NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA hosts 13th annual U.S. – China Tourism Leadership Summit in Seattle, Washington

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Participants exchanged marketing strategies and discussed the positive impact of travel and tourism

Brand USA, the destination marketing organization for the United States, joined the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, to host the 13th annual U.S. – China Tourism Leadership Summit in Seattle, Washington, from September 18-20. The summit is the marquee opportunity to build and strengthen relationships between U.S. and Chinese travel and tourism industry leadership and government officials. Participants emphasized the important contribution of travel and tourism to the world's two largest economies.

Summit participants included executives and officials at state, provincial, and city level destination marketing organizations, industry association heads, tour operators and online travel agents, attractions, transportation companies, and more. High-level government officials in attendance were Washington Governor Jay Inslee; former U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Ambassador to China, and Washington Governor Gary Locke; U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for the National Travel and Tourism Office Phil Lovas; and Deputy Director-General, Li Yaying, Bureau of International Exchanges and Cooperation, Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

"Over the years, the discussions that have taken place at and around this summit have proven mutually beneficial to improve strategies for tourism marketing in the United States and China," said Christopher L. Thompson, president and CEO of Brand USA. "As a result, the industry has made significant contributions to economic development, the balance of trade and better cultural understanding in both countries."

The theme of "culture and tourism" resonated throughout the event. Attendees were immersed in discussions and presentations centered around best practices in marketing, travel and tourism trends, and current issues impacting the industry. Panelists examined the evolution of the China market, the importance of inspiring travelers through storytelling, and how the USA is adapting to meet technological expectations of Chinese visitors.

The summit also provides a platform to showcase great destinations and experiences in the United States and China to an influential audience. This year, participants visited truly unique to Seattle attractions, including Blake Island Marine State Park with Argosy Cruises' Tillicum Excursion, the Space Needle, Chihuly Garden and Glass, Boeing Future of Flight, and Chateau Ste. Michelle Winery.

"China is Seattle's top overseas inbound visitor market and we are proud of the longstanding relationship we have forged through tourism, trade, and shared cultural history," said Tom Norwalk, president and CEO, Visit Seattle. "This summit provides an opportunity to highlight the best of what Seattle and the Puget Sound region has to offer and to position it as a must-visit destination for the lucrative China market."

Importance of the China Market

According to most recent NTTO statistics, the United States welcomed 3 million visitors in 2018 from China, with 85 percent being repeat visitors. China ranks as the number one market for U.S. tourism exports at $34.6 billion and remains in the top five in visitor volume at around 3 million arrivals in 2018.

Brand USA has several China-specific consumer marketing campaigns, robust travel trade outreach programs, and cooperative marketing and features heavy digital and social presence across established and emerging Chinese channels. Given the importance of the market, Brand USA has created a dedicated Chinese website, GoUSA.cn. Brand USA also works closely with the U.S. embassy and consulates and has established representation offices in Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, and Shanghai, to assist in reaching the travel trade and travel media.

About U.S. – China Tourism Leadership Summit

Established in 2007 by the U.S. Travel Association, the U.S. – China Tourism Leadership Summit provides a platform for discussion between U.S. and Chinese tourism industry leaders and government officials from the two countries. In 2014, U.S. Travel Association transitioned responsibility for the summit to Brand USA as the nation's official cooperative destination marketing organization. The summit is now co-hosted by Brand USA and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China. The location of the event alternates between the United States and China each year.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.