BRAND USA

NEWS RELEASE

The United States And China Launch Cooperative 'Tourism Year'

Beijing, China - February 29, 2016

The U.S. Department of Commerce and the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) today officially launched a bilateral "U.S.-China Tourism Year" initiative between the two countries at an event held in Beijing, China. The event was hosted by Brand USA, the destination marketing organization for the United States and the leading private sector partner for U.S. efforts during the Tourism Year. President Obama and President Xi first announced the bilateral initiative during President Xi's visit to the United States on September 25, 2015.

The Tourism Year is designed to effectively position the United States and China for increased trade in travel services by focusing on three mutually beneficial areas (enhanced travel and tourism experiences, cultural understanding, and appreciation of natural resources) and builds upon the momentum of the 2016-2017 Work Plan of the U.S. – China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade Tourism Working Group (signed by the Department of Commerce and CNTA on September 10, 2015). Additionally, the Tourism Year leverages the opportunity created by the reciprocal extension of short-term tourist and business visas issued to each other's citizens from one to 10 years (effective November 12, 2014) and reciprocal extension of student visa validity from one to five years. Since these announcements, the State Department has seen nearly a 50 percent increase in Chinese applications for U.S. nonimmigrant visas.

The official launch event, held at the JW Marriott Hotel Beijing, included participation by approximately 350 U.S. and Chinese tourism industry professionals and national and provincial government leaders representing China and the United States, including U.S. Deputy Secretary of Commerce Bruce Andrews, U.S. Ambassador to China Max Baucus, and National Travel and Tourism Office Executive Director Kelly Craighead.

"The U.S.-China Tourism Year will foster continued tourism cooperation for both countries and help each leverage the power of travel and tourism as an economic driver," said Chris Thompson, president and CEO of Brand USA. "The initiative nurtures our on-going partnership with a mutually beneficial focus on tourism for both countries. By providing a high-impact springboard for the 'Tourism Year' with a united travel and tourism industry working in concert with the governments of the United States and China, we are setting the stage for great growth in Chinese visitation to all areas of the United States in 2016 and beyond."

Key partners for the launch event include Visa, Inc. and United Airlines. "We are pleased Visa and United Airlines have joined us as sponsors of the U.S.-China Tourism Year launch event," said Thompson. "Each provides a range of options to support the Chinese traveler's decision to visit the United States and have a demonstrated commitment to the market."

The Tourism Year initiative is expected to result in new travel offerings for both the Chinese and U.S. markets to increase travel between the two countries. It will better prepare all segments of the U.S. travel and tourism industry and U.S. government agencies to attract and welcome Chinese guests. As part of its efforts to support the Tourism Year, Brand USA is developing a dedicated website to serve as an online resource center to the travel industry for up-to-the-minute information on official Tourism Year events and programs, as well as educational and training resources to help travel professionals, destinations, and other travel-related organizations be "China Ready" and effectively market to and serve the Chinese traveler.

In addition, Brand USA and the Department of Commerce will work together to communicate best practices for each country to continue to appreciate and protect natural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of their people and their visitors.

China is currently the sixth-largest source market for inbound tourism to the United States, according to statistics tracked by the National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO) of the Department of Commerce and Brand USA. Over 2 million Chinese visited the U.S. during 2014 – a jump of 20 percent over the previous year. Brand USA officials project that China could become the largest source market for long-haul travel to the United States within three years.

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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.