



Visitors relaxing on the beach and enjoying a wide range of activities at Port Dickson. - Bernama



Tan visiting a padi field in Kampung Londah which was part of the state government's efforts to promote eco-tourism.

## Bright prospects for Negri tourism

EFFORTS to further promote Negri Sembilan as a favoured tourism destination will shift into high gear in the coming months as the state prepares for Visit Negri Sembilan Year 2026 (TMNS2026), says state tourism committee chairman Nicole Tan Lee Koon.

With an estimated 22 million tourists expected to visit attractions in the state known as "Negeri Beradat" for its unique Adat Perpatih and rich customs and traditions, Tan said more tourism events will be planned in the coming months to make TMNS2026, which is being held after more than 25 years, a roaring success.

Tan, who also holds the arts and culture portfolios, said promotions have already started at sales and exhibition missions both domestically and abroad such as the MATTA Fair, NS Travel Fair @ NS Fest, as well as trade fairs in the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry at the World Travel Market in London, the China Sales

Mission in Shenyang, Changchun, Jilin and Harbin, Asean Festival, Thailand and ITB China in Shanghai.

There have also been several business to business sessions with related tourism agencies as well as familiarisation trips to Negri Sembilan involving travel agents and key opinion leaders and influencers.

There will also be promotions through mainstream media such as print media including newspapers and magazines and electronic media such as radio and television," she said.

Tan said the state government will also promote TMNS2026 on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, and TikTok and collaborate with players in the tourism industry to promote its tourism destinations and products through other communication mediums.

"The state government has set the tourism segment to 60% beach tourism, 30% eco-tourism and 10% tourism based on customs, heritage, and culture.

"This designation was made because the state is indeed rich in tourist attractions, especially those based on nature such as beaches and eco forest parks, in addition to the uniqueness of customs and heritage in Negri Sembilan," she said, adding that

the last Visit Negri Sembilan Year was held in 1999.

She said since TMNS26 is being held simultaneously with Visit Malaysia Year 2026, the state government will focus on efforts to strengthen existing tourism products by upgrading infrastructure, facilities and tourism facilities.

The state government will also focus on developing new tourism products to enhance the tourism sector's ecosystem, add value to existing attractions, and provide visitors to Negri Sembilan with satisfying and memorable experiences.

Tan said some of the new products planned for the state to complement an already impressive list were a floating mosque in Port Dickson, the Silara Hutan Sky Walk in the Pasir Panjang Forest Eco Park, also in Port Dickson, a tapir sanctuary in Kenaboi in Jelevu and the Miniature Culture Village in Seremban which will be built starting this year.

There will also be the Melewar Fun Run to mark the 250th anniversary of the rule of the Negri Sembilan royal family. Others include the annual Pestabola Ngoca Sawah or "padi field football" which is expected to attract thousands of tourists to the state.

The event held at the Terachi Cultural Village in Kuala Pilah not only attracts teams from other parts of the country but also from abroad. Although football is the main attraction, other events usually held include greasy pole-climbing, duck-catching, pillow wrestling, catching fish with bare hands and other traditional games.

Tan said Negri Sembilan welcomed 15 million tourists in 2023 against 11.5 million the year before. The state had received 13.3 million tourists in 2019 but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the numbers fell to 8 million in 2020 and 5.5 million in 2021.

While Port Dickson remains the crown jewel of tourism in the state, Tan stated that the state government will actively promote other destinations as well.

"Port Dickson as we all know, is synonymous with the beauty of its beaches and has earned the status as the country's National Beach Resort City (Pantai Peranginan Negara).

"It has always remained popular as

apart from its gorgeous beaches, it is also known as the Army City for having several army camps and training centres as well as an Army Museum," she said.

There are 11 popular beach stretches in Port Dickson. These are Pantai Tanjung Gemok, Pantai Batu 1, Pantai Bagan Pinang, Pantai Saujana, Pantai Cahaya Negeri, Pantai Batu 5, Pantai Telok Kemang, Pantai Purnama, Pantai Cermim, Pantai Tanjung Biru or Blue Lagoon and Pantai Dickson.

"In addition, eco-tourism has also become a focus for tourists both from within the country and abroad who enjoy nature-related activities, such as at the Kenaboi State Park in Jelevu, Batu Maloi Cave in Kuala Pilah, and PD Forest Sg. Menyala, among others.

"These locations attract groups of tourists seeking challenges and adventure activities comparable to elsewhere," she said, adding that there were more than 10 best eco-parks in the state.

Tan said efforts to organise international-level events in the state has also helped boost tourism. Among the international events that attract tourists are the Port Dickson Triathlon, Power Boat International Championship F3000, Tampin MTB Jamboree, the Negri Sembilan 7even Wonders Challenge and Folklore Festival.

"The international festival will bring a lot of economic spillover to Negri Sembilan because they will come as a family or in a group. Apart from contributing revenue to the state, the local population will also benefit through services provided, such as food and beverage sales, handicraft products, transport services and accommodations like hotels and homestays," she said.

The Negri Sembilan 7Even Wonders Challenge involves participants scaling seven hills in the state which are Gunung Angsi (Kuala Pilah), Bukit Melati (Seremban), Gunung Tampin and Gunung Datuk (both in Tampin), Bukit Penarikan (Jempol), Bukit Batu Sawa (Jelevu) and PD Forest (Port Dickson).

Tan said there were also plans for cruise ships to dock at the Port Dickson passenger jetty to further bring in tourists to the

state. However, the lack of facilities including insufficient sea depth levels which made it difficult for larger vessels to berth at the port has caused this proposal to be postponed.

Tan said the state's homestay industry was also doing well and was gaining traction among foreigners.

"On Dec 4 last year, we had more than 500 tourists from China visiting the D'Pelandok Best Homestay in Port Dickson. It was a different holiday experience for them as they had the opportunity to feel the atmosphere of a village and the experience of doing village activities with the kampung folk," she said.

She said at present, there were nine homestays in the state registered with the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry.

Based on statistics, the number of tourist arrivals to homestays in the state had jumped from 1,643 in 2021 to 7,473 in 2023. Tan said tourists who wish to visit other eco-tourism destinations in the state can also opt to experience staying at homestays, glamping and campsites.

She added that although some were of the opinion that tourists often bypassed the state and would rather spend their holidays in other states such as neighbouring Melaka which had more attractions, Negri Sembilan was unique in its own ways.

"We are unique as we are the closest to the Klang Valley, have the best beaches and our proximity to KLIA and KLIA2.

Based on the statistics on tourist arrivals in 2023, it proves that Negri Sembilan is one of the focus of tourist visits," she said.

She said efforts were continuously taken to further improve tourism products, the organising of high-impact events and more aggressive promotions to increase tourist arrivals to the state.

Citing the state's Adat Perpatih for example, Tan said the state government has set aside RM500,000 annually to further promote the customary laws and traditions during Perpatih Fest.

The Adat Perpatih, which originated from the Minangkabau Highlands in Sumatra, Indonesia, is unique for its matrilineal customs that hold women in high regard.



Tan, holding the Jalur Gemilang, flagging off the Port Dickson Triathlon, an event aimed at boosting tourist arrivals to the state.



Tan promoting homestays in the state with a group of foreign tourists.