



Putting the stress back into the travel industry

By Barry Daniel

PATA's latest figures show an estimated 6% decline in visitor arrivals to SE Asia, with Thailand contributing a double digit fall to this. However one sector of the in-bound market to Thailand that's currently booming is health and wellness tourism. In Phuket I live just along Chalong Beach from Michael Massey who heads up the Atmanji Wellness Centre in the island's southeast corner. Over a couple of cold ones he told me that since opening 18 months ago, they've been experiencing almost 100% occupancy on their detoxification programme. Apparently the decision to take a detox. holiday is usually a "knee jerk" reaction to a major life trauma such as relationship difficulties, health issues or, surprise, surprise, job loss.

In the current climate business is booming, as frazzled visitors from congested big cities seek an escape on Phuket plus a chance for rejuvenation, and a fresh start at coping with all the stress and mayhem that's out there. For up to ten days they detox on a diet of fruit juice, veggie broth, colonic cleansing, morning yoga and meditation.

All this on a delightful Phuket beach and then the disciples are ready to fly back home and take on the world once again.

Roger Moore, who works out of Tea Tree House up a nearby hill from me, is a wellness practitioner who offers all sorts of therapies from seven Chakra massage, to Indian cranial therapy and functional insight training to all these visiting acolytes. He has something of a global reputation as one of the best in the business and has members of the rock and show biz aristocracy amongst his clients. The likes of Madonna, Adam Clayton of U2, Van Morrison, Peter Gabriel and Trudie Styler who is better known as Mrs 'Sting' have all been on his massage table!

Over a cup of tea he told me that he has never been busier and had just been flown out to Dubai to treat a very rich client to a day's massage and therapeutic chat. At least I know where to go when I feel my next nervous breakdown coming on and I feel rather privileged that I don't have to fly half way around the world to be put back together next time it happens.