

## 《多国简化签证手续吸引中国游客》

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Countries are scrambling to change their policies so they can grab a larger slice of the pie

As China is expected to surpass the United States as the world's largest travel and tourism economy in 2027, experts and industry insiders expect visa barriers targeting Chinese tourists to be eased in the near future.

One of the major inhibitors of the tourism industry is the fact that 70 percent of tourists still need to go to an embassy to visit a foreign destination, said David Scowsill, president and chief executive of the World Travel and Tourism Council.

Yang Jinsong, a professor at the China Tourism Academy who focuses on international tourism, said that visas are still the major hindrance to Chinese outbound tourism, the growth of which would be inestimable without the visa barriers.

"However, thanks to the tremendous growth of China's outbound tourism in recent years, an increasing number of countries are extending an olive branch, by reducing the visa application process for Chinese applicants or waiving the visa requirement in an attempt to attract more Chinese tourists," Yang said. "No one wants to be left behind as China's economic pie is being carved up."

Despite all the concerns, including overstays, terrorism, illegal immigration, considering the potential economic contribution, it is an inescapable trend that visas to most countries will be waived in the future, he said.

"As much of the growth of the tourism and travel industry is coming out of Asia, especially China, more countries will come up with easier visa policies, including e-visas instead of interviews, and reciprocity among nations, to further eliminate visa barriers and make travel easier."

There were more than 98 million outbound visits by Chinese in 2013, and the country's tourism market will exceed more than \$2 trillion five years later, Chinese Vice-Premier Wang Yang said on Thursday at the opening ceremony of the 2014 World Travel & Tourism Council Global Summit in Sanya, Hainan province.

The boom in Chinese outbound travel is changing the global tourism landscape. Chinese travelers have emerged as the largest spenders in worldwide outbound tourism, said Richard Solomons, global chief executive of the InterContinental Hotels Group, a multinational lodging company headquartered in the United Kingdom.

Many countries, including the UK, the United States, France, New Zealand, Malaysia and Thailand, have eased their visa procedures for Chinese travelers, either through waivers or reducing the red tape involved.

"As the whole world is competing to welcome Chinese tourists, governments are being more progressive in trying

to come up with loosened visa application procedures," said Arne Sorenson, president and chief executive officer of Marriot International Inc, a leading global hospitality company.

"The United States, as well as the European union , has been trying hard to make it easier for Chinese to get a visa, which shows that the world is more than ever focusing on Chinese tourists," said Sorenson.

Sorenson, who is also a member of the President's Export Council, which is the principal advisory committee to the US president, said the US has been looking to introduce a more progressive visa policy and easier access for Chinese tourists and to grant longer stays - and even a visa waiver the second time a Chinese visits the US in the future.

He said he has talked to President Barack Obama about the US' visa policy a dozen times, and it is crystal clear that the president wants to encourage more tourists to visit the US.

Michael Robbins, a partner at the Tourism Company, a Canada-based management consultancy specializing in tourism, said the Canadian government has been investing heavily to attract Chinese tourists, and there has been a sharp growth in the number in recent years "but the visa has been a hurdle that prevents tourism development".

"Countries are left with no choice but to make it easier for Chinese to get a visa, because people will opt for another country if they have to wait for months for a visa," said Desiree Bollier, chief executive of Value Retail management, the creator and operator of Chic Outlet Shopping.

Bollier said the group has been talking with the UK's Ministry of Tourism to push for easier visa applications targeting the Chinese, one of the major customer sources of the outlet, which is one of Europe's largest discount outlet chains.

"All these are not one way straight. In both sides we are trying to be progressive to make the visa easier for Chinese coming to US and US citizens coming to China."