

# THE LEADING COMMUNITY OF CHINA'S TOP TRAVEL BUYERS

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## **Making the most of Chinese first-time travellers' fondness for island trips**

Island tours are high on the priority list of first-time travellers from China. The pie of island tourism from China is also growing. So is it time such travellers are targeted with new, exciting options, rather than mundane packages?

First-time travellers from China are being seen as one of the attractive segments to target for outbound tourism. It is estimated that 16-17% of the 1.4 billion population has travelled abroad till date. China's new passport issuance annual growth currently stands at 20% or so. Moreover, the Chinese passport can now allow Chinese to travel to 74 countries and territories around the world with no visa or visa on arrival requirements.

Referring to the database of travellers from 8 Continents Travel, the company's CEO, Bamboo Jizhong Zhou, shared that among those who step out of China, 85% are island travellers during the first three years, and the percentage last year was still 70% considering that the company increased 30% of its non-beach destinations. 8 Continents Travel has been offering beach destinations-related travel products for more than eight years.

## **Overcoming complacency**

Among the group of travellers who are most likely to visit islands, "honeymooners" aren't showing signs of drifting away from regular destinations. Other popular segments are young couples and families with kids. Zhou indicated that South-East Asia islands generally are no longer considered as "worth-being-proud honeymoon travel destinations, but long-haul ones are, such as Fiji, Tahiti, Seychelles, Santorini etc."

"Thailand and Maldives are not new but are still the most popular two for Chinese people," said Zhou.

Considering that these destinations have been around for a while and have the opportunity to target audience from third- and fourth-tier cities in China, they shouldn't take their existing offerings or approach towards promotion and marketing for granted. "China is not a new island market, but a big customer source country with different guests. No island destination is that new for frequent traveller from the first and second tier cities like Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, etc.," said Zhou. He added that in case of travellers from third and four tier cities, who are ready to explore the world, they can be targeted in new ways, incorporating novel concepts or fresh campaigns. "It really does not matter that these two (Thailand and Maldives) destinations are losing their popularity among travellers from the biggest cities, as the majority population, as well as future market, are out of these cities," he said.

Overall, the popularity of destinations that Chinese visitors have been enjoying for years has never apparently changed. Zhou mentioned that the serene surrounding of these locations, activities, friendliness of locals, well-established travel facilities, hotels and their hospitality all combine to make them popular. What is still definitely popular among the Chinese travellers is the list of South-east Asia's brands of luxury hotels and resorts. He mentioned that international chain hotels, especially luxury resorts, such as Four Seasons, Six Senses etc., "were, are and will be a big weapon for improving the island tours". "(These) brands are accepted by Chinese high-end travellers as best family island destinations due to its accessibility and general atmosphere of nature and culture. And they are also very popular for incentive groups and budget travellers due to the variety of hotels and travel services," he said.

"(Chinese travellers love) festival- and local culture experience," said Zhou.

## **Aiding decision-making of today's informed traveller**

It is time travel companies look at the profile of their target audience and act accordingly. One group would be travellers from major cities in China. "Nowadays, more and more urban citizens, of most are high-end individual travellers, are getting fond of being "getting away" travel because of their own busy daily work and life," said Zhou. "Referring to the increasing popularity of customized tour option such as island trips, he mentioned that travellers belonging to the 22 to 45-50 years age-group, those who are open to accepting new travel concept and can speak English, have such demand."

For those who are looking for standard itineraries, online availability is one way to attract them. But for those, who are keen on exploring new activities or even locations, relevant content or reviews would be add a lot more value.

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"For a travel package featuring personalized travel products, my suggestion is to prepare as much information as supplier can online to enable potential consumer to read and make decision on what they really need," said Zhou. This will greatly benefit different stakeholders involved, he felt. "So far, the best example I have even seen globally is Australian's Hamilton Island," added Zhou.

He mentioned that all of this comes on the top of what is generally expected by all travellers. Six key points are:

- Safety;
- Being China-ready including Chinese speaking staff or tour guides;
- Quality of accommodation;
- Food and Beverage, especially Chinese or Asian flavours for certain Chinese travellers;
- Proper activities for certain purpose travellers;
- Special care

"Actually, all should be done - excursion, shopping, dining, accommodation, transportation, entertainment, as well as daily service and occasional "wow" surprise (for instance, tourists also hope to have surprises, such as birthday wishes or honeymoon flowers)," concluded Zhou.

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#### *Additional Company Info:*

Founded in January 2012, 8 Continents Travel is headquartered in Shanghai, with branches in Beijing and Chengdu. With destinations all over the world, 8 Continents Travel mainly offers honeymoon and family vacation packages, as well as private customized travel services. 8 Continents Travel is well known for its high-quality tailor-made services and the ability of taking good care of their guests. Through ensuring high-quality services with its series of criteria and standards, such as Hotel/Resorts Selection Criteria, Flight Selection Criteria, Visa Application Standards, Customized Services Standards and Emergency Procedure Standards, and retaining a "friend-to-friend" relationship with the customers, 8 Continents Travel acts unique in luxury travel industry of China.