



Understanding the necessities of different adventure trips

The core modules of adventure trips are converging, without too much customization given the considerations of safety, specialization, resource rarity and supporting staff. At the same time, a specialist like CYTS' Sparkle Tour understands the joy behind every adventure trip, and looks beyond customized arrangements, too.

Adventure tours demand attention on several fronts. Considering the extensive array of options for such trips, it means the providers of adventure travel need to assess the uniqueness of each trip and accordingly work on requisite essentials for each of the trips that can be possibly planned.

On the positive side, adventure tour specialists in China have gained considerable experience over the years, and found out that there are certain aspects that are common in such trips. So as they become accustomed to serving adventure enthusiasts, sellers are becoming proficient in meeting the expectations of this audience.

"The core modules of adventure trips are converging, without too much customization given the considerations of safety, specialization, resource rarity and supporting staff," shared *Chen Yao, Deputy General Manager of Sparkle Tour*, a luxury travel brand operated by CYTS. Yao mentioned that the routes of cave exploration, crossing of inhospitable zones and polar expeditions are mostly predefined.

"However, most travellers require some customized arrangements before or after the core modules. There is a greater room of customization in leisure adventures, for example, the routes of mountain hiking and the choice of safari." At the same time, Sparkle Tour understands the joy behind every adventure trip, and looks beyond customized arrangements, too. "Niche or rarity is one of the charms of adventure trips, which will be retained. Therefore, it is essential to explore the diversified needs of these consumers, instead of mass production," said Yao.

As for what adventure means to the typical Chinese adventure traveller, she says they aspire to get new experience from the journeys, satiate their curiosity by exploring the unknown, challenge the limits of physical strength and will power, and participate in exceptional outdoor activities that are beyond the sight of ordinary tourists.

The way it is planned

In general, adventure travellers are prepared for simple food and accommodation. In particular, when the situation is extremely tough, most of travellers fully expect camping, humble accommodation and rough food, said Yao.

"However, some travellers prefer luxury in wilderness. After a day of challenges, premium accommodation and catering services substantially improve the overall travel experience, which depends on their budgets," she said.

Explaining the main drivers for travellers who opt for adventure trips, Yao explained:

- Challenge yourself and achieve psychological self-fulfillment beyond physical pleasure.
- To know people with the same hobbies and meet social needs.
- Outdoor adventure is one of the healthy lifestyles and the theme that travellers inherently want to participate in.
- It is also a trend of high-end and young consumers.

These travellers can plan an adventure with their respective clubs (featuring consumers with similar interest), with friends with similar interests, join a travel group and even travel alone.

Sharing more details, Yao added:

- Age: Mostly young and middle-aged travelers, for example between 28-45 years.

- Gender: Men prefer extreme adventures, such as 7+2 and polar expeditions (refers to extreme expeditions undertaken to climb the highest peaks of all the seven continents and hike to the North and South poles), while women more favor lifestyle adventures, such as marathon and experiential sailing.
- Occupations: Corporate executives, senior and middle managers and young white collars seeking for excitement.
- Lifestyle: They advocate natural and healthy lifestyle, and are highly interested in mountains, ocean and geography.

Sparkle Tour doesn't provide professional adventure products at this juncture. Most of the company's products are experiential and leisure adventure trips, for example, extreme outdoor sports in New Zealand, participation in world-leading marathons, polar cruises and off-road crossing in Northwest China. As a strategic partner of National Geographic Expeditions (NGE) in China, Sparkle Tour helps NGE launch adventure products guided by NGE-certified experts, such as animal tracking in East Africa, exploration at Tangjiahe Conservation Zone and hiking in Baima Snow Mountains. Since the launch of these products, the company served over 100 travellers in dozens of groups.

Factors impacting price

There are many segments under adventure travel, such as extreme challenges, outdoor challenges (cave exploration and crossing of inhospitable zones) and leisure adventures (e.g., experiential outdoor activities, skiing, running and hiking).

"Each segment targets a different yet somewhat overlapping audience. Generally speaking, the more specialized an exploration, the scarcer the resources and the more challenging the activity, the more expensive it is," shared Yao. She added that certain adventurous activities tend to be relatively expensive than others due to the equipment, transport, staff, etc. "The cost of a premium adventure trip depends on destination, which is usually RMB200,000-500,000 for polar expeditions and other remote destinations, including all expenses and equipment, and is RMB30,000-100,000 for domestic destinations," she said.

Popular destinations include: South and North Poles, South America and Africa. In and around China, the list features national parks/ inhospitable zones such as Xinjiang and Tibet/ complicated territories in Northwest China and Guizhou.

She picked the off-road crossing in Northwest China as the most prominent adventure activity in the last 12 months or so. "Without too many restrictions on age and physical fitness, it takes only 7 days, instead of over 20 days for polar trips, which are not suitable for working class. It is quite balanced, combining excitements with comfortable and relaxing experience," said Yao.

Yao also highlighted that family trip is one of the major segments among Chinese tourists. "It is possible to pay more attention to adventure trips designed for different age groups, including children, which will create opportunities for them to get close to nature and challenge themselves. By challenging various tasks, it will also help promote the relationship between family members," she said.

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