

# CHINESE TOURISTS STILL NOT HEADING TO EUROPE



Many tour operators in Europe have expressed their concern about the low number of bookings from Chinese tourists which has been totally unexpected. There are a few groups that have looked forward to larger numbers to start arriving in Europe by May but the data is not showing a positive outcome.

Urs Kessler who operates Jungfrau Railways had very high hopes for the return of Chinese tourists since COVID restrictions were lifted but his hopes seem dashed. From March to August, **the percentage of outbound Chinese flights seem to run the same as the pre-pandemic numbers at 32%**. The Chinese are big spenders who traveled before the pandemic bringing in 1,500 to 3,000 euros per individual.

The travel industry is struggling with less revenue for the holidays and searching for cheaper vacations while the cost of energy and food continues to climb. This has been a challenge for airports and airlines looking to increase staff and not repeat last year's summer havoc.

ForwardKeys experts point out a long way to go to full recovery. On top of that, the Chinese airlines are doing everything they can to increase operations.

Before the pandemic, tourism from China was way up. Other tourists outside of Europe were the highest in 10 years leading up to 2019. The market was driven by interests in luxury shopping and 5-star dining.

Everything started coming to a halt caused by visa restrictions, very long passport wait lines, and limited airline tickets available to Europe. Also, the costs in some cases were 80% more expensive than before the pandemic hit. All-in-all, tourists from China are sticking closer to home and using their money for places like Hong Kong, Thailand, and Vietnam. In Hong Kong, arrivals were up 1,400% over the past two months with similar results in Thailand and Macau.

For those who do not have a great deal of money, the cost to travel to Europe can be an issue. The cost is definitely a big part of the picture. Many flights are still not operating in full which makes it even harder to travel to Europe anytime soon.

**Many tour operations are looking to the United States to bolster the industry by bringing in the American dollar to visit Europe** and they are coming in the throngs. Some analysts that foresee travel to places like London and Paris could surpass the numbers in 2019.

Many tourism services and retailers are crossing their fingers that the second half of this year will bring relief in visa policies, an increase in flights, and a stream of Chinese tourists.

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