

CHINA REVIVING AND TIBET TOURISM FLOURISHING THANKS TO THE GOLDEN WEEK



The importance of tourism worldwide cannot be underestimated. In this sense, China's big ace up their sleeve is the Golden Week – an annual holiday taking place at the beginning of October during which virtually the entire country is on the road.

And this is especially the case in these difficult times, as the Covid-19 pandemic has decimated the economies of countries all around the world. China is no exception from this rule, but a **successful Golden Week could have been an excellent way to restore confidence and restart the national economy**. So how did it go?

Record Revenues and Over 600 Million Tourists

It can be put in one word: positively. An overwhelming majority of Chinese tourists stayed in their own country. 637 million visitors were registered at the country's tourist sites. This is 79% of the figure for last year's holiday.

Meanwhile, in terms of domestic tourism revenue there was an increase of almost 70% compared to last year to 466.56 billion yuan (\$69 billion).

Some regions were more successful in their pursuit of tourists than others. Wuhan, the epicentre of the pandemic, once again showed its appeal to visitors. On the other hand, Macao was deserted with less than 100 000 visitors (-80%). But there was one surprising beneficiary of the Golden Week: Tibet tourism.

Rapid Growth of Tourism in Tibet

During the holiday week, the autonomous region of Tibet welcomed 1.88 million tourists. Total revenue reached an impressive figure of 979 million yuan (\$146 million), as reported by local authorities.

These figures correspond to a growth of 11.45% in terms of received tourists and 14% in terms of revenue. Some of the most popular sites in the region were the Jokhang Monastery and the Potala Palace.

Moreover, Tibet tourism sector experienced some changes in trends during this year's Golden Week. Rise of the popularity of day trips, self-drive tours and rural tourism was registered amidst the growth of tourism in the region.

This development is also one of the reasons why Tibet is so important to China, besides the political aspect. In the last couple of years there has been a steady growth of tourism in the region and in 2019 the demand peaked, as Tibet welcomed 40 million tourists. Revenues, meanwhile, reached a staggering 56 billion yuan.

Change of Tourism Habits

And while Tibet tourism stood out with its growth, there was an interesting change in the sector's dynamic during the Golden Week.

Some of them were connected to the pandemic, as visitors chose to spend more time in one place. The number of people staying in one hotel for 5 consecutive days increased by 35% compared to 2019, while the number of those staying in a hotel for a week rose by 70%. Furthermore, more people also chose outdoor activities, including sightseeing.

Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, interest in cinemas increased during the holidays, as the box office gross throughout China reached a staggering 3.7 billion yuan. This represents a record amount in the history of the Golden Week.

Young Travelers and Popular Cities

Data show that almost one third (30%) of all the tourists who were on the road during the Golden Week were people born after 1995.

Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou were the most popular destinations in the Asian country. Other metropolitan centers in the top 10 list include Chongqing, Shenzhen but also the already-mentioned Wuhan.

Indicator of the Economic Rebound

The successful Golden Week can be an indicator and the auspicious light at the end of the tunnel for China's economic rebound after a difficult year caused by the pandemic.

The annual holiday also reassured the population about the safety of their transport around the country. The celebration of the Golden Week showed the confidence of the country in its economic rebound and its public health measures.

And this is also supported by data from the economists, who say that **China has become the first major economy to return to its pre-pandemic performance**. The country registered a reported 5.3% growth in the third quarter of the year.

Finally, according to figures from the International Monetary Fund, China will experience an overall economic expansion of 1.9 % for the entire year - the sole major economy to show growth in these tough times.

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