

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Chinese leisure travelers expanding their global reach: report

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Chinese millennials spend more than a third of their income on travel. Image credit: Kantar

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Chinese millennials' evolving travel priorities are influencing the way older generations look at leisure trips, as Chinese tourists are spending more money and visiting farther destinations than in the past.

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The "2018 Chinese International Travel Monitor" by Hotels.com finds that Chinese tourists of all ages are looking for more authentic travel experiences. This is impacting when, where and how they travel.

"Film and television are now the main sources of inspiration for Chinese millennial travelers, playing a key role in attracting them away from Asian destinations, and to more far-flung parts of the world for their thrills and frills," said Johan Svanstrom, president of [Hotels.com](#).

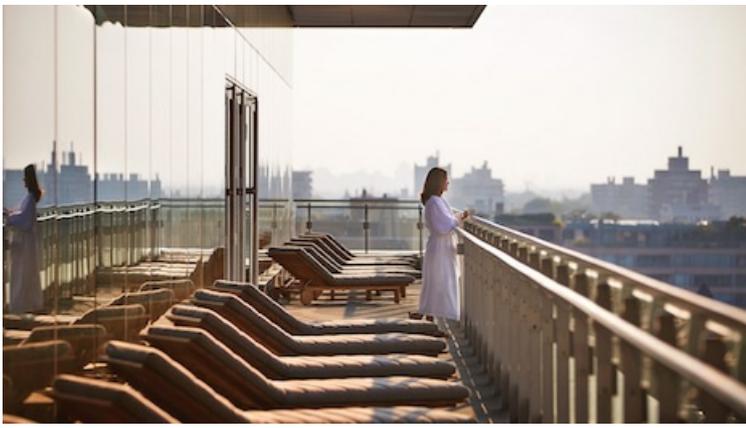
On behalf of Hotels.com, market research firm Ipsos interviewed 3,047 Chinese residents, aged 18-58 years, who had traveled overseas in the 12 months prior to May 2018. The report refers to those born in the 1980s and 1990s as millennials.

Travel habits

A rebounding Chinese economy means more disposable income for travelers. On average, travel spending is up 40 percent year-over-year.

Chinese travelers born after 1990, however, are spending 80 percent more than last year. They also spend more than a third of their income on travel, 36 percent, compared to 28 percent for Chinese travelers overall.

Sixty-two percent of respondents listed film and television as integral to inspiring their travels. Destinations outside of Asia especially gained traction from film and television.



Canada ranks second on Chinese travelers' bucket list. Image credit: Four Seasons

Sixty percent of Chinese tourists plan to travel to a new country in the next year, and less than half, 49 percent, plan on traveling within Asia. Australia, Canada and France were named as favorite future destinations.

Like their American counterparts, Chinese millennials also gather much of their travel inspiration from social media, with 53 percent citing social media as a key travel influence.

About half of American millennials say social media influences their travel decisions, according to a survey from Allianz Global Assistance. Peer-to-peer word of mouth holds the most sway, as 86 percent of consumers trust their own social networks to post accurate content about travel experiences, while 55 percent deem brands to be truthful on social media ([see story](#)).

Per Hotels.com's study, more Chinese travelers are also traveling independently, with 65 percent of travelers preferring that travel style instead of participating in group tours.



Group travel is on the decline among the Chinese. Image credit: Aspire Lifestyles

As a result, demand is growing for more intimate, boutique-style accommodations. More than half of Chinese tourists, 55 percent, stayed at independent hotels while 49 percent booked at international chains and 33 percent stayed at boutique hotels.

"Chinese travelers overwhelmingly want a local flavor to their accommodation choices while traveling," Mr. Svanstrom said.

Luxury impact

Authentic experiences are in demand for Chinese tourists of all ages.

For 70 percent of respondents, trying food only available in their destinations is a top travel priority. More than a third attend cultural events, and 56 percent of respondents born after 1990 also showed interest in learning and exploring while abroad.

These findings support a recent report from Agility Research & Strategy, which found Chinese travelers show the most interest in diverse activities while traveling compared to other affluent Asian leisure travelers. Agility also reported that Chinese millionaires have a high interest in purchasing luxury goods while they travel ([see story](#)).

While the Chinese International Travel Monitor examined Chinese travelers from various financial backgrounds, 38 percent of those surveyed did select luxury shopping as their favorite travel activity.

Luxury retailers are not the only ones who need to be aware of the changing behaviors of Chinese leisure travelers.

High-end hospitality brands must also consider that Chinese tourists are more technologically-inclined than ever before. The majority of travelers, 58 percent, admit they would book a hotel based on its advanced technology, with the number rising to 64 percent among millennials.

More luxury hotels are incorporating technology throughout their properties.

Marriott International is introducing Amazon's new Alexa for Hospitality artificial intelligence platform to a limited number of hotels starting this summer, including St. Regis Hotels. In rooms outfitted with Amazon Echo virtual assistant devices, guests can ask the voice assistant for hotel information, request guest services, play music in their room and more ([see story](#)).

"The Mainland Chinese outbound travel market remains highly valuable with enormous potential for continued growth," Hotels.com's Mr. Svanstrom said. "As such, hoteliers are encouraged to cater to this important travel market."

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