

BEIJING FACES DROP IN TOURISM NUMBERS



Alarm bells are ringing in the tourism sector in Beijing with the capital city not only recording a sharp decline in the number of tourists this year in comparison to last year but also a rise in the tourist complaints concerning the city over the past six months.

Data from Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics reveal that the number of tourists who visited the city during the first six months of the year stood at 2.14 million, **a decline of 14.3% as compared to the same period last year**. According to the authority, the declining trend had started in 2012 when the city attracted 5 million tourists, which was 3.6% lower than in 2011 when it had attracted 5.2 million visitors.

The quarterly survey of China Tourism Academy showed that the city's tourist satisfaction index which stood at 80.97% in the first quarter fell to 75.28% in the second quarter, which is the lowest since the inception of the survey by the Academy in 2009. The survey also revealed that the nationwide complaint rate of inbound tourists also rose from 5.77% in the first quarter to 7.20 % in the second quarter.

The Beijing Commission of Tourist Development held a conference in July to combat this declining trend. In a statement its spokesman said that detailed plans would be set in place soon to boost tourism.

Zhang Hui, a professor of tourism management at Beijing Jiaotong University, blames the weak global economy and the appreciating currency for the decline. He further added that the services in several **Chinese cities are not up to the high western standards and tourists find the scenic spots overcrowded**. According to him, Chinese cities including Beijing have not yet established a system which can provide quality services for individual tourists.

Corroborating this statement, Chen Xu from China Tourism Academy said that most of the complaints are related to the environment at the scenic spots and urban management.

A marketing manager at China CYTS Tours, Hu Jiying, has confirmed that her company has recorded a sharp fall in the number of tourists in the first half of the year. According to her, there was an almost 70% decline in the number of Japanese tourists to Beijing while the corresponding figure stood at nearly 30% for European tourists.

According to Hu, the trend can partly be blamed on China losing its attractiveness among the tourists amidst the increasing costs. She further adds that as the capital city is the first destination choice of the tourists, Beijing has been severely affected by this trend. To attract more tourists her company has offered detailed services such as greater tour choices to the overseas tourists.

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