

BEIJING RECORDS SLOW GROWTH IN TOURISM



Beijing's increased tourist visits during the first half of the year seem to have slowed down, according to a recent study. China's capital received over 2.5 million visitors from overseas - this includes those who have come from Macao, Hong Kong and Taiwan - in the year's first half, which improved the increase by 4.2 percent.

However, it appears that the growth has been slowing down since the second quarter and is expected to continue dropping, based on research done by the Beijing Tourism Development Committee. Lu Yong, the committee's director stated that the city of Beijing will bring forth more measures and policies that will attract incoming tourists. Interesting historical sites and beautiful sceneries have always been attractive for overseas visitors, according to the tourism committee.

A major portion of incoming tourists come from Asia, including Macao, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Asian tourists represent 48.5 percent of all the visitors, making a 1.9 percent year-on-year increase. 25.1 percent of these are European tourists, which make a 8.4 year-on-year increase. The remaining are American tourists, who make up for the remaining 20.5 percent of the total population of visitors, according to the tourism committee.

According to a report that the committee released, although inbound tourism has made a year-on-year increase of 9.1 percent in the first six months, this was reduced to 1 percent in the second quarter. This is partly caused by the weakened recovery of the world's economy and the budget deficit, unemployment and debt issues that are affecting a lot of developed nations.

Then again, outbound tourism has seen a year-on-year growth of 69.2 percent, outperforming its inbound counterpart with over 1.2 million outgoing tourists in the first six months. This is mostly due to the increasing value of yuan and extensive promotion of overseas destinations by their respective countries.

The committee claims that the slow rate of inbound tourism may continue until the next half of the year. To further raise Beijing's inbound tourism, the capital is likely to initiate a 72-hour window to allow exploration of the city without the need for a visa, as well as other policies.

Kajiya Yoichi, an accountant who is now living in Japan, has always desired to return to China, where he studied in Tsinghua University, to explore the wonders of this ancient city with his family again. However, the visa is hindering him. According to him, if the 72-hour window is enforced, many potential overseas tourists would surely love to tour the city, as a three day tour is enough excitement to explore its cultural and historical significance.

According to Lin Song, an officer at the public security bureau, once the policy is implemented, they are expecting more tourists. However, the details of this policy have not yet been revealed.

According to Jiang Yiyi, the director of China Tourism Academy's ITDI (International Tourism Development Institute), a visa waiver for incoming tourists will largely benefit local tourism as a tight visa will only drive potential tourists away.

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