

# OLYMPIC GAMES HURT THE BEIJING'S TOURISM INDUSTRY?



Beijing has undergone massive changes since the decision that the Olympic Games will take place here. The investments into the Games related infrastructure are reported to have reached \$40 billion. Construction of new venues as well as teaching inhabitants to queue up in line should have made the games a Chinese Triumph. Thousands of taxi drivers have learned English to make traveling round the city easier for foreign visitors during the games.

According to Beijing Tourism Bureau's statistics, currently there are 5,892 hotels and other institutions offering 336,000 rooms and 660,000 beds during the Beijing Olympics. It was expected that the hotels will be fully booked. Nevertheless, only 77 per cent of the city's five-star hotels and 44 per cent of its four-star hotels is booked by now.

What is more, Beijing witnesses a drop in the number of inbound tourists. This May, only 346,000 inbound tourists visited the city which is a 14.2 per cent drop compared to the same period last year. From this January to May in 2008, the city was visited by 1,577,000 inbound tourists, which is a 1.6 per cent over the same period last year. This May saw 26.6 per cent decrease in the numbers of visitors from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, 17.1% decrease of USA visitors, a 9.1% decrease of South Korean visitors and a stunning 44.9% decrease in the number of Japanese coming to Beijing compared to May 2007.

There are several reasons for these problems. There has been the earthquake in the Sichuan province as well as pro Tibet protests. Perhaps the biggest reason for the drop of inbound tourists is the new Chinese security policy. The government issued new visa regulations which make it more difficult for foreigners to get to the country. Business people are canceling their attendance to conferences and seminars and also students have problems with the new policy. According to Qin Gang, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, these measures are just temporary. The prime goal of the government is to secure safe Olympic Games.

Planning to go to Beijing? Add your comment.

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