

DO YOU SPEAK MANDARIN?



Global tourism 2006 celebrates a new record with 842 million international arrivals. Of this number China received 124 million visitors and earned \$33.5 billion from tourism last year, making the country the sixth highest tourism revenue earner globally, reports the official Xinhua news agency.

Experts predict that China's growth as a travel hotspot will accelerate: according to the World Tourism Organization the country is expected to overtake France as the top vacation spot by 2020 and replace Spain as the second most popular travel destination by 2010.

China is renowned for its splendid mountain backdrops, rich culture, and an elaborate history which still lives on through the multiple temples and eternal landscapes. All in all, this communist state is hardly lying when it claims to be able to cater for all tastes. Currently the flow of travelers to China is predominantly from South Korea followed by Japan, Russia, the US, Malaysia and Singapore. Nevertheless, with globetrotting back in fashion, European tourists are also placing fresh photos of the Great Wall of China into their holiday albums.

Officials are looking to further boost incoming tourism by raising service standards, improving tourism infrastructure, and allowing foreign-funded travel companies to take root in a previously exclusive environment. Next year, the Beijing Olympics will provide China with a bonus chance to impress the foreigners and secure tourists' loyalty. The flow of tourism is not one-sided, and experts suggest that while more foreigners will be arriving in China, we will also observe an increase in the number of camera-wielding Chinese around famous international locations. To be more specific, 50 million Chinese will head overseas by 2010, with the number expected to double by 2020. If you are struggling to choose what oriental language to learn - Chinese may be the safest bet.

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