

CHINESE TOURISTS MAY USE THEIR CURRENCY IN CAMBODIA



After a two-year hiatus, Chinese tourists are making a comeback in Cambodia.

Last week Cambodia welcomed the inaugural flight of the Chinese national airline, Air China, with a salvo of water cannons in its capital.

The flight, carrying some 125 Chinese tourists, arrived at Phnom Penh International Airport from Beijing and received a warm welcome from Cambodia's Minister of Tourism, Thong Khon, and Chinese Ambassador to Cambodia, Wang Wentian, as well as other officials.

Speaking to reporters at the welcoming ceremony, **the minister said that China is the world's largest tourist-sending country, with nearly 155 million Chinese tourists traveling around the world before the pandemic.**

Thong Khon used the event to announce a number of measures taken to accommodate them in 2023.

Among them, the minister announced the authorization of the use of the yuan, the official Chinese currency, instead of the Cambodian riel or the USA dollar, in all tourist services. From now on, all hotels and restaurants, as well as all tourist services, can accept payments in Chinese currency. He hopes this will attract more Chinese tourists.

This decision is part of the Cambodian government's strategy to facilitate and promote the return of these celestial tourists to the kingdom.

"For Cambodia this year, we will try to attract between 800,000 and 1 million Chinese tourists," he said, in January, the country received 25,000 Chinese tourists.

According to the Ministry of Tourism report, **China provided the largest number of foreign tourists to Cambodia in the pre-pandemic era.** In fact, the kingdom received some 2.36 million Chinese tourists in 2019, which accounted for 35.7 percent of the country's total tourist arrivals and generated about US\$1.8 billion in revenue.

Overall Cambodia hopes to receive more than 4.3 million international tourists in 2023.

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