



## **Heart and desire for adventure travel in China on the rise: ATTA**

China's interest in adventure travel is growing rapidly. The interest seems to be increasing for both the outbound traveller and inbound traveller, according to the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA).

The definition of adventure from a traveller's perspective varies. For some people, it could be about polar expedition and mountain climbing, whereas for others it could be about exploring unknown destinations during a leisure vacation. This means both professional adventurers and casual travelers are increasingly enjoying adventure travel experiences.

In this context, the ATTA, widely recognized as a vital leadership voice and partner for the adventure travel industry around the world, takes a very global view of adventure travel.

"We don't limit the conceptualization of adventure to high-adrenaline sports that are seen as dangerous, though they certainly do count as adventurous. Rather, we have a view of adventure that includes many different types of travel," says Jake Finifrock, ATTA Regional Director, Asia. The association serves more than 1300 members in 100 countries worldwide. Its members consist of tour operators, tourism boards, specialty agents and accommodations, all sharing a vested interest in the sustainable development of adventure tourism.

Referring to the results of a survey featuring its members and clients who have travelled with ATTA's member companies, Finifrock says adventure includes components of nature, activity, and culture in a travel itinerary.

In terms of what drives travellers who are passionate about adventure travel, travel providers largely refer to the lure of "experience and challenge." Moreover, tourists are no longer satisfied with regular trips and seek more exciting and themed journeys. Also, as people become more conscious about fitness, living life to the fullest, and challenging themselves, they want to achieve psychological self-fulfillment beyond physical pleasure, socialize with travellers with similar hobbies, and meet local people. Some even consider these trips as way to rejuvenate or revitalize their lives. It could mean a regular break for some or a new lease of life for others. Activities on adventure tours might vary, but the spirit is largely the same.

Finifrock agrees and says, "Often, adventure travel involves some sort of transformation for the traveller who is going deep into the destination through some sort of involved activity. Gone are the days of being content to sit on a bus and visit landmarks. Adventure travellers want to get into the environment and have a deep experience that goes beyond sightseeing."

This also reflects in the growth of this tourism category. "Adventure travel has been growing at a rate of four times the mass travel industry over the last decade. All indications point to this trend continuing as travellers are continuing to pursue meaning and engagement in their travel. They want the value and the transformation that adventure travel can bring, and they want to know that their money is staying in the local communities where they are exploring. The adventure travel community actively seeks off the beaten path experiences and wants to be a benefit to the places where they travel."

### **Adventure travel on upswing in China**

Chinese travellers are showing an interest in activities like mountaineering, diving, boating, and skydiving.

"China's interest in adventure travel is growing rapidly. The interest seems to be increasing for both the outbound traveller and inbound traveller," Finifrock said.

Specialists point out that China has attractive options for adventure tours, such as off-road riding trips in the Western part of China.

"It appears that as the Chinese traveller has more opportunities to explore other destinations that they are interested in trying new and exciting activities that either aren't available in China, or are undeveloped. Urban travellers from China are drawn to the excitement and engagement that many adventure activities bring, but may not yet be as experienced in some of the activities as international travellers, and safety and clear communication are sometimes of some concern," Finifrock said.

He added, "In the future, as domestic standards increase and protocols develop for domestic adventure travel, the Chinese traveler will have had greater exposure to adventure activities, and will be adequately equipped to engage in a wide array of adventures. The heart and desire is clearly growing, and undoubtedly China will become a driving force in the adventure travel sector."

This travel sector is expected to grow as people begin to understand what it entails, tour operators begin creating clear itineraries emphasizing adventure travel, and confidence in safety measures increases. Specialists point out that the risks associated with adventure trips are indeed manageable and as the word spreads about safety management, it will only attract more Chinese travellers.

"For the outbound travel market, it is important to offer adventure activities that are suitable for the average Chinese traveller. That way an activity will be appropriately stimulating, with just the right amount of challenge and reward. These type of activities are really transformational and often entice a traveller to do more and bring their friends next time. For the inbound market, it is crucial for Chinese adventure providers to maintain international standards for safety and service," Finifrock said.

"The ATTA provides education for travel companies and tourism boards who want to make sure to build their adventure travel industry in a safe, sustainable, and successful manner. If the industry within China develops properly with a good foundation, the result will be evident in the great satisfaction of the international guests, and the reputation will speak for itself," added Finifrock.

### **ATTA's role in adventure travel**

The ATTA is at the forefront of the global adventure travel industry. "We are a community of over 1300 adventure travel companies and tourism boards who are committed to provide meaningful, sustainable, and people-friendly travel. We emphasize value over volume, and promote a type of travel that is beneficial to the host destination as well as the traveler. We lead by gathering our community for global events where we can collaborate, communicate, and learn from one another. We are also involved in research and the promotion of best practices, international standards, and ethical practices in travel," explained Finifrock.