



Outbound Tourism Soars in China

By Zhu Zijun

“In 2010, Croatia saw a surge of Chinese tourists, so we will attach more importance to the Chinese market,” Zlata Merlin, an official from the Croatian Tourism Bureau, told media at the 7th China Outbound Travel & Tourism Market (COTTM), held in Beijing from April 13th to the 15th.

She was not alone in mentioning the importance of the Chinese market. Although the Japan earthquake and turmoil in North Africa has cast a cloud over the recovery of China's outbound tourism, the opening of the COTTM still suggests that foreign countries are optimistic about China's outbound tourism.

Outbound tourism surges

Boosted by the rise of the global and domestic economy, an appreciating Chinese currency, and loosened visa restrictions in foreign countries, outbound tourism in China has hit a record high in terms of the number of tourists and their consumption, according to the annual outbound tourism report released on April 12 by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) and China Tourism Academy (CTA).

The report predicts that in 2011, the tourism industry is certain to maintain its growth, thanks to the continuing recovering of the global economy, and the domestic economy whose growth is set at around 8%.

In addition, “China's fast-emerging middle class, improving transport links, combined with fewer travel problems and more favorable policies have all contributed to the boom in outbound as well as domestic tourism markets,” said Mr. Matt Thompson, Project Director of the COTTM, at the opening ceremony.

This year, outbound tourism in China is estimated to sustain double-digit growth. The number of outbound travelers hit 57.4 million in 2010, up more than 20% from the previous year. The number is expected to reach 65 million this year, up 13% from 2010.

The CTA said that the increasing number of Chinese citizens traveling overseas and their tourism consumption will climb to a record 55 billion U.S. dollars this year. Statistics from the CTA show that the 57.4 million Chinese tourists that traveled overseas in 2010, brought a total of 48 billion U.S. dollars to overseas destinations.

Foreign countries eye Chinese tourists

All of the aforementioned factors make China the focus of more and more global tourist destinations, which are marching into China to offer more opportunities.

A Boston-based consulting company estimates that by 2020, a quarter of international tourists to Japan and South Korea will come from China,





while the number of Chinese travelling to Europe will quadruple.

In North America, Chinese travellers will rank third among international arrivals. On average, there will be 25 million first-time Chinese tourists every year for the next 10 years.

This is the third time that the Guam Visitors Bureau (GVB) has attended the COTTM. The Bureau is sparing no effort to promote Guam, the closest U.S. island destination to China as an ideal resort getaway for mainland visitors wanting a taste of the US with a relaxing island experience.

“Mainland China arrivals to Guam in 2010 increased 45% from 2009 and we believe the number will continue to significantly increase over the next five years,” said Pilar Laguana, GVB Marketing Manager.

“As tourism is the biggest driver for the local economy, efforts like our participation in the COTTM will help us build a stronger relationship with China’s travel trade, and help introduce

Guam’s rich and colourful tourist resources,” she added.

The Philippines also sees China as one of its key markets. China is one of the fastest-growing markets for Philippine tourism with an 18 percent growth in the number of Chinese travelers visiting the Philippines last year, according to the Philippine Daily Inquirer. In 2010, the number of Chinese tourists in the country hit 200,000.

Tourism Secretary, Alberto Lim, from the local tourism department told the media the government is making every effort to improve the country’s infrastructure, facilities, and services in preparation for the arrival of more Chinese tourists.

In New Zealand, the number of Chinese visitor grew 31.2 percent in the year ended January to 127,837 people, making it the fourth biggest market after Australia, Britain and the United States, according to Statistics New Zealand.

Auckland Airport CEO Simon Moutter told the New Zealand Herald that Chinese outbound travel has quadrupled in the past decade to 46 million trips, which makes New Zealand’s current share about 0.3 percent. The



The COTTM, a leading B2B travel event in China, is a unique business platform for international travel and tourism professionals to develop the growing China outbound travel market. The COTTM has been held six times since 2005.

This year, the COTTM attracted over 230 exhibitors from 55 countries and regions, from Cambodia to Canada; Kenya to Kazakhstan; Malawi to Morocco; Slovenia to South Africa. There appeared many new products and exhibitors this year, including new pavilions from Turkey, Zambia and Sicily.

The COTTM also focused on educational forums, including exhibitor workshops and a number of panel discussions on changes in the demands of group Chinese outbound tourists, FIT, Theme Tours, luxury travel and how to cater for the new Chinese tourists. Besides, the COTTM played host to the Chinese Tourist Welcoming Awards – now in its eighth edition.

growth in outbound travel is being fuelled by a soaring number of Chinese middle class and affluent consumers, which a Boston Consulting Group report last year estimated would increase from 150 million to more than 400 million over the next decade.

Kenya is also banking on increased Chinese tourists and investments to spur its economic growth, said Kalonzo Musyoka, the Vice President of Kenya, when he welcomed Mr. Li Changchun from China recently. ☺