

CHINA'S TECH TOURISM IS BOOMING



tech tourism.

China has reported a rise in a new class of tourists. These visitors are not primarily interested in the Great Wall, the Bund in Shanghai, or the Forbidden City. Instead, a growing number of foreign entrepreneurs, investors, engineers, and executives are coming to China to see its humanoid robots, electric cars, smart factories, and the boom in artificial intelligence. The trend is called

Industry experts believe that something remarkable — if difficult to describe — is happening in China. **A private industry has sprung up around these specialized tech tours, with agencies arranging manufacturer visits and laboratory tours in Shenzhen, Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou, and Hefei.** According to the Glopen agency, the demand for such itineraries rose by more than 50% in 2026, and the agency reportedly arranges over a hundred company visits a month.

Industrial, business, and trade tourism are merging. People are curious about how companies in China approach the design, production, and launch of new products — and the speed with which they do it. Robotics, electric vehicles, batteries, drones, applied artificial intelligence, and electronics manufacturing — these are the main areas of interest for such tourists.

Shenzhen is the main destination for such visitors. This city is home to many component manufacturers, robotics and drone manufacturers, electronics manufacturers, and a large pool of subcontractors. The number of foreign visitors increased by 70% in Shenzhen last year and more than 30% in the first quarter of 2026. Over 5 million foreign tourists arrived in Shenzhen from the beginning of the year to the end of August.

The demand for such tours has increased so much that local tour operators are beginning to react to it. Bridging China, one of the industry's leading players, has created a six-day AI and robotics tour in Shenzhen. The program includes meetings with local entrepreneurs, visits to robotics companies, and meetings in the robotics development center. Another highlight is a walking tour of the vast Huaqiangbei electronics market. This tour is quite long and costs about 2,580 euros per person. It does not include hotel accommodation and air tickets.

Of course, tours for China's technology elite are much more expensive and are completely customized. For example, one five-day business tour is organized for investors and top-level managers and costs about 12,909 euros per person. At the same time, there are tours in Shanghai and other cities that are relatively short but allow you to see China's technology industry. They cost about \$70 and \$130 to 2,300 euros for a few hours of electric car rides, robot walks, virtual reality games, or drone flights. Some tour operators even indicate the average price range for their tech tourism offerings in Shenzhen or Shanghai.

Meanwhile, in China, not only private tour operators but also state structures are showing interest in this trend. In particular, seven ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, issued a directive in May 2026 encouraging the development of industrial tourism. Authorities want to attract tourists to the automotive, robot, aerospace, logistics, and equipment manufacturing industries. The directive also encourages incorporating artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and autonomous driving into tourist experiences. China currently has 142 national-level industrial tourism demonstration sites. In

addition, industry insiders calculate that China's industrial tourism market size will exceed 300 billion yuan (about 38 billion euros) by 2029.

One reason for the popularity of tech tourism is the perception of China's technological and industrial potential among foreign companies and investors. Perhaps partly because many multinational corporations are worried about China's rapid progress in some areas, many tours take on the flavor of an industrial exchange. That is, visitors are looking for signals about potential competitors, suppliers, and partners, and the most important thing for them is to get an idea of the capabilities of China's technology industry.

It is important to note, however, that in many ways, this tourism trend is about curiosity. Many who witnessed the development of the personal computer and the rise of Silicon Valley feel that they need to see the new wave of technological disruption in China. However, when it comes to artificial intelligence, robots, electric vehicles, and the associated technologies that China demonstrates, these are often spectacular but relatively superficial projects. According to the Reuters report, many of the robots that China has demonstrated to foreign tourists are actually slow and barely capable of independent movement.

China's industrial potential indeed cannot be ignored. Even so, **the country still has significant challenges in becoming a world leader in all of the above industries, and some technologies remain far from use in mainstream manufacturing.** Nevertheless, it seems that tech tourism will continue to develop in China. This growth is fueled by an increasing number of multinational corporations interested in China's technology industry and a growing curiosity among foreign entrepreneurs and investors. Perhaps in a few years, this will become an everyday experience for some tourists to watch a smart factory or a robot workshop.

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