THAILAND'S TOURISM IS BOOMING THANKS TO CHINESE TOURISTS

According to data from the Kasikorn Research Center, as of April 30, Thailand welcomed more than 737,000 Chinese tourists in 2023, 30 times more than the same period last year.

The Grand Palace and Bangkok's high-end shopping malls, like the resort town of Pattaya are once again booming with Chinese tourists flocking to Thailand during the five-day Labor Day holiday.

The Long-awaited Return of Chinese Travelers

The pandemic has dealt a severe blow to the tourism industry, significantly dropping visitor numbers.

Since the end of April, however, **Mandarin has become a common language in major tourist destinations in Bangkok.** Chinese social media platforms are full of young travelers sharing their shopping and travel experiences in Thailand.

Chanapan Kaewchaiyawuth, vice-president of the Thailand-China Tourism Alliance association, is extremely satisfied. According to him, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand daily has returned to a third of its pre-pandemic level, with around 10,000 visitors.

According to Chanapan, travel agencies in Thailand have prepared to welcome a large number of Chinese tourists during the holiday season.

Marisa Sukosol Nunbhakdi, president of the Thai Hotel Association, predicted that with the increase in the number of flights between Thailand and China during the summer, followed by the Mid-Autumn Festival, the number of Chinese tourists is expected to recover by up to 60% of pre-pandemic levels.

As it is currently low season with fewer European customers, tourism industry players hope more Chinese tourists arrive beyond the Labor Day holiday.

Different Ways to Travel

Experts noted a significant shift in Chinese tourist preferences, with younger travelers and small-group tours becoming more popular.

These tourists prefer to experience local food, fashion, and off-the-beaten-track destinations. Also, here is the tendency of Chinese tourists to seek out new experiences.

The tourism authorities hope that in the future, **Chinese visitors will continue to venture beyond popular tourist destinations and explore emerging regions that offer unique attractions.**

Chinese customers have shifted from group travel to independent travel so that more local businesses will benefit. In addition, independent travelers are more likely to explore and spend

money in multiple regions rather than in one place.

Chinese tourism follows the same evolution as Western tourism. Although, in the beginning, many Western travelers preferred group travel, with time, experience, and the help of good travel guides, many now prefer independent travel.

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