

FRANCE TRYING TO ATTRACT CHINESE TOURISTS



The Louvre Museum had 8.9 million visitors in 2023, close to its attendance level in 2019. However, the museum still misses its Asian tourists from Japan, Korea, and China. These visitors only made up 2.5% of the museum's visitor numbers. In 2018, Chinese visitors alone accounted for 8% of the museum's attendance.

In 2019, France welcomed over 2 million tourists from China, the world's second-largest economy. However, this only represented 3% of the total tourist flow. **Despite this low percentage, these visitors spent €3.5 billion in revenue, 7% of the total expenditure.**

As China reopened its borders in January 2023, the Ministry of Tourism reported that the "threshold of one billion euros in revenue has been largely exceeded." However, this is still significantly lower than the €3.5 billion recorded in 2019. The arrival figures for this year are not yet known.

French Authorities in Action

The French Minister Delegate for Tourism, Olivia Grégoire, visited China last week to encourage Chinese tourists to return to France. The visit was part of the Franco-Chinese Year of Cultural Tourism, celebrated on the sixtieth anniversary of bilateral relations between China and France. During her visit, Grégoire also sought to reassure visitors who may have been deterred by the riots in several French cities last summer.

Improving Visa Processing

On the "very delicate subject" of visas, Olivia Grégoire's office has stated that work is being done to improve the processing of applications of potential Chinese tourists - the executive plans to reopen several visa application centers across China and reduce the costs of the service. Bringing visitors from far away also requires planes.

A bilateral agreement between France and China provides up to 128 weekly rotations, but it has been suspended since the pandemic. Air France is against its reinstatement as long as Russian airspace remains forbidden. This situation leads to longer flight times of more than two hours and creates a fear of distorted competition with Chinese airlines. Since last summer, the French company has been operating 14 weekly rotations to mainland China, compared to 32 before the pandemic.

International Customers: The Locomotive of Summer Season 2023

France remains a major player in the tourism industry, despite some setbacks. In 2019, the country welcomed 90 million foreign tourists, making it the world's leading destination. Although the pandemic caused a significant decrease in tourist numbers, revenues from January to September 2023 have reached 50.4 billion euros, an 11.6% increase compared to the previous year, according to Atout France.

During the summer season of 2023, international customers were the driving force behind

the tourism industry in France. In July, the number of arrivals from the Americas returned to its 2019 level. However, compared to the pre-pandemic level, there was a decline of only 41% in July and 44% in August for air arrivals from Asia-Pacific tourists.

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