

TIBET STRIVES FOR 3 MILLION TOURISTS



Tibetan tourist officials have been far from modest in setting their targets for 2007. They intend to increase job opportunities for local people and train local tour guides. Apart from this, they wish for rural tourism, very popular in India, South Africa and China, to be further developed and for tourists to bring in 435 million US dollars throughout the year. This would mean welcoming at least a further 3 million foreign tourists as well as encouraging locals to spend more. This optimism has been based on three factors. The first two involve construction projects completed last year and the final element lies in the statistics of previous years.

Nearly all recent years have seen steady growth in the number of visitors to Tibet, yet 2006 broke many records with an astounding 29% increase. Tibet has always been a place talked about worldwide for its extreme beauty with the world's highest mountains, everlasting green landscape and fascinating culture. Even the less well-known Namco, the world's highest salt-water lake with waters said to be capable of healing any sorrows and pain attracts a host of tourists..

The reason for the influx of people to Tibet last year lies in the opening of the Qinghai-Tibet railway. Before its opening, people from China and other neighbouring countries could only come by air or road. The railway has provided cheaper and safer access to the region. A few months later, Tibet's third airport was officially opened.

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