**Denight: Working to extend visitor stays**

Buenas yan håfa adai! The Guam Visitors Bureau team has just returned from showcasing our island at the 4th Annual Mode Tour Travel Mart in Seoul, South Korea. The Travel Mart welcomed about 300 institutions — embassies, tourism boards, local governments, airlines, hotels and resorts, and insurance companies — and an estimated 80,000 visitors, mostly from the travel trade and consumers.

I would like to thank Sen. Dennis Rodriguez Jr., GVB board members and our cultural ambassadors, who worked tirelessly alongside the GVB team in Korea.

The Travel Mart gave us a great opportunity to promote our island, tell stories about our people and culture, invite travelers to upcoming events, and highlight our island as a unique destination. It was also the perfect platform to promote our 2018 theme “InstaGuam” to key travel agents, wholesalers, tour operators and media in one of our top source markets.

Our underlying goals were to: attract a more diverse group of travelers from Korea; continue to position Guam as a safe, family-friendly destination; and to encourage longer stays on island, which is the sixth objective of the Tourism 2020 strategic plan.

When the Tourism 2020 plan was being developed, we examined the on-island spend of our visitor and determined that if each visitor were to extend their stay by just one day, the economic impact would be astounding. Visitors stay on island for an average of three-and-a-half days. In fiscal 2016, the island received $1.854 billion is total sales from 1.5 million visitors. We estimate that if the 1.5 million visitors were to stay a day longer, the amount of sales would jump to about $2.383 billion.

Currently, our visitors spend an average of $350 per day on island, or $1,226 over the duration of their trip. By extending an additional day, the amount a visitor spends for their entire trip would rise to $1577.25. This would translate into half a billion dollars more for our local economy and the potential creation of 7,000 additional jobs.

Extending the average length of stay by one night would increase the number of room nights sold and ultimately increases the economic returns from the same number of visitors. Based on fiscal 2016 numbers, our government collected $260 million in hotel occupancy taxes. With an additional night, it would increase government taxes by an additional $34 million — that could support much-needed capital improvement projects, infrastructure upgrades and educational, social and cultural programs. It would mean an increase in the overall quality of living for Guam’s residents.

With this in mind, GVB is working toward this goal through these avenues:

1. Promote longer staying packages in all our markets;
2. Support the development of alternative accommodations such as vacation rentals and B&Bs;
3. Diversify and grow markets such as Russia, Europe and Australia that have longer holidays;
4. Develop more things to do throughout the island; and
5. Communicate the diversity of our family friendly local events to give our visitors more reasons to stay and play longer on Guam.

Next week, I’ll talk about the seventh objective of Tourism 2020 — promote our attractions.

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