

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

China's May Day holiday reveals new favorite tourist destinations

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Travel bookings for China's May Day holiday have surpassed pre-pandemic levels, a boon for both traditional tourist hubs and off-the-beaten-path destinations. Image credit: Shutterstock

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China's domestic tourists are back in full force, journeys undertaken over the May Day holiday show.

A record high of **19 million** domestic railway trips were made on the first day of the five-day Labor Day holiday, which ended on May 3, and the China State Railway Group expects **120 million domestic railway trips** to be made between April 27 and May 4.

Beijing welcomed more than 22 million visitors to its 60 key commercial areas, who drove spending on goods up 41.7 percent in the capital.

Elsewhere, Hong Kong saw 760,000 visitors over the weekend, while **Macau** received more than 353,000 visitors from Saturday, April 29 to Monday, May 1.

The Jing Take: The second long holiday since the country reopened its borders, this year's May Day holiday saw Chinese consumer demand for travel and consumption surge.

According to Alibaba Group's online travel platform **Fliggy**, bookings for flights, accommodations, group travel items and tickets to scenic spots surged 1,000 percent compared to the same period last year, surpassing pre-pandemic levels.

Local tourist spots continue to be popular.

Macau, for example, **ranked as the top destination** for Chinese travelers within Asia from April 17 to May 7, with bookings up 11 percent from 2019 versus a 32 percent fall for trips to Hong Kong, according to travel firm ForwardKeys.

The rush of visitors is a boon to the Portuguese city keen to **diversify its economy beyond gambling**.

Besides these traditional tourist hubs, lesser-known locations gained traction this holiday.

In particular, Zibo, an industrial city in Shandong province, has blown up on social media for its affordable barbecue food and value-for-money experiences big pull factors as the country's youth battles historically high unemployment rates. Local authorities reported that May Day hotel bookings soared **800 percent** from 2019.

This is not to say that Chinese tourists are not interested in going abroad.

In fact, bookings for international excursions **on Fliggy** hit an all-time high for Labor Day and more than tripled the previous record set during this year's Spring Festival.

However, international flight capacity continues to limit outbound travel. This also means that there is still much spending potential to be unlocked in China in the near future.

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