

TIBET RECEIVES MORE VISITORS FROM ABROAD



According to a top Tibetan official, the autonomous region of Tibet will further open up to outside world and welcome more foreign visitors during this summer.

During the year 2010, the central government put forward a proposal to transform Tibet into a major global tourism destination, and between January and November of 2012, **the region welcomed more than 190,000 tourists from abroad**, according to the local tourism bureau.

The chairman of Tibet's legislature, Padma Choling, said that there was need for the autonomous region to open up further in order to ensure that the tourism industry continues to develop in the right direction.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Padma said that as from this summer, tourism would open up the region to the outside world. He added that since the conditions in winter are inclement, the summer would be the starting point.

Last year, the region welcomed a total of 10.58 visitors which was a 21.7 percent increase from the number recorded in 2011, with 12.64 billion Yuan (\$2 billion) being generated in income. The Tibetan authorities project that by the end of year 2015, the contribution of the tourism industry to the region's GDP will have grown to 20 percent, with more than 10 percent of the total number of tourists being from abroad and above 15 percent of the local revenue being generated by the industry.

Padma however said that this opening-up had first to adhere to the State foreign policies as well as fit what was taking place locally. He further said that the precondition of opening up the region was to improve the service facilities in order for requirements to be matched, and that it was important to protect the region at the borders.

The autonomous region of Tibet has numerous tourist attractions such as Potala Palace, Yarlung Grand Canyon and Qomolangma which is the highest peak globally and is also known as the Mount Everest of the West. As there is need to protect the distinct lifestyles of cultural relics, ethnic groups and the local ecology, overseas tourists have to apply to be given entry permits.

In 2010, the former spokesman of the foreign ministry, Qin Gan, said that Tibet couldn't cater for all tourists due to various restrictions like natural conditions. He said that as a result, the authorities began introducing entry permits so as to manage the flow of tourists. Qin added that a big number of foreigners including reporters had traveled to the region for various purposes like tours, interviews and work and that more foreigners were expected to come to the region as it continues to develop and the conditions there improve constantly.

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