

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

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HD **Australia tops wishlist for Chinese tourists**  
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High-spending Chinese tourists rank Australia as their No. 1 destination for international travel and as the most welcoming to Chinese travellers. But Australia only places 11th when it comes to actual online hotel bookings.

The latest Hotels.com Chinese International Travel Monitor comes as Tourism Australia unveiled plans to build an elite network of travel agents in China that are specially trained to sell tour packages to the high-yielding independent tourist market.

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The tourism marketing group wants Australia to be less reliant on Chinese tourists visiting on cheap packaged tours. "For us it is as much about quality as it is quantity," Tourism Australia managing director John O'Sullivan said in response to the Hotels.com survey.

"We are targeting high-yielding travellers who are more likely to stay longer, travel deeper into our country and spend more by doing so."

The number of Chinese tourists to Australia fell last year after the Chinese government banned cut-priced "shopping tours" that require participants to visit certain shops which give large commissions to the operators.

However, Accor's director of international sales for the eastern hemisphere, Kate Marshall, said shopping tours had resumed from March, when operators were allowed to offer them if they disclosed the nature of the tour and also provided a non-shopping alternative which is typically a far more expensive option for customers.

Ms Marshall said about 85 per cent to 90 per cent of Chinese guests at Accor's Australian hotels were still travelling on cheap package tours, which often stayed in locations such as Homebush in Sydney's west so that few non-commission shopping options were nearby. She said products favoured as purchases on shopping tours included items like alpaca skins, Ugg boots and Chinese health products.

"They are less of a mature market than many other markets we receive," Ms Marshall said of Chinese tourists. Room service, restaurants key

The Hotels.com survey found room service and on-site restaurants were the most important amenities for Chinese travellers staying at hotels. Ms Marshall said having Chinese food options such as congee for breakfast available at Accor hotels frequented by Chinese visitors was a key focus for the hotel chain. Accor has put in place China-friendly measures, including cultural training for staff, Mandarin speakers, Chinese menu options and Chinese television channels at close to 25 per cent of its Australian properties.

Katherine Cole, Hotels.com's regional director for Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, said Australia was in prime position to harness the momentum and growth in the Chinese market. More than two in five Australian hoteliers reported an increase of between 1 per cent and 10 per cent in

**Chinese** tourists over the last 12 months, although 34 per cent experienced no increase in **Chinese** travellers.

"The next 12 months need to be about continuing to convert the **Chinese** traveller's wishlist into reality as we compete with holiday heavyweights [such as] Asia, the United States and Europe," Ms Cole said.

**CO**      tourism : Tourism Australia

**NS**      gtour : Travel | gcat : Political/General News | glife : Living/Lifestyle

**RE**      austr : Australia | china : China | apacz : Asia Pacific | asiaz : Asia | ausnz : Australia/Oceania | bric : BRIC Countries | chinaz : Greater China | devgcoz : Emerging Market Countries | dvpcoz : Developing Economies | easiaz : Eastern Asia

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