

ASIA PACIFIC TOURISM GROWS



Asia is witnessing a considerable growth in the tourism industry. The World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) analyses for the first four months of 2007, position Asia Pacific as the region with the world's highest growth in tourist entries.

It witnesses a 9% rise compared to the world average of 6%. This region is the second most favored destination in the world after Europe. China itself is number four as the most favored destination after France, Spain and the United States. UNWTO predicts that China will overtake the United States in 2008 and they suppose that it will take the lead in 2020. Other destinations in this region have also witnessed a growth in numbers of entries: Macao (+21%), Indonesia (+14%), Vietnam (+12,5%), India (+12%), Japan (+11%), and Malaysia (+10%).

The development in tourism industry affects other sectors too. For example the hotel sector is rapidly growing. In 2006, Asia registered the world's highest growth in hotel base (+10.5% or some 60,000 extra rooms). This is a very interesting development for investors as China and India, with populations of 1.6 and 1.13 billion represent a huge market. There are already some big hotel groups present on the Asia hospitality market. For example, InterContinental Hotels Group has 66 hotels in China and intends to double this figure by 2008. Another hotel player is Accor which runs 44 hotels in the country. Accor also plans to expand. They want to have 125 hotels in China by 2008. The Accor network has recently grown by 21%, mainly in China, Thailand, Indonesia and Australia. Hilton Hotels Corp. considers India as their key country. As the hotel market grows there emerge some serious challenges. There is for example the problem with ratings. Experts from hotel industry call for unification and a clear system of ratings system for hospitality services in Asia.

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