Washington wooing Chinese tourists

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China tops Washington’s courtship list of international visitors, as the country sends an increasing number of high-spending tourists to the US each year.  
About 3 million Chinese travelled to the US and the overall spending by Chinese tourists to DC amounted to $576 million in 2016, according to the National Travel and Tourism Office of the US Department of Commerce.  
“We continue to project a growth of Chinese visits to the US and expect that China will become our No.1 or No. 2 overseas market by 2020,” said Isabel Hill, director of the office.  
Washington, DC, with its combination of historic monuments, museums and restaurants, drew one tenth of the total Chinese tourists to the US in 2016,.  
The demand has encouraged the city to take whatever measures they can to cater to Chinese tourists’ specific needs and interests.  
The latest effort is a partnership between Destination DC, the district’s non-profit marketing organization with more than 1,000 member businesses, and WeChat, the 1 billion-user Chinese social media app developed by internet conglomerate Tencent.  
In conjunction with WeChat, Destination DC launched the “City Experience Mini Program” app last fall giving Chinese visitors information about the city’s most famous sites, shopping malls and restaurants with Mandarin audio guides.  
“We want to make sure we are positioned to adequately host Chinese visitors and make them feel welcomed in the US,” said Elliott Ferguson, president and CEO of Destination DC.  
In 2016, China’s mobile payments hit $5.5 trillion, roughly 50 times the size of the US’s $112 billion market, according to the consulting firm iResearch. WeChat Pay accounted for 40 percent of the market share by the first quarter of 2017.  
By tapping into such an enormous market, Destination DC has given its members more confidence in serving Chinese tourists.  
“We are so excited about WeChat Pay and we want to get on WeChat and make our Chinese visitors feel at home,” said Anabeth Guthrie, chief of communications at the National Gallery of Art.  
Kate Thompson, research manager at Destination DC, said that Chinese tourists are more interested in experiencing fine dining and visiting cultural heritage sights than typical overseas visitors.  
The National Travel and Tourism Office projects that the number of Chinese tourists to the US is likely to reach 5 million by 2020, with 530,000 of them expected to visit Washington, DC.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201805/08/WS5af09c93a3105cdcf651c763.html