

CHINESE TOURISTS FAVOUR THAILAND AFTER RECENT EVENTS



Sometimes a tourist destination can benefit in surprising ways from some second-hand promotion, sometimes bad publicity can be spun into a positive with clever marketing, and sometimes a succession of unfortunate incidents can have a significantly negative impact. In China, tourists have turned their back on two key Asian destinations because of recent events while one Thai city has seen a surge in popularity thanks to recent exposure in a Chinese movie. Since the disappearance of flight MH370, which held a large number of Chinese passengers, the number of Chinese visitors to Malaysia has dropped and the same can be said for Singapore, where numbers have declined after the recent kidnapping of a Shanghai tourist. Tourists are understandably discouraged by these events, fearing for their safety in these nations, and are setting their sights on other, more inviting countries.

While Malaysia and Singapore suffer the consequences, Thailand is enjoying a boom in visitor numbers.

Thailand has always been a popular destination in regard to the smaller MICE sector (meeting incentive conference and exhibition), with 128,437 visitors spending 2.2 billion yuan in 2013 as they travelled for Chinese and international conferences and exhibitions. What makes this year different is that there has also been a large surge of holidaymakers travelling to the city of Chiang Mai, to the north of the country, and this is largely attributed to a Chinese box office hit called 'Lost In Thailand'. High ticket sales have fuelled the desire of these movie-goers' to see the location for themselves and it is claimed that these Chinese visitors alone are now spending an average of 3,750 baht/\$125 a day in the city. Provided that this interest and the positive MICE relationship remains, Thailand should continue to be a top destination for Chinese visitors; how long they will draw away from Malaysia and Singapore is, however, unclear.

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