services at affordable prices. Tourists come here for cosmetic surgery, dental treatment and wellness programs.

Prospects for the development of tourism in Thailand.

After the easing of pandemic restrictions, Thailand is actively working to restore the tourism industry. It is expected that in 2024 the flow of tourists will reach pre-crisis levels. The Thai government has developed strategies to boost tourism, including easing visa restrictions, increasing international flights and promoting the country as a safe and comfortable tourist destination.

Global trends favor the development of sustainable tourism, and Thailand is trying to adapt to them. Ecotourism is gaining popularity among tourists looking for an ecologically responsible vacation. National parks, conservation of marine resources and eco-resorts try to minimize the impact of tourism on nature. For example, many islands in Thailand are temporarily closed to tourists to allow nature to recover from heavy use.

One of the key areas of tourism development in Thailand is to encourage visits to less popular regions. The government plans to attract tourists to provincial cities and regions in the north and east of the country, such as Isaan or Nan. This will help not only to relieve popular tourist centers, but also to promote the development of the

local economy and infrastructure.

Medical tourism in Thailand continues to develop due to the high quality of medical services and competitive prices. The country is expected to attract even more medical tourists thanks to the further development of specialized clinics and wellness resorts. Bangkok and Phuket are becoming hubs for those seeking cosmetic surgery, dental treatment and other high-end medical services.

Thailand is actively adopting digital technologies to enhance the tourism experience. New mobile applications, booking platforms and virtual tours help tourists plan their trips and get information about travel services. The government is also developing initiatives to digitize tourism services and improve logistics within the country.

Infrastructure development is key to supporting the growth of the tourism industry. The Thai government is investing in the modernization of transport infrastructure, including the construction of new airports, the development of high-speed rail lines and the improvement of the road network. This will contribute to more comfortable travel around the country and increase the number of tourists.

Thailand will continue to develop cultural tourism. Festivals such as Songkran (Thai New Year) and Loy Krathong (Festival of Light) are among the most popular among tourists. Supporting traditional cultural events and developing new cultural initiatives will help attract more visitors and promote cultural exchange.

Challenges for the development of tourism in Thailand. Although Thailand has great prospects for the development of tourism, there are also certain challenges: oversaturation of tourist destinations: Popular destinations such as Phuket and Pattaya suffer from an excessive flow of tourists, leading to the degradation of natural resources and infrastructure; climate change: Sea level rise and other environmental issues can have a negative impact on beach resorts; competition with other countries in the region: countries such as Vietnam and Cambodia.