

# WHY DON'T THE CHINESE COME TO LATIN AMERICA?



Nearly one million Chinese visit France and Germany, while another half a million visit Italy annually. Spain had 150,000 Chinese tourists in 2012. And what about Latin America?

Spain is the third country in the world in regards of tourist visits (almost 58 million last year); Chinese tourism is not yet positioned as one of the priority markets visiting the Iberian country.

The proposal by the Spanish tourism management is to reach one million Chinese tourists in 2020. Today, only 0.2 percent of the 80 million Chinese people who travel every year choose Spain. Private companies, such as Henkuai (a specialized communication partnerships Chinese market oriented company), have started campaigns and promotions to attract Chinese tourists, and no wonder: tourists are spending more and more money in the countries they visit (an average of 344 euros per day for Chinese tourists abroad).

## Latin America

In the 80s, after the opening of China and the possibility of traveling to this country coupled with economic growth in Latin America, many Latinos started to tour China as an interesting option, but it was not until 1997 that the Chinese agencies began organizing trips abroad. Between 200,000 and 300,000 Latin American tourists visited China annually over the last decade; Mexico and Brazil remain the two largest countries with travelers to China. On the other hand, Cuba was the first Latin American country to be recognized by the Chinese government as a tourist destination.

Later, Jamaica, Brazil, Mexico, Peru, Barbados, Antigua, and Barbuda were added (in 2005). The following year, Bahamas and Granada were added. Argentina and Venezuela were added to the list in 2007, Ecuador and Dominican Republic in 2009, and finally Colombia in 2012.

On the other hand, 14 of the 30 Latin American countries are already existing tourist destinations for the Chinese. However, due to the long distance and the high cost of travel, there are not many Chinese who prefer Latin America as a travel destination. In a year, there will be 20,000 people who will go to Cuba, and some 40,000 who will go to Brazil or Mexico. In 2011, 25,000 Chinese tourists came to Argentina.

These numbers are quite small compared with the 80 million Chinese tourists leaving the country each year, so there is still room to grow. The tourism sector in Latin America has also made great efforts to attract more Chinese tourists. For example, many Argentinian hotels already offer Chinese food and hire people who speak Chinese.

However, crossing the Pacific Ocean is still a problem for tourists. Currently, Aeromexico is the only airline with a direct flight that links China (Shanghai) and Latin America (Tijuana, Mexico), a flight that can take about 13 hours. The journey continues to baffle the tourists.

## Main difficulties

Besides improving air routes and resolving obstacles with visas, the cities and regions that want to conquer tourists from china should know Chinese better, adapt offers to them, and work with their travel agencies.

The second issue is fought in the language field; most travelers from China speak only Mandarin Chinese, so it would be essential that the tourism sector learn this language.

There continues to be many challenges, and much remains to be done to attract travelers from the promising Asian giant market.

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