

# MYANMAR'S TOURISM INDUSTRY LOOKS FORWARD TO THE CHINESE RETURN



or 13.15%.

Affected by the new coronavirus epidemic and the political situation, Myanmar's tourism industry was hit hard. In April last year, the border was reopened to foreign tourists. However, the data could be more optimistic. In the 2022- 23 fiscal year, from April to March this year, Myanmar received 367,000 international tourists. Chinese tourists accounted for the most, reaching 48,342,

However, in 2019, the number of tourists in Myanmar reached 4.36 million, of which Chinese tourists accounted for one-third.

Today, foreign tourists in Myanmar have dropped sharply, and tourism and related industries have been hit hard. For example, the room price of a well-known resort hotel in Bagan for local tourists has been reduced by over 60%, from US\$ 130 to US\$ 47 per night.

Myanmar has adopted various methods to attract tourists, such as allowing people from more than 100 countries and regions to enter with electronic visas (e-Visas). Myanmar's Ministry of Hotels and Tourism also specially held basic introductory Chinese courses in the capital, Nay Pyi Taw, to better welcome Chinese tourists. Although Myanmar only attracted about 450,000 foreign tourists in the first half of this year, that was much better than the previous fiscal year.

With the recent release of China's third batch of countries and regions permitted for outbound group tourism, Myanmar finds itself among the listed destinations, presenting new tourism opportunities.

The political situation in Myanmar is very complicated and highly fragmented. Generally speaking, the south as a whole is stable, but the fringe areas, especially northern Myanmar (more precisely, northeastern Myanmar), mainly Kokang, Wa State, Little Mengla, and Tachileik are all outside the actual jurisdiction of the central government—the state of warlord separatism. Various civil and local armed forces, anti-government groups, and government forces are intertwined, forming a unique "military-political integration" ethnic political system and deriving relatively independent social systems and management methods.

This has led to many places in Myanmar being in a state of conflict and tension all year round. The British Foreign Office has warned British citizens not to travel to conflict areas in Myanmar. The U.S. State Department has also issued a level 4 warning, urging people not to travel to Myanmar.

Security concerns are also contributing to discouraging foreign tourists from visiting, in addition to political factors.

Criminal activities such as telecommunications fraud, drug smuggling, gambling, and other gray industries are rampant in areas like northern Myanmar. There are endless cases of foreign tourists being cheated into Myanmar and even losing their lives.

Although the government is doing its best to fight crime and ensure safety, the effects are apparent over time.

It is foreseeable that rebuilding security confidence will be difficult for some time, and Myanmar's

tourism will face challenges in recovering for a long time.

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