

SRI LANKA SAW 56% MORE CHINESE TOURISTS IN Q1



Chinese tourists are fast becoming the biggest group of travelers heading for Sri Lanka. In the first quarter of 2012 the number of Chinese visitors in the country was 5,334. This year it is 8,353 which is an increase of 56.6 percent.

The data also shows growth in the amount of Japanese travelers coming for holiday. With the second highest growth rate (21.4 percent) the number of Japanese visitors to Sri Lanka reached 7,239 in Q1.

The boom of the Sri Lankan tourist industry began in 2009, after the country's three-decade long war came to an end, making the country a more attractive place to visit. In 2012 alone, the tourists entering the country numbered more than one million. Although this number shows a significant improvement, the country's government is not complacent. **The target for 2013 is set at 1.25 million visitors with hopes of continued increase.** By 2016, the goal is to have 2.6 million tourists to the island.

Although tourists coming from India have been the greatest source of arrivals, the number of visits from this country recently fell by 18.1 percent, numbering only 11,789. The plummet started after visas were re-imposed.

The growth shown so far this year happens to be the lowest of any quarter since 2011, when it was only 10.9 percent for March, according to statistics provided by the Sri Lanka Development Authority, representing 288,798 tourists.

As the Sri Lankan government works to increase the popularity of the island, plans are being made to sponsor 100 travel agents in China over the course of 2013. Actions have also been taken by the Sri Lankan Economic Development Ministry, which has invited media crews to the country. These measures are taken in an effort of increasing awareness of the island's attractive destinations.

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