Top Destinations for Chinese Tourists 2026-2027

20 countries, the social media campaigns that moved Chinese travellers, and a playbook for tourism boards

20
countries ranked, with 2026 data

20
campaigns that went viral in China

5
priorities to communicate in China

Chinese Tourists Agency
Independent agency for Chinese travellers · Shanghai, since 2012

contact@chinesetouristagency.com
chinesetouristagency.com

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HOW WE RANKED

The ranking combines 2026 Chinese arrivals published by each destination, growth against 2025, and the interest we see on Xiaohongshu, Douyin and booking platforms. Periods differ by country; each figure is dated and sourced.

WHO IT IS FOR

Tourism boards, destination marketing organisations, airlines and the travel trade preparing their China plans for 2026 and 2027.

In 2026, Chinese travellers chose the destinations that made it easy, and that showed up in their feed.

Mainland residents made 88 million border exits in the first half of 2026, up 10.5%. But growth was very uneven between destinations. Five lessons from our ranking of 20 countries:

1 **Asia keeps the volume**

South Korea (4.82m, January to August), Thailand (3.54m), Vietnam (3.9m to September) and Malaysia (2.56m in the first half) lead. Short flights and easy entry win.

2 **Visas and flights move the needle fastest**

The top growers all changed something concrete: Philippines +69% and Türkiye +28% after going visa-free, Russia +20%, Spain +61% with 42% more flights.

3 **Politics can erase half a market in months**

Japan lost 56% of its Chinese visitors after the November 2025 travel advisory. Interest did not disappear: it moved to Korea and Southeast Asia.

4 **The moments that moved people started on social media**

A K-beauty trend on Xiaohongshu, a visa-free announcement that went viral, an Egypt exhibition with 30 billion online impressions, a family story for Saudi Arabia. Few came from brochures or ads alone.

5 **Tourism boards should spend in the order travellers decide**

Xiaohongshu first, then Douyin video, WeChat Channels video and invited creators. Trade fairs and B2B still matter, but they move far fewer travellers.

OUR READING FOR 2027

The next winners will not be the biggest destinations. They will be the ones that remove friction, then tell a story Chinese travellers want to share.

Source for exits: National Immigration Administration, July 2026. Destination sources on pages 5 to 14.

Asia leads on volume. Visa-free newcomers lead on growth.

Latest published figure for mainland Chinese visitors; periods differ by country. ▲ growing · ▼ falling · – no 2026 figure yet

#	COUNTRY	CHINESE VISITORS	TREND	WHAT DRIVES IT
1	**South Korea**	4.82m (Jan-Aug 26)	▲ 29%	Group visa trial, K-beauty and K-pop, demand diverted from Japan
2	**Thailand**	3.54m (Jan-Aug 26)	▲ 16%	Visa-free since 2024, food and value, TAT's Nihao Month
3	**Malaysia**	2.56m (Jan-Jun 26)	▲ 18%	Visa-free, Visit Malaysia 2026, Xiaohongshu partnership
4	**Vietnam**	3.9m (Jan-Sep 26)	▲ 2%	Cheaper beaches, new group visa-free pilot in Nha Trang
5	**Japan**	2.06m (Jan-Jun 26)	▼ 56%	Travel advisory and flight cuts since Nov 2025
6	**Singapore**	435k (Aug 26)	▲ 5%	Mutual visa exemption, interest-led trips, STB × Xiaohongshu
7	**Indonesia**	1.34m (2025)	▲ 16%	Bali plus new islands, more direct flights
8	**Australia**	821k (Jan-Aug 26)	▲ 14%	Record Spring Festival, Trip.com partnership
9	**Russia**	381k (Jan-Jun 26)	▲ 20%	Visa-free since Dec 2025, aurora, border trips
10	**UAE**	824k (2024)	–	Visa on arrival, China-ready Dubai, 2026 disrupted
11	**France**	about 1m (2024)	–	Culture and luxury, half its pre-2020 level
12	**Spain**	329k (Jan-Apr 26)	▲ 61%	Flights +42%, high spend, football and culture
13	**Italy**	2.45-2.6m (2026 forecast)	–	Milan Cortina Olympics, top Airbnb search for Golden Week
14	**Egypt**	about 360k (2025)	▲ 20%	Grand Egyptian Museum, Shanghai exhibition effect
15	**Switzerland**	330k hotel arrivals (Jan-Aug 26)	▼ 10%	Alps and watches; soft 2026
16	**Maldives**	279k (Jan-Aug 26)	–	China back to No.1, honeymoons, WeChat Pay
17	**United Kingdom**	426k (2025)	–	Screen tourism, 641k forecast for 2026
18	**Philippines**	310k (Jan-Aug 26)	▲ 69%	14-day visa-free entry since Jan 2026
19	**Türkiye**	245k (Jan-Jun 26)	▲ 28%	Visa-free since Jan 2026
20	**Saudi Arabia**	+48% (2025)	▲ 48%	Group tour status, flights +91%, China-ready programme

Read across: every top grower of 2026 (Philippines, Türkiye, Russia, Spain) changed something concrete for Chinese travellers: visas, flights or payment. The fallers lost on politics or price, not on interest.

Sources: national tourism authorities and statistics offices, detailed on each destination page. Ranking: Chinese Tourists Agency.

1 South Korea 韩国

4.82m

Chinese visitors, January to August 2026, +29%

Korea Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Sept 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Visa-free trial for Chinese tour groups (Sept 2025 to June 2026)
- Short flights, K-pop concerts, dramas and shopping
- Demand diverted from Japan since November 2025

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

韩国变美三件套 · The Korea glow-up trio

Organic traveller trend · Xiaohongshu · 2025-2026

Young travellers fly to Seoul for half a day of personal colour analysis, hair and make-up and professional ID photos, then share the before and after. Beauty services became a reason to book a short trip.

Source (Chinese): The Paper (澎湃新闻), June 2026

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in South Korea 2026**

2 Thailand 泰国

3.54m

Chinese visitors, January to August 2026, +16.1%; about 4.0m by 3 October

Thai Ministry of Tourism and Sports, via China News Service

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Permanent mutual visa exemption since March 2024
- Food, beaches and value for money
- The tourism authority targets 6.7m Chinese visitors in 2026

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

泰中友好月 · Nihao Month

Tourism Authority of Thailand · Xiaohongshu, Meituan, Douyin · 2024-2026

Every Mid-Autumn and Golden Week, TAT runs a food content call on Xiaohongshu, a sales push on Meituan and a gala in Bangkok, and sends Chinese creators on themed routes: 31 of them in 2026.

Source (Chinese): Xinhua (新华网), September 2026

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in Thailand in 2026**

3 Malaysia 马来西亚

2.56m

Chinese visitors, January to June 2026, +17.6%

Tourism Malaysia and Immigration Department, 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- 30-day visa-free entry, extended to the end of 2026
- Visit Malaysia 2026, extended into 2027
- Chinese-speaking communities, food and nature at lower cost

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

马来西亚旅游局 × 小红书 · Tourism Malaysia × Xiaohongshu

Tourism Malaysia · Xiaohongshu · since May 2025

A partnership signed in Shanghai to prepare Visit Malaysia 2026: an official account covering all 13 states, joint campaigns, creator meetups in Kuala Lumpur and sentiment monitoring.

Source (Chinese): Reference News via Tencent News (腾讯新闻), July 2025

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in Malaysia 2026: Beyond Resorts**

4 Vietnam 越南

3.9m

Chinese visitors, January to September 2026, +1.5% after a record 2025

Vietnam National Authority of Tourism, via VietnamPlus, Oct 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Beach holidays priced below Thailand
- Phu Quoc visa-free; Nha Trang visa-free for groups from October 2026
- Vietnam-China Tourism Cooperation Year 2026-2027

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

去越南芽庄，免签了！ · Nha Trang is visa-free now

Policy buzz · Chinese news and social feeds · October 2026

The visa-free pilot for Chinese groups flying to Cam Ranh spread fast on Chinese platforms. Da Nang also held a seminar with Xiaohongshu in May 2026 to win Chinese travellers.

Source (Chinese): Tencent News (腾讯新闻), October 2026

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in Vietnam 2026**

5 Japan 日本

2.06m

Chinese visitors, January to June 2026, −56.4%

JNTO estimates, compiled by Honichi Lab, Aug 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Beijing's travel advisory since November 2025 cut demand by half
- Flights between China and Japan halved for summer 2026
- Anime, shopping and scenery still pull strong interest

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

灌篮高手 镰仓高校前道口 · The Slam Dunk crossing

Organic fan moment · Xiaohongshu · 2023-2026

The 2023 film made the Kamakura level crossing a must-shoot spot. In Golden Week 2026, with trips down sharply, a café in Lianyungang that recreates it went viral as a 'domestic Kamakura': the desire for Japan outlived the boycott.

Source (Chinese): HK01 (香港01), October 2026

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in Japan: the Diplomatic Crisis**

6 Singapore 新加坡

+4.8%

Chinese arrivals, January to September 2026; 435,440 in August alone (+9.4%)

Singapore Tourism Board data, Oct 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Mutual 30-day visa exemption since February 2024
- China is the No.1 source market while total arrivals dip
- Concerts, events and interest-led trips

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

小红书商业 × 新加坡旅游局 · Xiaohongshu Business × Singapore Tourism Board

Singapore Tourism Board · Xiaohongshu · May 2026

A strategic MOU to move from guidebook travel to interest-led travel: four traveller groups such as young parents, Singapore-themed content series, then measurable sales.

Impact: Xiaohongshu counts 130m monthly users discussing or planning trips abroad and 520,000 travel creators.

Source (Chinese): Digitaling (数英), May 2026

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in Singapore (2026)**

7 Indonesia 印度尼西亚

1.34m

Chinese visitors in 2025, the best level in six years; +15.6% in August 2026

BPS-Statistics Indonesia, via Xinhua and iNews

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- More direct flights to Bali, Jakarta, Surabaya and Manado
- Bali plus new options: Labuan Bajo, Lombok
- Target of about 1.72m Chinese visitors

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

#美妙印尼# #是时候去巴厘岛了# · Wonderful Indonesia × Douyin creators

Ministry of Tourism with Douyin · April 2023

Right after group tours reopened, the ministry and Douyin flew Chinese creators to Bali and Labuan Bajo for food, culture, wellness and a sunrise trek on Padar Island, with airline and resort partners.

Source (Chinese): NetEase (网易), April 2023

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in Indonesia: Beyond Bali**

8 Australia 澳大利亚

821,050

Chinese arrivals, January to August 2026, +13.8%; a record 220,170 in February

Australian Bureau of Statistics (sum of monthly data)

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Record Spring Festival in February 2026
- China is No.1 by visitor spending
- Three-year partnership with Trip.com signed in 2025

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

来澳大利亚，道一声G'day · Come and Say G'day, with actor Yu Shi

Tourism Australia · Chinese social media and pop-up · August 2025

China was the first market for the new chapter of the global campaign: Ruby the kangaroo with Chinese actor Yu Shi, a China-only film, a pop-up in Shanghai and a call to share memories under #念念不忘的澳大利亚.

Source (Chinese): Jiemian (界面新闻), August 2025

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in Australia**

9 Russia 俄罗斯

380,600

Chinese tourist trips, January to June 2026, +19.8%; Q1 alone +44.4%

FSB Border Service data, published by the Russian Union of Travel Industry, Aug 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Visa-free entry since December 2025, extended to the end of 2027
- Aurora in Murmansk, cheaper than the Nordics
- Short flights and busy border regions

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

《妻子的浪漫旅行2026》俄罗斯篇 · Viva la Romance 2026, the Russia episodes

Hunan TV and Mango TV, with Murmansk's tourism ministry · April 2026

The hit celebrity couples travel show opened its 2026 season in Moscow, St Petersburg and Murmansk, just after visa-free entry: Arctic Russia shown to a mass audience on TV, streaming, Weibo and Douyin.

Source (Chinese): Yangtse Evening Post (扬子晚报), April 2026

Read our analysis: **+44% Chinese Tourists in Russia in Q1 2026**

10 United Arab Emirates 阿联酋

824,000

Chinese visitors to Dubai in 2024, +31% (latest China figure published)

Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism, via Xinhua

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Visa on arrival for Chinese passport holders
- Alipay in taxis, Chinese signage, Chinese New Year in the city calendar
- Watch point: 2026 traffic hit by regional disruption

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

迪拜 × 抖音 · Dubai × Douyin

Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism · Douyin · 2025

Dubai now presents itself as a 'digital-first' destination for Chinese travellers, with a dedicated Douyin programme running alongside its global campaign.

Source (Chinese): China Daily (中国日报网), December 2025

Read our analysis: **How Dubai Businesses Can Attract Chinese Clients**

11 France 法国

about 1m

Chinese visitors in 2024, half the pre-2020 level; Chinese clientele in Greater Paris +7% in July 2026

Atout France via Sina Finance; Paris je t'aime barometer, Aug 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Large room to grow back to pre-2020 levels
- More flights, with Shanghai-Marseille opening Provence
- Culture, wine, luxury and premium experiences

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

巴黎奥运会带热赴法游 · The Paris Olympics effect

Event moment · Trip.com booking data · summer 2024

The Games put France back in Chinese feeds and booking searches. No single national social campaign stood out since 2023: the opening is there for France.

Impact: Paris hotel bookings by mainland Chinese travellers +194% for the Games period (Trip.com)

Source (Chinese): Yicai (第一财经), August 2024

Read our analysis: **10 most visited sites in France by Chinese tourists**

12 Spain 西班牙

328,527

Chinese tourists, January to April 2026, +61%; air passengers China-Spain +46.8% in H1

Frontur (INE) via Forbes España; Aena via IFEMA, 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Air capacity China-Spain +41.7% for summer 2026
- High spend: about €2,775 per trip in 2025
- Football, Gaudí, flamenco and food

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

安达卢西亚旅游局 × 华为 · Turismo Andalucía × Huawei

Turismo Andalucía · Huawei phone and smart-TV ads · 2024

Andalusia presented its culture to Chinese travellers through splash-screen ads, feed ads and a naked-eye 3D video on connected TVs, then extended the partnership in 2025.

Impact: 80 million impressions in two weeks; searches for Andalusia up about 17 times (vendor data)

Source (Chinese): The Paper (澎湃新闻)

Read our analysis: **Spain and Chinese Tourists in 2026**

13 Italy 意大利

2.45-2.6m

Chinese arrivals forecast for 2026 (no official 2026 count published yet)

STAMP forecast via Qualitytravel, Sept 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Milan Cortina Olympics during Spring Festival: Milan hotel interest +200%
- Most searched outbound destination on Airbnb China for Golden Week 2026
- Independent trips spreading to Naples, Verona and Florence

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

爱彼迎 × 意大利国家旅游局 × 意大利国铁 · Airbnb China × ENIT × Trenitalia

Italian National Tourist Board · Airbnb China · August 2026

Stays, local experiences and rail combined for Chinese independent travellers across cities, lakes, coast and countryside. ENIT had already partnered with WeChat in 2023.

Source (Chinese): Airbnb China newsroom (爱彼迎), August 2026

Read our analysis: **Italy Is Still a Dream Destination for Chinese Tourists**

14 Egypt 埃及

about 360,000

Chinese visitors in 2025, about +20%; target of one million a year

Egyptian Travel Agents Association, via Daily News Egypt, Sept 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Grand Egyptian Museum opened in November 2025
- Direct flights from six Chinese cities
- Long trips of 8 to 12 days with high spend

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

金字塔之巅：古埃及文明大展 · On Top of the Pyramid exhibition

Shanghai Museum with Egypt's antiquities council · Xiaohongshu, Douyin, Weibo · 2024-2025

Asia's largest ancient Egypt exhibition became a national social media phenomenon, with 70% of visitors coming from outside Shanghai. It kept Egypt top of mind before the new museum opened.

Impact: 2.78 million visits and more than 30 billion online impressions

Source (Chinese): The Paper (澎湃新闻), September 2025

Read our analysis: **Egypt and Chinese Tourists: Record Growth**

15 Switzerland 瑞士

329,594

Chinese hotel arrivals, January to August 2026, −9.6%: a soft patch, still below 2019

Swiss Federal Statistical Office (HESTA), our calculation

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Alps, watches and multi-country Europe itineraries
- Sino-Swiss Year of Culture and Tourism in 2025
- Premium travellers who book through operators

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

全职高手：相约苏黎世 · The King's Avatar: see you in Zurich

Switzerland Tourism × Yuewen (China Literature) · fan communities · 2025

Switzerland Tourism 'hired' Ye Xiu, hero of a famous e-sports web novel, as its 2025 Swiss Travel Explorer, with a fan route from Zurich to Titlis, Lucerne and the Jungfrau.

Source (Chinese): NetEase (网易), July 2025

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in Switzerland**

16 Maldives 马尔代夫

279,410

Chinese arrivals, January to August 2026: China is again the No.1 market

Maldives Ministry of Tourism, via VnExpress, Sept 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Visa on arrival, and WeChat Pay rolled out to local merchants
- Honeymoons and one-island-one-resort luxury
- 2026 declared a Visit Maldives year

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

马尔代夫旅游推广局 微博/微信 · Visit Maldives on Weibo and WeChat

Visit Maldives (MMPRC) · Weibo, WeChat · 2023-2024

As Chinese travel reopened, Visit Maldives ran content and giveaways on Weibo and WeChat, and turned travel bloggers' stories into short films. A Xiaohongshu and Douyin push is the next step it has not yet made.

Source (Chinese): People's Daily (人民日报), February 2024

Read our analysis: **Maldives and Chinese Luxury Travelers in 2026**

17 United Kingdom 英国

426,000

visits from mainland China in 2025; VisitBritain forecasts 641,000 for 2026

Office for National Statistics, Oct 2026; VisitBritain via 21st Century Business Herald

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Screen tourism: 97% of potential visitors interested in film and TV locations
- Long trips: 14 days on average, 65% outside London
- Warmer ties after the Prime Minister's Beijing visit in January 2026

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

星耀英伦 · Starring GREAT Britain

VisitBritain · Xiaohongshu and creator films · 2025-2026

Film and TV locations are used to push regional Britain, with 'Screen Britain' content on Xiaohongshu and creator trips to Bath and Manchester. VisitBritain says it is the third most popular tourism board account on Xiaohongshu.

Source (Chinese): 21st Century Business Herald (21世纪经济报道), February 2026

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in the UK: 2026 Full Guide**

18 Philippines 菲律宾

310,088

Chinese arrivals, January to August 2026, +69%: the biggest jump among top markets

Philippine Department of Tourism, via Philippine News Agency, Sept 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- 14-day visa-free entry since January 2026
- New flights from Xiamen and Chongqing
- Beaches a short flight from South China

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

爱上菲律宾 · Love the Philippines, with P-pop ambassadors

Philippine Department of Tourism · Douyin · 2026

The tourism department named P-pop groups BINI and SB19 as ambassadors after SB19's song 'Gento' sparked a dance craze on Douyin, to reach young Chinese travellers.

Source (Chinese): NetEase (网易), September 2026

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in the Philippines in 2026**

19 Türkiye 土耳其

245,000

Chinese visitors, January to June 2026, +28%: Türkiye's fastest growing market

Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, via TGA and Xinhua, Aug 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Visa-free entry since 2 January 2026
- China-friendly airport, Chinese signage in Cappadocia
- Chinese New Year festival and themed balloons in Cappadocia

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

#土耳其免签# · The visa-free surge

Viral moment · Qunar, Trip.com, Weibo, Xiaohongshu · January 2026

The visa-free announcement on New Year's Eve went viral within hours, just before the long Spring Festival holiday. No paid campaign: the policy itself was the message.

Impact: Flight searches to Istanbul ×3.2 week on week on Qunar the next morning

Source (Chinese): Beijing News (新京报), January 2026

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in Turkey: 2026 Full Guide**

20 Saudi Arabia 沙特阿拉伯

+48%

growth in Chinese visitors in 2025 (latest published)

Saudi Tourism Authority, via Arab News, Sept 2026

WHY CHINESE TRAVELLERS GO

- Approved Destination Status for group tours since 2024
- Flights with Greater China +91% in 2025
- 'Friendly China' programme for service, payment and dining

THE CAMPAIGN THAT MOVED THEM

沙特，奇遇阿拉伯 · Immerse your soul in Arabia

Saudi Tourism Authority · Xiaohongshu, WeChat Channels, Douyin · November 2025

A Chinese family's journey from AlUla to the Red Sea replaced the celebrity approach, with a 'Saudi Town' pop-up in Shanghai. A campaign Chinese Tourists Agency worked on.

Impact: The Shanghai pop-up drew more than 100,000 visitors in 8 days

Source (Chinese): Sina (新浪), September 2026

Read our analysis: **Chinese Tourists in Saudi Arabia**

Five Chinese cities that went viral, and what foreign destinations can learn

Chinese travellers learned to travel by following their feed at home first. These domestic cases show how a moment on Douyin or Xiaohongshu turns into millions of visits, when the destination is ready.

CITY AND TRIGGER	WHAT THE CITY DID	PUBLISHED RESULT
Harbin 哈尔滨 Winter 2023-24 · Douyin · a refund row that turned into "尔滨" love	Fixed the complaint in public within days, then answered each online wish with a visible gesture: a drone "moon", free metro, warm stations, hotel price checks.	**10.09m visits** and 16.42bn yuan over the 2024 Spring Festival, a record
Zibo 淄博 2023 · Douyin · students filming cheap DIY barbecue	Barbecue trains from Jinan, 2-yuan bus lines to the restaurants, strict price control on hotels and taxis, open letters asking residents to welcome visitors.	**61.1m visits** in 2023 (+67.6%), 63bn yuan revenue
Tianshui 天水 2024 · short video · a bowl of spicy malatang	City-wide mobilisation, malatang buses from the stations, free parking and toilets in government compounds, a food street built in two days, visitors sent on to the Maijishan Grottoes.	**3.89m visits** in 28 days; videos at 20bn plays
Rongjiang 榕江 2023 · Douyin · village football, "the winner gets a cow"	Trained 12,800 villagers to film short videos years before; let villagers run the games, free, with no tickets or sponsors; added stalls, shuttles and beds.	**11.7m visits** in just over a year; 78bn online views
Altay 阿勒泰 2024 · TV drama 我的阿勒泰 · healing landscapes	Within days: restored film sets, themed routes and flights, discounts with hotels and car rentals, extra flights from June.	**886,500 visits** over May Day 2024 (+43.4%)

FOUR LESSONS FOR FOREIGN TOURISM BOARDS

1. A viral complaint is a chance: fix it fast, in public. 2. Protect the promise of the video: price, welcome, transport. 3. Have a second and third thing to show once people come. 4. Prepare the product before the screen moment, not after the searches spike.

Sources: Harbin tourism bureau via Jiemian and 21jingji; Zibo 2023 data via 21jingji; Gansu culture and tourism department; Xinhua (Jan and Jul 2024); Altay culture and tourism bureaus via Workers' Daily.

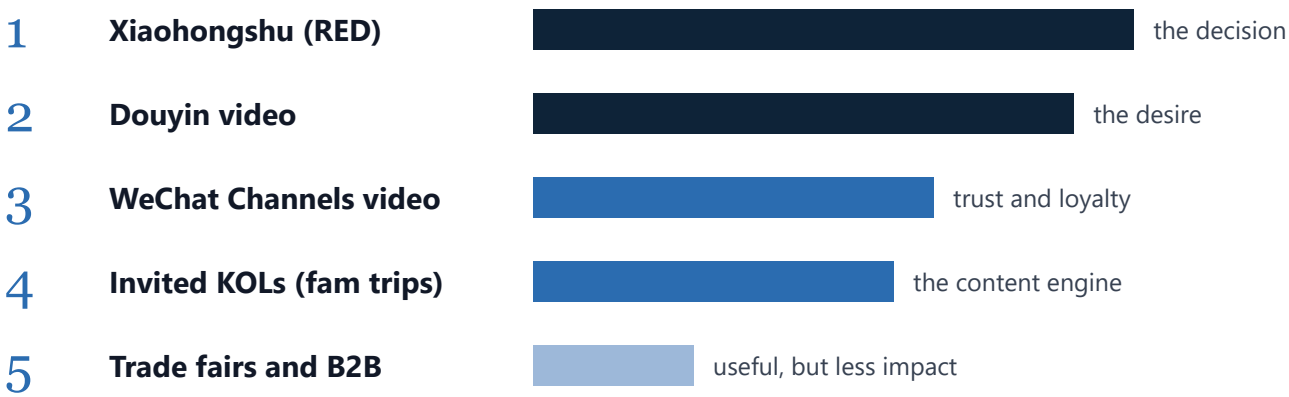
PART 3 · PREPARING TO COMMUNICATE IN CHINA

Where Chinese travellers decide, in order of impact

A Q1 2026 survey quoted by China Tourism News found that 54.4% of outbound travellers use Xiaohongshu and 51.5% use Douyin to explore itineraries, ahead of travel apps at 46.8%. Most tourism boards still spend the other way round: trade fairs and brochures first, social media last. Our recommended order:

EXHIBIT

The five levers, ranked by impact on Chinese consumer demand (CTA assessment)



Why social comes first

Independent travellers now make most outbound trips. They plan on their phone, read other travellers and book late. A destination that is not in their feed and their search results is not on their list.

Why trade still matters

Tour operators still sell premium groups, long-haul and first trips. Keep a trade programme, but size it to the share of travellers it reaches, and feed it with the social content you produce.

Before any campaign: one official Chinese name used everywhere, verified accounts on Xiaohongshu, Douyin and WeChat, a Chinese landing page that loads in China, and a team that answers comments in Chinese the same day.

Source: China Tourism News (May 20, 2026), Q1 2026 survey. Ranking: Chinese Tourists Agency assessment from campaigns run for tourism boards.

1 Xiaohongshu: be found where the trip is decided

Xiaohongshu (RED) works like a search engine for travel. More than 230 million monthly users follow travel content there, they generate about 2.4 billion travel searches, and over 80% of travel users read guides before they pick a destination or a hotel. For a tourism board, this is the single most important platform.

WHAT TO PUT IN PLACE

- **A verified official account** under one Chinese name, with a clear profile and links to your other channels.
- **A keyword map:** the exact words travellers type (city + “攻略” guide, “visa-free”, “family”, “worth it”), by season.
- **Search-first notes:** the keyword in the title, the cover text and the first lines; practical guides beat beautiful slogans.
- **Real voices:** notes from creators and real visitors (KOC), always declared when paid.
- **Search ads** on your best notes during peak planning weeks.

54.4%
of outbound travellers explore itineraries on Xiaohongshu

520k
travel creators with more than 1,000 followers

3.17 RMB
per click in our 2026 Golden Week hotel campaign, vs 10+ RMB usually

Benchmark. In May 2026 the Singapore Tourism Board signed a partnership with Xiaohongshu Business and organised its approach around traveller groups and interests. Tourism boards now treat the platform as a core market channel, not an add-on.

Avoid: bought notes and fake accounts (the platform removes them), translated Western posts, and accounts that go silent between campaigns.

Sources: Xiaohongshu 2026 travel summit, China Tourism News (May 2026), Singapore Tourism Board, CTA campaign data (InterContinental Kuala Lumpur, Oct 2026).

2 Douyin video: the place where desire starts

Douyin has more than one billion monthly users and 51.5% of outbound travellers use it to explore trips. Its 2026 travel report counts 67.7 billion hotel and travel searches in one year. Video is vital: a destination that does not move on screen does not exist for this audience.

- A verified official account and complete location (POI) pages for key sites
- Short videos titled with real search queries, not slogans
- Creator videos and livestreams with bookable offers: 32% of Douyin hotel bookers bought inside a livestream
- Paid boost only on videos that already perform organically

3 WeChat Channels video: trust, families and the trade

WeChat has 1.439 billion monthly accounts. Its Channels videos spread through friends' likes, which reaches older travellers, families and travel professionals better than any other app. WeChat search also offers AI answers, used by 160 million people a month by mid-2025.

- Channels videos cut from your Douyin and creator content
- An Official Account for articles: practical guides, news, offers
- A Mini Program or H5 brochure for agents and repeat visitors
- Fast replies in Chinese, which WeChat users expect

One shoot, three platforms. Plan each video production for Douyin first, then cut versions for WeChat Channels and Xiaohongshu. The same footage, adapted to each app's format and search words, multiplies reach without multiplying cost.

Sources: QuestMobile (Mar 2026), Douyin 2026 travel reports, China Tourism News (May 2026), Tencent Q2 2026 results, QuestMobile via 21st Century Business Herald (2025).

4 Invite the right KOLs: your content engine

A well-run fam trip with Chinese creators produces months of content for Xiaohongshu, Douyin and WeChat, in the voice travellers trust. Choose creators for their audience, not their follower count: a niche creator who matches your traveller often beats a celebrity.

- One theme per trip (wellness, food, nature, culture)
- A brief with the search words to use, but freedom of tone
- Paid content declared, claims checked against advertising rules
- Rights to reuse the footage on your own accounts

Thailand, "Thai Friends Take Chinese Friends on a Tour": bilingual creators, 15 provinces, about 150 pieces of content, more than 100 million impressions and broadcast on CCTV.

Saudi Arabia, "沙特，奇遇阿拉伯" (Nov 2025): a family-focused creator campaign that reached about 100 million views and 5 million+ interactions.

5 Trade fairs and B2B: keep them, but size them right

Fairs such as ITB China, COTTM and CITM help meet tour operators, airlines and OTAs. They still matter for premium groups, long-haul products and first trips. But a stand alone reaches very few travellers, and Chinese professionals follow up on WeChat, not by email.

- Bring a WeChat H5 brochure, not paper
- Book meetings in advance through WeChat groups
- Give partners your social content to reuse in their sales
- Measure qualified contacts and products listed, not visitors to the stand

Sources: campaigns Chinese Tourists Agency worked on (Thailand Tourism Bureau, Chiang Mai fam trip 2025, Saudi Arabia campaign Nov 2025).

About the authors

This paper was written in Shanghai by the team that runs Chinese campaigns for tourism boards, hotels and attractions every day.

Pedro Wang

FOUNDER, CHINESE TOURISTS AGENCY

Pedro spent ten years inside the Chinese travel industry before opening the agency in 2012: six years at CITS, China's largest state travel operator, then four at Ctrip, on hotel acquisition and destination campaigns. He has run destination campaigns on Xiaohongshu since 2018 and advises tourism boards on their China strategy.

"The destinations that win in China are the ones travellers can find, check and book in their own apps."

Alex Wu

PROJECT MANAGER, CHINESE TOURISTS AGENCY

Alex runs day-to-day campaigns for tourism boards and hotels from the Shanghai office: Xiaohongshu and Douyin content, creator trips, Chinese listings and monthly reporting. Bilingual, he is the contact clients call when they need an answer the same day.

A team of 30 across China

Content writers, media buyers, creator managers, designers and account managers, led from Melody Square, Jing'an, Shanghai.

Questions about this paper: contact@chinesetouristagency.com

Your destination, ready for Chinese travellers

Chinese Tourists Agency is an independent agency based in Shanghai. Since 2012 we have helped tourism boards, hotels and attractions be found, chosen and booked by Chinese travellers.

FOR TOURISM BOARDS

China representation office · Xiaohongshu, Douyin and WeChat accounts · creator fam trips · press relations · trade relations and fairs · market intelligence and reporting

FREE FIRST STEP

A China visibility audit of your destination: what Chinese travellers find today on Xiaohongshu, Douyin, WeChat and Baidu, and what to fix first.

2012
founded in Shanghai

30
specialists across China

1
market: Chinese travellers

Shanghai office

Room 101, Building 8, Melody Square
No. 1220 Jiangning Road, Jing'an, Shanghai
上海市江宁路1220弄音乐广场8号楼101

Contact

contact@chinesetouristagency.com
chinesetouristagency.com

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