



# Unlocking the Potential of Tourism Consumption Contributing to Global Tourism from China's Perspective

— Insights on High-quality Tourism Development by Zhang Hui, Vice Chairman  
of the Expert Committee of the World Tourism Cities Federation

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Since the beginning of this year, the global tourism industry has stepped on the accelerator for recovery. How are world tourist cities seizing the opportunity? Recently, Zhang Hui, Vice Chairman of the expert committee of the World Tourism Cities Federation, was interviewed by this publication. He thoroughly analyzed the crucial factors and shared the experience of China's high-quality tourism development.

## Tourism Consumption Has Become a Strategic Consideration for the Country

Considering the current stage of China's development, consumption will become an important driving force for socio-economic growth and a crucial basis for building China's dual-circulation development strategy. As an essential part of consumption, tourism has broad involvement, strong economic impact, and high levels of repeat consumption. China has entered the era of mass tourism, and tourism will become a significant new growth point in the consumer sector.

After more than 40 years of development, China's tourism industry has formed a vast industrial and market scale. However, compared to high-quality development, there are still many shortcomings.

Firstly, the number of domestic tourists in China reached 6 billion in 2019, but the proportion of tourists staying overnight or using accommodation services remains relatively low. Most tourists are day trippers, so their full potential in consumption has yet to be fully realized. Secondly, in terms of cultural and tourism integration, there is still room for breakthroughs in business models. Thirdly, the tourism industry chain suffered severe damage during the three-year pandemic, and how to quickly restore the industry chain to provide momentum for the next development of cultural tourism industry is also an issue. Lastly, there are a large number of small and micro-enterprises in the tourism industry that were hit hard during the pandemic. How to help these enterprises out of difficulties is also a problem.

For China, tourism consumption has become a significant strategic consideration. Understanding and studying the present state of the tourism industry's development by relevant organizations will aid in devising targeted promotional strategies to tackle the current obstacles to high-quality tourism development. Furthermore, addressing the deficiencies in both the supply and demand aspects of tourism consumption is also a matter that merits attention.





China has high hopes for the tourism industry: hitting two birds with one stone. China's economy seeks to promote consumption growth through tourism, and at the same time contribute to the world's tourism development through its tourism growth. China has so far opened outbound tourism to 20 countries and regions in the first batch and 40 countries and regions in the second batch. (and released the third batch of 78 countries and regions—noted by editor.) In the future, the Chinese tourism market may open up to the entire world. In terms of domestic tourism, after policy and management changes, domestic tourism has rebounded rapidly, already reaching the level of the same period in 2019. After the complete reopening of inbound and outbound tourism, it will be a significant boost for the world's tourism development.

Currently, we can observe that China's outbound tourism has not grown rapidly. This is mainly because air routes to major tourist destinations in the world have not fully resumed, and are still

limited to neighbouring regions and countries like South Korea, Japan, Thailand, etc. The recovery of routes to Western countries is relatively slow due to air rights issues. Therefore, increasing efforts to restore air routes will promote further opening of the world tourism market. Additionally, visa issues are also crucial. Some Western countries have increased the difficulty and cost of visa processing for Chinese tourists due to international factors, making the process slower and more stringent. Solving these two issues of air routes and visas will help accelerate the recovery of the outbound tourism market.

### Leveraging the Federation's Role as a Bridge to Strengthen Communication and Achieve Mutual Tourism Sources

The World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) is the first international tourism organization based on cities. Since its establishment in 2012, the number of members has grown from the initial 58 to the current 239, covering 83 countries and



regions worldwide, showing strong development in recent years. From the perspective of organizational positioning, it plays a vital role in connecting China with countries worldwide and plays an essential role in conveying China's voice and showcasing China's image.

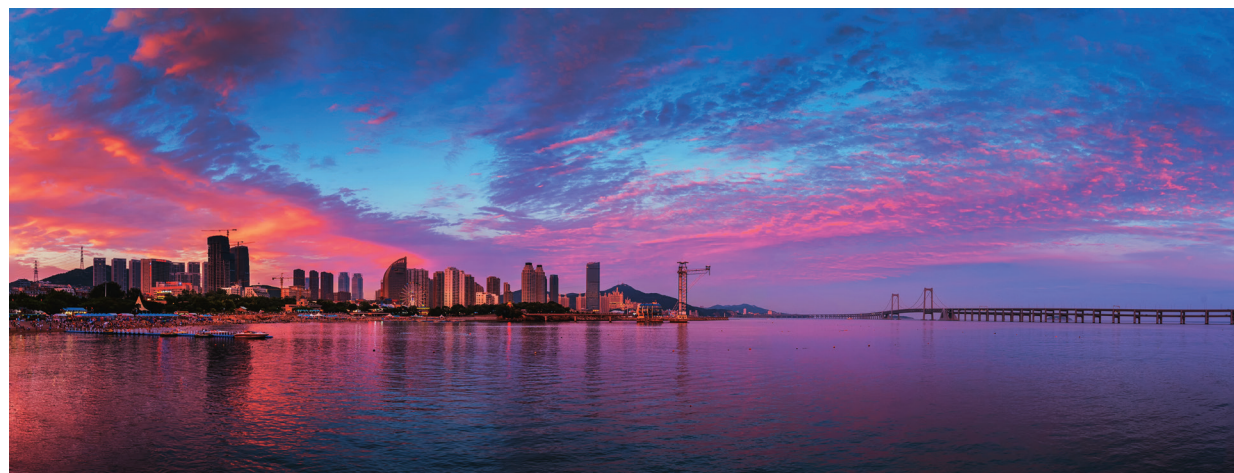
The three-year pandemic has had a significant impact on the global tourism industry and tourism cities. As an international tourism organization, the WTCF needs to consider how to better leverage its platform advantages. In my view, the first thing we should do is strengthen communication between nations and cities. As an international organization, the WTCF can utilize its platform and city cooperation to address practical issues, such as the resumption of international routes, tourism industry chain recovery, and tourism services improvement, all within the framework of tourism cities and the WTCF's platform.

Secondly, it should play a bridging role in driving the international market. Cities are vital tourist destinations and also important sources of tourists. So far, the focus of world tourism is still on cities,

especially in international tourism development, where cities play a crucial role. Therefore, the WTCF can act as a bridge and link between member cities for cooperation and development. By establishing sister-city relationships and exchanging experiences and practices, cities can achieve mutual tourism sources.

When foreign tourist cities understand the vitality of the Chinese market and the demands for Chinese tourism, they can tailor their products and strategies to match their own countries' tourism markets. Simultaneously, when they obtain valuable information from the WTCF, they will be more willing to establish close connections with the WTCF, attracting more cities and institutions to join the WTCF, trust and rely on it, and further enhance the WTCF's platform advantage and international reputation. In this process, the WTCF can organize important conferences, forums, and speeches, such as the multiple sessions of the Fragrant Hills Tourism Summit, Cooperation and Development Conference, regional forums, etc., to facilitate communication and exchanges between cities





and even countries. Additionally, by collaborating with OTA, travel agencies, airlines, etc., it can further expand cooperation and development with world tourism cities.

It's worth noting that among the 239 member cities, some are economically underdeveloped, such as some African cities. To these member cities, international organizations like the WTCF can help in their efforts to use international tourism to create opportunities and benefits for their economic development. In this regard, the WTCF can provide support and assistance by inviting these cities to participate in various large-scale events, promote their culture and tourism resources, learn from well-developed cities' experiences and practices,



and seek cooperation opportunities.

## Beijing Should Aim to Develop into a World-Class Tourism City

As China's capital and the headquarters of the WTCF, Beijing is a critical concept in the entire Chinese tourism market. Beijing boasts rich historical, cultural, and natural resources in China. Especially as tourism expands from a lifestyle to a means of learning and growth, the distinctive characteristics of Beijing's tourism can be fully demonstrated. At this stage, Beijing's tourism, relative to other regions, no longer needs to rely on large-scale visitor flow but should focus on raising the average consumption level, so that Beijing can be truly established as an important international tourism destination.

I believe that Beijing may need to consider several aspects in the next step. Firstly, Beijing should become a crucial component in supporting China's inbound tourism, meaning it should aim to develop into a world-class tourism city, which is vital for the country's inbound tourism development. Beijing's cultural and historical



uniqueness is of international significance. The future direction for Beijing's tourism development should not be to pursue the number of visitors but to focus on tourism quality and inbound tourism development. To achieve this, we need to discuss how to build Beijing into a world-class tourism city with significant influence on a global scale through urban construction, service system establishment, and tourism product development.

Secondly, as China has become a major global economic power, Beijing should also be developed into a world business and exhibition center, promoting MICE tourism.

Thirdly, Beijing, with its concentration of higher education institutions and historical-cultural resources, can also become a world hub for study tours. Inbound tourism in China still faces many challenges besides sightseeing and vacation tourism if it wants to be competitive in the international market. However, study tours have the opportunity to become a significant tourism

form that shapes the world's tourism trends.

Beijing can leverage its historical and cultural resources, higher education institutions, and well-developed transportation infrastructure to develop study tour markets in the world. Study tours play a crucial role in "taking Chinese culture abroad". Hence, we need to mobilize various forces to build the study tour tourism industry chain through campgrounds, educational materials systems, service systems, and research systems. 

(Interviewed and Summarized by Wang Xinbing, Zheng Yijia)

