

Outlook for Travel to Britain

- With Christmas/New Year/Chinese New Year season around the corner, the H1N1(swine) flu quiet down and prices of air tickets continuing to drop, the prospect for Britain bound travel in the next 3 months looks optimistic.

Britain in the News

- The Pound stabilized at a low position, swinging between 1:11.4 to 1:11.6 against RMB (China Economic Review), mainland Chinese continue to take advantage of weak pound when shopping in London.
- Gordon Brown announced tougher immigration rules to reduce number of immigrants to the UK, including tighter measures for student visa applications, and considering shutting down of applications from parts of China where there had been evidence of abuse (Guardian).

General Market Mood

- China's economic engine, boosted by government stimulus, improved to 8.9% in the third quarter of 2009, from 7.9% in the second quarter, economists were divided on whether the turbo-charged growth momentum was healthy and sustainable.
- China looks firmly on track for economic recovery, consumers remain confident and optimistic when spending. Consumer confidence for economic outlook remains strong, evidenced by growing car sales throughout China and a booming property market. Government put leash on the growing property price by invalidating favourable housing loan policies.
- China's October car sales up almost 76% year-on-year, and well on track to become the No.1 car market (11m sold) and manufacturer (13m made) in the world (Reuters).
- H1N1 (swine) flu had a second surge during September to November with more confirmed cases and death toll, but its impact over international travel has diminished. The pandemic is no longer in the headlines and sentiment on international travel started to rebound.

Consumer Behaviour

- Apart from factory towns heavily reliant on exports, most Chinese cities are doing well amidst the recession. General sentiments are upbeat about economic and income outlook. People continue to spend and travel and continue to take advantage of weak dollar and pound on overseas trips.
- Global Refund and top London retailers (Westfield, Harrods etc.) report a fantastic year for Chinese shoppers. Sales were up 180% by Chinese visitors to Selfridges, and were set to overtake those from the Middle East and become the biggest spenders by Christmas.

Media Matters

- Partnership between VisitBritain and China Central TV in London generated over £1 million worth of advertising value over the last 6 months. This is at the cost of just £6,000 pound direct investment.
- VisitBritain and Tourism Ireland will jointly host a media gathering event in Shanghai on 10 December. The event is to refresh our key media contacts in east China with updates/inspiring Britain and Ireland destination knowledge to maintain their interest on the two destinations and working relationship with us. Around 30 journalists will be invited by VisitBritain and Tourism Ireland together.

Routes and Fares

- Virgin benefits from VisitBritain's 'Britain Your New Playground' campaign by over RMB2.5 million in sales from September. The partnership is to continue through the Christmas and New Year period.
- British Airways to launch their 6th flight between Shanghai and London in early December, in preparation for Shanghai Expo 2010.

Business Tourism

- VisitBritain Beijing, China Holiday and VisitLondon represent Britain at the CIBTM in Beijing

Leisure Travel Trade

- VisitBritain and Tourism Ireland to partner up on China Travel Trade Mission in January 2010. This would be VisitBritain's major travel trade effort in 2009/10, where over 20 UK/Irish suppliers are to meet over 50 top travel agents from across China.

Competitor Activity

- Tourism Ireland poised to launch their Shamrock training programme for Chinese buyers.
- Tourism Ireland launched new travel package product including France and Switzerland destinations together with the local travel agent China Space Beijing in October.
- Tourism Australia mission held in Guangzhou from 8-11 November. 48 suppliers from regional tourist board, airlines, hotels and ground handlers in AUS joined the mission and 177 travel agents in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan attended the event.
- Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) registered in Beijing as regional hub on 19 November. Chief Representative will look after Asia.
- A few European NTOs exhibited at China International Travel Mart in Kunming in November.
- Switzerland Tourism, Holland, Flanders and Canada etc have promoted family holidays in their media/trade/consumer communications.
- Germany, Austria, Italy Singapore, UAE, New York, California, Flanders join up promoting shopping and NY experience campaign delivered by CAISSA Travel.

VisitBritain Activity Update

- VisitBritain supported CAISSA Travel, a leading agent with Headquarters in Beijing, on its newly launched Global Experience Travel Season. VisitBritain helped to promote Selfridge, Harrods, Oxford St. as part of the programme.
- VisitBritain supported Liverpool in delivering a Liverpool specific itinerary as part of Liverpool's Shanghai Expo2010 ambition. Imagine Liverpool seminar where held in Shanghai on 25 November, attended by 30 travel trade and media from East China. The event kicked off a series of activities including introduction of Liverpool product at the China Travel Trade Mission in January, familiarisation tour in March and official product launch in May 2010 from the Liverpool Expo Pavilion
- VisitBritain secured Scotland's Red Hot Chilli Piper band to perform on Beijing TV's Special Festival Special 'World Gala', to be viewed by over 300m viewers in China in February 2010.

Upcoming activity

- China Travel Trade Mission to be held in Sanya 20-23 January. Sponsored by Tourism Ireland, this will be attended by 20 British and Irish suppliers and over 50 top Chinese agents.
- VisitBritain to launch joint value campaign (as part of regional effort) with British Airways in China.
- VisitBritain to launch luxury campaign by Mar 2009.

Who's in Town?

- Barack Obama visited China as part of his first trip to Asia in November.