

# China to Open Tourism Market



The People's Republic of China has witnessed a significant growth in the number of tourists visiting the country. Wang Zhifa, Vice-Chairman of China's National Tourism Administration said: "Last year, the number of overnight inbound tourist arrivals in China was almost 50 million, while the country's outbound tourist trips reached 35 million." The number of domestic travelers is also increasing. In 2005 the Chinese tourism industry made up some 5% of the total GDP. According to China Travel and Tourism Economic Research, which was conducted by the World Travel and Tourism Council, China's tourism industry income will rise to some 600 billion RMB (78.2 billion U.S. dollars) in 2007, which will account for 2.5 percent of the country's GDP. Last year, China took 5.8 percent of the global tourism market and is now the world's number four tourism destination. First is France, second Spain and third is the United States. Nevertheless, Chinese officials believe that their country will soon overtake the US, an opinion echoed by a United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) official.

Twenty-nine percent of all tourists who traveled to Asia and the Pacific last year included a visit to China. The People's Republic of China was expected to become the most popular destination by the year 2020. However, the country's tourism industry has been developing so rapidly that the UNWTO changed the expected date from 2020 to 2015.

There are also going to be important events in China that will bring in even more tourists. In 2008 the Olympic Games will take place in Beijing, and in 2010 there is the World Expo in Shanghai. Another important fact is that China is going to make it possible for foreign-funded travel agencies to set up subsidiaries in the country without restrictions. Mr. Shao Qiwei, head of the China National Tourism Administration said: "We welcome the entry of the world's big tourism companies and well-known brand names into China. It will help enhance the competitiveness of Chinese tourism enterprises.

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