

TIBET EXPECTING TEN MILLION TOURISTS IN 2012



The autonomous region of Southwest China, known as Tibet, should receive a record number of tourists this year. Local tourism officials are optimistic and expect 10 million inbound travelers.

The tourists should inject more than 12 billion yuan, the equivalent of 1.89 billion dollars (U.S.), which is an important seventeen percent of the Tibetan annual gross domestic product. This predicted calculation was stated by the head of the region's tourism bureau.

Already more than 7 million tourists, both domestic and foreign, have visited the region during the period from January 2012 through the end of August. This is an impressive increase of over 25 percent, compared to the same period in the previous year. Revenue from this increase in tourist visitors grew even more, to 30 percent, compared to the same period in the previous year.

The regional tourism bureau feels this boom in the number of visitors can be attributed to tour activities that were organized for 2012. Themes for the various tour programs have been Tibetan culture, scenic mountain beauty, landscapes with snow and sunshine. Intensive advertising for the Tibetan festivals, like the popular Tibetan New Year were also instrumental in boosting the number of tourists so far this year.

Tibet is located on a high plateau known as the Qionghai. Most of the regions citizens are ethnic people with roots in Tibetan Buddhist culture. The most popular destinations have been Mount Qomolangma, Lake Nam Co, considered sacred by Tibetans, and various Buddhism heritage sites such as the beautiful Potala Palace. The Jokhan Temple and Monastery at Zhaxi Lhunbo have also been very popular.

More than a quarter million citizens work to take care of tourists in Tibet. The tourist industry has fixed assets and investment to support tourism worth more than 25 billion yuan. Tourism to the region of Tibet has grown, on average, more than 150 percent in the last five years. Almost 9 million people visited Tibet in 2011, spending nearly 10 billion yuan. The Tibetan region is expected to receive at least 15 million tourists every year by the end of 2015.

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