

PORTUGAL TARGETS HALF A MILLION CHINESE TOURISTS BY 2025



Portugal's tourism authorities aim to attract half a million Chinese visitors and achieve one million overnight stays by 2026. Carlos Abate, head of Portugal's tourism board, stated that 57,740 Chinese tourists arrived during the first quarter of 2024, marking a 135% annual increase. Despite this growth, only 70% of the pre-pandemic visitor numbers have been recovered.

China is the world's largest tourist source market, and in 2023, Chinese tourists spent more abroad than any other country. However, due to the Republic's strict travel restrictions related to COVID-19, **the latest increase in Chinese numbers is 44% below the pre-Covid highs, according to data from the Economic Intelligence Service.**

Over the last two years, China has been working to establish international visa-free agreements as part of its ongoing effort to rebuild connections and business relationships. Commercial aviation connections are expected to increase, and efforts to facilitate the renewal of Chinese passports and visas that expired during the pandemic should support this push. Despite this, Portugal is not expected to fully recover until 2025.

Some may consider Abbate's goals to be conservative. Although aiming for 500,000 Chinese tourists (which is 100,000 more than in 2019) and one million overnight stays in 2026 may seem ambitious, it would actually represent a lower visitor overnight stay rate than in 2019. Regarding the projected revenues of 224 million euros, Abbate explained, "In line with the growth forecasts for the Chinese market globally, we believe it's feasible."

Part of the comprehensive strategy to achieve these ambitious goals includes active engagement on Chinese social networks. This approach has already shown promising results in Porto, Portugal's second city, which saw a 107% increase in the number of Chinese visitors from 2019 in the first quarter of 2024. **This success is attributed to the effective use of Chinese social networks, demonstrating the potential of this strategy in attracting more Chinese tourists to Portugal.**

Although China enforces strict censorship measures, Abate emphasized the significance of engaging through channels like online marketing platforms. He mentioned, "We are very active in this area because we realize that this is where the dynamics lie." Initiatives include Turismo de Portugal's WeChat program, which serves as a platform for sharing teasers about the Portuguese gastronomic scene, featuring the world's best chefs, cultural attractions, and festivals.

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