

# CHINESE TOURISTS ARE HOT TOPIC IN SOUTHEAST ASIA



Chinese tourists travel all over the world in massive numbers. In the first half of 2017, they were ranked number one for most outbound trips, with 62 million trips. This was reported by the China National Tourism Administration and it is one of the reasons, why so many countries are fighting for recognition by the Chinese.

Southeast Asian countries are also looking to attract Chinese tourists. **In 2016, more than 30 million trips were made between China and Southeast Asian countries.** During this year's National Day holiday, approximately 700 million trips were made. According to the China Tourism Academy, Southeast Asian countries were top destinations during the holiday.

According to the academy, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines were among the top 10 most popular destinations from October 1 to 8. But Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia were also top overseas destinations globally for Chinese tourists last year.

One of the reasons for this is also the fact that 9 Southeast Asian countries have a visa-free or visa-on-arrival regime with China. Moreover, more than 2,700 flights connect these countries with China every week. Both are mutually largest overseas tourist destinations and also largest source markets.

## Indonesia Plans to Impress

Indonesia plans to attract even more Chinese visitors in the future. 1.4 million of them visited the Southeast Asian country from January to August this year. This is an increase of 46% compared to 2016. However, there is still room for improvement, as the outflow to Indonesia accounts to only about 1% of the total outflow (120 million Chinese tourists abroad).

The Indonesian government wants to double this number and is set to launch an extensive advertising program in top Chinese locations. Moreover, President Joko Widodo has an ambitious plan of building 10 new tourist regions similar to Bali.

The plan is to emulate Bali's popularity in new destinations such as the Toba Lake, Seribu Islands, Mount Bromo, Mandalika or Morotai. However, it will take massive investments to realize this project. According to Tourism Minister, Arief Yahya, \$20 billion will have to be invested over five years. From this sum only about \$10 billion is expected to come from the government itself.

## Malaysia Increasing Efforts to Close Thailand Gap

Malaysia has always been one of the world's most popular destinations. In 2010 it was the 9th most visited country globally. However, last year it fell to 12th and was replaced by Thailand in the ranking.

In 2016, 2.12 million Chinese tourists arrived to Malaysia. This is an increase of 26.7% compared to 2015. In comparison, Thailand was visited by 8.76 million Chinese visitors last year, while Singapore saw 2.86 million arrivals.

Chairman of Tourism Malaysia, Siew Ka Wei, acknowledged that the country has some problems. For example, the lack of direct flight connections to tourism resorts or flight cancellations. Siew however, also added that progress is being made in this direction as well as regarding visa rules, digital marketing, and much more.

**One of the country's measures to increase Chinese inflow was the introduction of the eNTRI program in March 2016.** This program simplifies the visa regime and enables a holder to visit the country for a maximum of 15 days per visit.

Malaysia is also cooperating with China Southern Airlines. The goal is to improve the connection between both countries. In addition, Alitrip, Alibaba's online travelling platform, is another partner that should boost the inflow from China. This year, 2.14 million Chinese tourist arrivals are expected, thus only a slight increase compared to last year.

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