

CHINA WILL BE THE FIRST OUTBOUND TRAVEL MARKET



According to a study by Euromonitor International, tourists from mainland China will overtake Americans to become the largest international outbound travel market. The number of Chinese citizens traveling abroad will more than double, up to 259 million departures in 2030 of 97.5 million in 2018. That figure will far exceed the United States that will be in second place with 159 million departures and Germany with 138.6 million.

Currently, the United States leads the ranking with 115.17 million trips abroad in 2018, followed closely by Germany, with 110.52 million departures.

Bob McKercher, professor at the school of hotel and tourism management at the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong, said part of the reason why China will head the table is that Hong Kong and Macao are considered international trips.

"There is still a border between mainland China, Hong Kong and Macao because when Hong Kong and Macao returned to the Chinese government, the World Trade Organization kept its borders separate from mainland China", said McKercher in an interview.

It was expected that transportation projects, as the rail link Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express and the bridge Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau, further increase travel between the continent and the two Special Administrative Regions.

The mainland immigration authorities issued 133 million passports in 2017 and recorded more than 46 million visits to Hong Kong and Macao from continental China, according to official data.

The number of mainland Chinese traveling to international destinations has stagnated in the last three or four years, said McKercher, but "given that China's economy is expected to maintain formidable growth, it is probable that a greater part of its population requests passports. Countries such as Thailand, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia would benefit from the continued growth of the outbound travel market in mainland China," he said.

The Euromonitor report also predicted that China will be the main destination for international travelers by 2030, but did not provide specific estimates. **Tourist arrivals to China reached 67.3 million in 2018 and will increase, according to the study, in about a quarter to 88.5 million in 2023.**

It is expected that the segment of "high income" from China expands to 480 million by 2030, which represents more than a third of its population, according to Dan Wang, Analyst of the Intelligence Unit of The Economist.

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