

QUICK FACTS AND INSIGHTS CHINA

Economic environment

Population:	1.3 billion
Internet penetration:	10% of the population use the internet
GDP 2006 (PPP):	US\$9,983 billion
GDP growth:	c. 10%

China has become the world's 2nd largest economy, and continues to grow at a fast rate. It has increasing numbers of millionaires and a growing middle class. Although only a small proportion of China's huge population use the internet, it is popular amongst the affluent and educated urbanites.

Source: Economist / ETC

Chinese outbound travel trends

- Even though only a small proportion of the huge population can afford to travel, outbound travel from China has been growing quickly in the last few years. It has become the 6th largest market in the world in terms of spend on international travel.
- The boom in leisure travel began with the introduction of Approved Destination Status, which allowed group travel to certain destinations. At present, over 130 destinations (including the UK) have ADS status. Much of the outbound travel goes to countries within Asia, but long-haul travel is increasingly popular, both for group and individual travel.
- The travel trade has a vital role to play in this market, providing recommendations and organising trips and visas etc. Other important sources of ideas on holidays are personal recommendation, the internet, TV programmes and the press.
- The most popular type of holiday abroad is touring around seeing iconic sights. Peak times for travel are around the traditional "Golden Weeks" – Chinese New Year (Jan / Feb), Labour Day (May) and National Day (October).
- As they grow in travel experience and confidence as consumers, travellers from China are becoming more independent, sophisticated and demanding. However, they are also price conscious and because of the cost of travelling to Europe, packed multi-country itineraries are common. Many travellers prefer to save on travel and accommodation, to be able to spend on shopping, including for gifts to take home.
- Chinese language provision is a key need of the market and it is also vital that suppliers understand Chinese customs and preferences.

Scotland's visitors

- Chinese people have generally positive perceptions of Scotland and traditional icons such as whisky, kilts, scenery etc are recognised. Scotland is seen as a romantic, historic and mysterious destination with a strong identity. Golf is an elite sport in China and therefore is only attractive to the very affluent and to business travellers. The most common negative perceptions are of bad weather and expensiveness.
- There has been a lack of detailed knowledge about what Scotland can offer as a holiday destination both amongst travellers and the travel trade. To become increasingly included in recommendations and itineraries, continuing awareness building activities are vital. VisitScotland's Chinese online training website, www.scotsagent.com.cn was launched at the end of 2007, to increase product knowledge amongst Chinese travel trade.
- Scotland is likely to remain as a destination included as part of a longer holiday. However a limiting factor in market growth is the perceived, and actual, difficulty in obtaining a visa for the UK in comparison with other European destinations.

For more information on Scotland's visitors, visit www.visitscotland.org