

# CHINESE TOURISTS EXPLORE RUSSIA IN GREATER NUMBERS



Chinese tourists are on a big travel wave recently. Millions are travelling out of the country to experience different cultures, see the world's most famous sights and much more. Russia is one of the countries that has benefited from this Chinese travel boom.

The numbers are only expected to rise. In 2016, Chinese inflow to Russia increased by 40% compared to 2015. **This amounts to about 1.3 million visitors from the Asian country.** According to the Border Service of the Russian Federation, one in four people visiting the country was a resident of the People's Republic of China. Experts widely consider the fall of the ruble in China as one of the main reasons for the recent developments. As a result, Chinese tourists can visit Russia for a much cheaper price than before.

## 2017 Started Off Well

The rising trend is clear and already at the beginning of this year the progress is visible. According to experts, in the first quarter of 2017, 58.5 thousand Chinese tourists arrived in Russia under the visa-free group exchange. This represents a 3.7 times higher number than in the same period last year. 46% of Chinese tourist arrivals this year have been to Moscow and St. Petersburg.

"At the beginning of 2016, the growth compared to the previous year was 45%. Now it is almost 300%. We hope that this trend will continue in the second and especially in the third quarter of the year," Svetlana Pyatikhati, an expert in the matter, said.

## Continuous Growth Expected

Over the next few years the number of Chinese tourists coming to Russia can grow about 5 times compared to 2016 - up to 5 million people. This is the prognosis of deputy head of the Federal Tourism Agency Alexei Konyushkov.

"Of course. Given the fact that a total of 120 million Chinese travel the world," Konyushkov responded to questions regarding a potential inflow increase in the future.

Konyushkov noted that this development is an expert evaluation of the market potential. "It is not enough for the tourists to arrive. **We need to place them in accommodation facilities, arrange excursions etc.** This is the expert evaluation of the market potential for the following years, which was expressed by my colleagues," the expert added.

He also predicts that the growth rate of tourist arrivals in 2017 will outpace last year significantly. The main stimulus should be the FIFA Confederations Cup held in Russia this summer ahead of the World Cup next year.

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