

# MAURITIUS TOURISM EXPECTS A RECOVERY OF CHINESE MARKET



According to Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, the steep decline in the number of Chinese visitors will only be temporary. With additional flights, next month the business should get back to normal.

Air Mauritius, a national airline, has eight weekly flights to China. The main city is Shanghai with three flights, of which the last one has been effective since June. For the other Chinese destinations, which are Beijing, Chengdu, and Guangzhou, there is one flight per week. As for Hong Kong, there are two flights.

**“We plan to increase the frequency of flights to Guangzhou to two per week from the beginning of next year, if the growth trend continues,”** says Prem Sewpaul, Vice President of Communications and Corporate Affairs at Air Mauritius.

Mauritius tourism has benefited from the growing numbers of Chinese visitors: “From April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016, the number of seats sold in China was around 52,000. From April 1 to September 30 of 2016, Air Mauritius has already transported more than 45,000 passengers to China and Hong Kong, which represents an increase of about 6,500 seats compared to the same period of the previous year.”

Along with India, China is one of the two major markets in Asia. From January to September, the number of Chinese visitors has dropped by around 12%, reaching 62,691 tourists. This is what emerges from the monthly report published by Statistics Mauritius. In 2015, this market has seen an increase of around 41%, or 89,585 tourists.

For Kevin Ramkaloan, director of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA), the country has a very good image in China, in light of the recent survey results. Mauritius was named the number one destination in a survey by the China National Tourism Administrative and Mafengwo.com. It was also named the best destination for families in 2015 by Best Travel Media of China, and gained an award in 2015 for being a wedding and honeymoon destination, among others.

“Today, it is mainly a question of connectivity between the main cities of this significant Asian market and Mauritius. In November 2015, China Southern ended its operations in Mauritius. This caused an absence of seats while the market was growing,” emphasizes Kevin Ramkaloan. “Air Mauritius has increased the number of its flights to China. MTPA and Air Mauritius are working together to increase the visibility of the destination. Additional flights will soon be offered. The arrival of Air Asia is also expected to meet the deficit in the availability of seats. In 2017, we can expect to welcome 100,000 Chinese tourists.”

Mauritius tourism businesses however need to be prepared for the growing numbers of Chinese visitors. Saheed Eyasim, sales manager at the heart of Sun Resorts, affirms that the Chinese tourists have their specific demands. “China is a fast-growing market, compared to existing countries. It is also complementary to the traditional market because the Chinese travel during the low season in Mauritius.”

“Sun Resorts has adapted to this new clientele and has made available Chinese-speaking staff,

breakfast buffets, and a special menu in the restaurants. **While somewhat more discreet, the Chinese customer has the same expectations as everyone else when it comes to the quality of the product purchased.** They have specific expectations – different from our key markets – such as kettles and Chinese food.”

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