



TOUR OPERATORS & TRANSPORT SERVICES –SECTOR SPECIFIC

General Background

The UK China tour market is fairly well established now, particularly in London and major tourist destinations around the UK.

There are a wide range of companies providing these services to be found in the Great China Welcome Charter directory if you have particular enquiries and require specific help and advice.

In general groups booked through travel agencies still remain a large part of the total visitors market to the UK; however the number of Chinese booking through travel agents has fallen over the last few years as more independently organised travel is booked directly with the carrier or through internet third parties.

According to recent research conducted by Visit Britain (visitbritain.org/greatchinawelcome) “Chinese travellers use the internet more for gathering travel information than for making bookings, with so called ‘non transactional sites’ such as travel guides and travel review sites seeing far more traffic than transactional websites”.

Travel guides, travel blogs/forums, social media and talking to friends, family and relatives provide the top few sources of influence on destination choice according to the report.

Therefore it is important for Tour Operators and those wishing to provide Tour Services to consider providing a Chinese language presence online in China and there are several providers who can assist in this as listed in the Great China Welcome Charter Members directory.

Consider developing your own Chinese language app and an official presence on Chinese social media, (Harrods Department Store successfully launched this facility in 2014). Also providing a helpline with Chinese speaking staff can be seen as a very positive and welcoming gesture.

Providing a “Google” translation tab on a UK website is not sufficient as at the moment Google is not available across China on a stable platform basis. As a result the Google translation tab does not

appear when accessing the site from China and unless the organisation name and link words are listed in Chinese then they are not likely to show up in local Chinese searches.

It is necessary to invest in a China listed website presence in order to ensure that information and details are easily accessible and visible to potential Chinese Visitors.

Tour operators and service providers - should provide very detailed quotations clearly indicating those services included and those that are extras. Chinese bookers may not be familiar with usual Western inclusions so they need to be clearly identified. Tax and commissions, as relevant, need to be clearly identified with clarity over their inclusion or otherwise in prices quoted.

Chinese agencies will prefer to avoid full payment in advance so wherever deposits and balances by certain dates are required to be paid then a very clear payment policy must be included. However some degree of flexibility should be allowed as an awareness of the need to work together build long term relationships.

Chinese Visitor groups often make last minute changes and cancellations so this needs to be taken into account and allowed for in the process. The Chinese agents will be under a high amount of pressure from their own clients to satisfy every whim.

Optional excursions and additional products should be offered as an extra choice rather than an obligation which is likely to put potential visitors off.

China is a big country so it is useful to carry out some research and cultural understanding to minimise any unintentional offence. Consider investing in a **staff cultural training and awareness** development training programme.

It is also very important to understand the different types of Visitor profiles and reflect this by tailoring your offering accordingly e.g. business travellers and incentive groups, Student s & Graduates (over for a minimum 18 months for a Masters course or longer for a Bachelors), Fully Independent Travellers(FIT's),Tour Groups, Visiting Friends and Relatives(VFR's) and Ex Pats.

Tours & Transport Services

It is expected now to provide a Chinese speaking escort or guide for group visitors from China. Where possible a guide or escort matching the group profile and ideally from their region, who speaks their dialect, is preferred.

The Tour guide/escort needs to communicate details of the members in the group clearly with accommodation providers, restaurants; attractions etc and can have a major impact upon the success of the visit and the perception of welcome and overall satisfaction.

The Tour guide /escort should be technologically proficient and be able to assist group members with their technological requirements. A significant number of venues now offer complimentary Wifi and tour guides/escort should be aware of these locations and be able to ensure easy access to these services for the Visitors.

Coaches –these should be as new as possible and have air conditioning.

Chinese are used to bottled drinking water being available so provide complimentary room temperature water bottles for each passenger.

Complimentary Wifi should be provided and access details available in Chinese language. Visitors will use the service to contact friends and relatives back home so use the opportunity to promote your services.

If dealing with VIP's ensure that the best seat is offered to the VIP/or most senior person in the group, but be aware that they may prefer to sit with friends and colleagues.

Consider developing drivers understanding of Chinese culture and language through some simple training schemes – it has a big impact on the perception of Visitors. These can be available through Visit Britain Great China Welcome Charter member organisations or your local Confucius Institute language classes.

Chinese groups like to start early and get as much into the day as possible so the drivers legal requirement for breaks and overnight rests must be made clear from the outset to avoid any misunderstandings.

Cars – Car colour and brand is important to Chinese and especially to business guests and for VIP's.

They should be black or silver and the driver should be smartly dressed (preferably in uniform), informative, respectful and polite with clear spoken English to assist understanding and preferably a Chinese language speaker.

Complimentary Wifi, drinks and snacks should be provided for the guests and Chinese language information about the journey or area being visited should be available.

Car pick up and drop off should be prompt and the journey should stick to a schedule that has been agreed in advance. Appointments should never be late and as usual a polite and smiling welcome goes a long way to developing a good relationship.

A basic understanding of Chinese culture and language would be most helpful and if the Chinese visitor market is considered a developing market for the organisation, then it would be wise to invest in some training from one of the many specialist companies listed in the Visit Britain Great China Welcome Directory or from your nearest Confucius Institute.

Ferry, Trains and Airports.

As in all areas a friendly and welcoming approach is a good start to encouraging more Chinese visitors.

Provide detailed location and layout maps in Chinese language clearly displaying key areas, e.g. toilets, retail, restaurants/cafes, exits etc.

Safety instructions should be provided in Chinese language (Simplified and Traditional), as should service process instructions (i.e. how to buy a ticket) and immigration procedures (as applicable).

Complimentary Wifi and bottled drinking water should be provided for Chinese Visitors and guests as a courtesy.

In China departure times and the number of the train are printed on the tickets so Chinese Visitors to the UK find our system difficult to understand especially if they have an open ticket and no reservation ticket. Consider having full details and timetables available in Chinese language, signage in Chinese and some staff having Chinese cultural awareness training to help to make Chinese visitors more welcome.

Visitors are likely to find the fare structures and booking arrangements very complex so prepare Chinese language versions to ensure no misunderstandings.

Similarly bus transportation is often difficult as it is not always clear which stops are coming up and which stop the traveller needs to get off. Consider Chinese language route and stop details, signage in Chinese and again cultural understanding and basic language training development for staff to help to make Chinese visitors more welcome.

Payment Types

Chinese are keen shoppers and enjoy a discount or bargain so if you are able to offer one you need to make them aware of the offer in the Chinese Language. Wherever possible add-ons or upgrades are much more productive than just plain discounting and customers need to be made aware of their availability to improve the value offering.

In general younger generation Chinese and Business people are more familiar and comfortable with credit and debit cards whilst older generation prefer cash or Union Pay. However many Chinese credit card providers do not currently provide chip and pin cards , only the magnetic strip cards that require holders signature. As some visitors can feel awkward when asked for their passport or photographic ID when making several purchases with these cards, it may avoid any misunderstandings to have an explanation available in Chinese language. (See Tool Kit Translator)

Union Pay is widely available with all bank accounts in China. It is often the card of choice even when customers have a range of credit cards

UK retailers and merchants can apply to accept Union Pay through their terminal providers and once approved should clearly display the approved logo to welcome Chinese shoppers. In the UK Chinese bank debit cards with the Union Pay log on them can be used to withdraw cash at ATM machines displaying the LINK logo.

