NUMBER OF FOREIGN TRAVELERS IN CHINA EXPECTED TO GROW AGAIN

The China Tourism Academy, a part of the Ministry of Tourism, has projected that in 2024 the country will witness six billion trips and earn revenues of around 6 trillion yuan (773 billion euros). For the year 2023, it has been estimated that there will be 5.4 billion trips and earnings of 5.2 trillion yuan.

Although the Corona pandemic has caused significant damage to the tourism industry, domestic and foreign tourism in China have witnessed steady growth over the past four years. **Stringent Corona regulations have made travel in China, the world's most populous country after India, difficult.** The government lifted the restrictions only in 2023, after which the industry saw some recovery. However, the number of foreign travelers in China was still lower than before the pandemic.

Relaxed Visa Requirements

In 2023, the Chinese were eager to travel, and the holiday season showed just that. The industry earned 753.4 billion yuan (99 billion euros) during the holiday week around the national holiday in October, which is 129.5 percent more than in the previous year and 1.5 percent more than in 2019, before the start of the pandemic. During the days off around the turn of the year, authorities counted 5.18 million entries and exits, almost five times more than a year earlier and roughly the same as in 2019.

Tourism plays a crucial role in China's economy, accounting for 3.96 percent of the country's economic output in 2021. The country is also looking to attract more international tourists. In December, Beijing relaxed visa requirements for Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, and Malaysia for a trial period of one year. This means any national of those countries who want to travel to China for less than 15 days no longer need a visa.

Problems for Foreign Travelers in China

According to experts, visa-free travel can increase foreign exchange earnings and economic growth. The increase in foreign travel also indicates how cosmopolitan a country is. In the long run, this can enhance the competitiveness and innovation of Chinese companies.

The government should introduce electronic visas to catch up with the trend. **It is currently impossible to apply for a Chinese visa online in some countries without visiting a Chinese embassy.** Also, Chinese citizens predominantly use mobile payments, which can be inconvenient for foreigners who don't have access to mobile payment platforms. Finally, the country's limited internet access can also challenge foreign travelers in China.

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