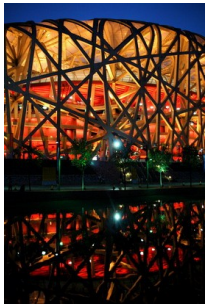


BIRD'S NEST LURES MILLIONS OF TOURISTS



In time of global crisis and the flu that scares off people from traveling, Beijing utilizes the vast development that the city underwent because of the Olympics 2008. Millions of domestic travelers come to the city to see the Olympics venues.

The Olympics is long gone but it still manages to lure tourists to Beijing. Mainly domestic travelers come to the city to see the changes the city had to undergo because of the Games. **The city was visited by some 85.4 million tourists in the first half of this year.** They have spent some 127.1 billion yuan (\$18.6 billion), which is a 14.6 per cent increase. The number of domestic travelers also increased by 20.8 per cent to 83.6 million when compared with the same period last year. Obviously the travelers did not get scared off neither by the flu nor by the global financial crisis.

Among the popular Olympics venues in Beijing belongs the National Stadium also known as the "Bird"s Nest," which manages to lure 20,000 to 30,000 visitors every day. This venue managed to earn some 260 million yuan (\$38.2 million) from October 2008 to this May.

People outside the mainland China, on the other hand, were obviously affected by the crisis and the flu. Only some 1.8 million tourists coming here during the period were not from the mainland. January"s numbers of arrivals of foreigners were even 29 percent down compared to the year before. As a result, Beijing"s luxury, four- and five-star hotels, had very low room occupancy rate. The hotels had to lower the prices because of that.

Nevertheless, Zhang Huiguang, the director of Beijing Tourism Administration (BTA) is optimistic. According to the director, numbers of travelers from outside the mainland are slowly increasing. The goal of the BTA for this year is to attract 154 million tourists and to earn 236 billion yuan (\$34.5 billion).

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