

MOROCCO PLANS TO LURE MORE CHINESE TOURISTS



Morocco maintains its goal to attract 20 million tourists annually, but it still hasn't reached it. Over the first six months of the year, and despite the 6.6% rise compared to the same period last year, only 5.4 million visited the Sharifian kingdom.

To boost this figure, the Moroccan authorities have decided to focus on Chinese tourists, the premier source market of tourists in the world, with more than 150 million holidaymakers annually.

In May 2016, following a visit from King Mohammed VI to Beijing, Morocco decided to waive visas for Chinese nationals. Moreover, Royal Air Maroc (RAM) confirmed recently the establishment of a direct link between the Casablanca Mohammed V airport and the Beijing-Daxing International Airport from 16th January next year. Onboard the last B787-9 Dreamliner acquired by the company, the flight should last thirteen hours and transport more than 325 passengers at a frequency of three flights per week.

"Royal Air Maroc is proud to offer its passengers the possibility of direct flights between Morocco and China. Much anticipated, this new air route will definitely contribute to the development of destination Morocco as the world's leading tourist emitter market. It will allow us to respond to a strong need expressed by the market operators of the two countries and help further strengthen the commercial and economic relations between Morocco and China," explained Abdelhamid Addou, the company's president and CEO.

In parallel, and in order to increase the visibility of destination Morocco in China, a partnership has been signed between the Moroccan National Tourist Office (ONMT, the marketer for destination Maroc) and Ctrip, the biggest online Chinese travel agency, and one of the most important ones in the world.

The president of Ctrip travelled to Morocco to meet Adel El Fakir, the general manager of the ONMT. Ctrip racks up 300 million active users for a turnover of more than 4 billion dollars. "An exceptional opportunity for the ONMT to reach Chinese tourists," says a representative of ONMT.

Following this agreement, the two organizations will be able to pool their resources and their skills to develop Chinese tourism in Morocco. This memorandum is for a duration of three years and should allow the Sharifian kingdom to eventually host 500,000 Chinese tourists per year.

"This market, which has experienced meteoric growth since 2016 opens, it's true, extraordinary development prospects. It is therefore important for the Office to canvass the biggest influencers of Chinese travel so that they join us in our strategy," assesses Adel El Fakir.

If in 2018 Morocco hosted 132,000 Chinese tourists according to the ONMT, they only hosted 10,000 three years ago. Chinese tourists now represent one-fifth of tourist spending in the world, as much for their numbers as for their willingness to spend. The ONMT's statistics show that 82% of Chinese visitors have opted for 4- and 5-star establishments, thus showing their preference for quality services and experiences.

Date: 2019-09-16

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/chinese-tourists-are-in-the-focus-of-morocco-news11175>