

Four Points Sandakan hoping for more MICE

SANDAKAN: Four Points by Sheraton Sandakan General Manager Peter Padman is hopeful Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) programmes from Australia to Sabah, particularly Sandakan, will increase.

Perseverance and building that rapport is Peter Padman's aim and plan to bring in more business into Sandakan.

Having just returned from a gruelling two-week trip to Melbourne and Sydney and then to Auckland, the energetic Peter, who is deeply passionate about Sandakan, says he is hopeful that leisure business will not only increase but expects more MICE programmes also from Melbourne and Sydney.

To his surprise, quite a handful of well-known agents for MICE business in the major cities only knew of Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok. Towns such as Kota Kinabalu, Kuching and Sandakan were only known for leisure.

Proboscis monkeys, orang utans and crocodiles were indeed an attraction and more so with the opportunity to climb Mount Kinabalu and visiting the rejuvenating village of Kundasang; these remained must-do's for both genders and all age groups especially for MICE groups.

In his many meetings with the MICE agents he was able to promote, Sandakan, Kota Kinabalu and Le Meridien Hotel in KK to them with the support of the Sandakan Tourism Association STAN and well supported by Le Meridien which provided him vouchers for tours to Kinabatangan and stays in Le Meridien KK.

He was on an invitation by recent guests of Four Points by Sheraton Sandakan now residing in Auckland, Mr and Mrs

Drew Hoffman.

The Hoffmans who had a liking for Peter's warmth and hospitality decided to reciprocate his kindness by inviting him to Auckland to introduce Sandakan live to a group of 30-40 Free Individual Travellers (FITs).

The cheese and wine cocktail on a Sunday evening at their private residence turned out to be a roaring success as the guests who are tired of travelling to the islands and Fiji are hungry for new destinations.

MICE is especially popular with pharmaceutical and medical-based companies and with persuasive talks rendered by Peter, more of such programmes in Sandakan are expected in the third and fourth quarters of the year.

Peter thanked his owners the KL-based developers, Ireka Development Management Sdn Bhd for supporting his mission and trusting his continued endeavours to penetrate not just the Australian market but now, New Zealand too.

Marriott International also organised some VIP MICE cocktails and dinners to meet key MICE agents for which, Peter was able to get some strong leads. - *By James Leong* -

Peter Padman (fourth left) with other Marriot International General Managers, Directors of Sales and Marketing in Australia.

