BRAND USA

NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA plans yearly U.S.-China conference for tourism leaders

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- About 200 participants to convene in Los Angeles this fall

For the first time, Brand USA – the destination-marketing organization for the United States – takes the lead role on the planning and operation of the ninth annual U.S.-China Leadership Summit, scheduled for Sept. 8-11 this year in Los Angeles.

“China is currently the fourth-largest source market for inbound tourism to the U.S. Slightly more than 2 million Chinese visited the U.S. during 2014. By 2018, China is expected to become the number-one market, “ said Chris Thompson, Brand USA’s president and CEO. “Chinese visitors spend on average $6,000 a person on each trip to the U.S. – about 30 percent more than other inbound international travelers.

Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Bureau and Visit California have partnered with Brand USA to host the annual conference.

"Visit California is honored to have the opportunity to co-host this distinguished gathering of Chinese and U.S. tourism and government leaders alongside our partners at the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board," said Caroline Beteta, president and CEO of Visit California. "California welcomed more than one million Chinese visitors last year and China is our state's largest overseas visitor market by volume, as well as the fastest growing and highest spending. We are looking forward to what promises to be an insightful dialogue and advancing our mutual objectives during the summit."

The summit, which began in 2007 and alternates yearly between the United States and China, brings together high-ranking tourism and government officials from the two countries for a program of business discussions and networking opportunities that foster cooperation between the tourism industries of the United States and China.

Previously, the U.S. Travel Association, a national advocacy organization, had been in charge of the domestic logistics for the U.S.– China Leadership Summit event in partnership with China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), the agency in charge of tourism for China. Last year’s summit, held in Xiamen, China, was a transition year in which Brand USA and U.S. Travel shared responsibilities with CNTA.

The 2015 summit is expected to draw between 180 and 250, including 80 Chinese delegates. Sessions will focus on emerging trends in the travel industry in China and the United States as well asefforts to drive tourism to niche markets such as golf travel, educational tourism, culture-oriented tourism, and cruise tourism development. Building off of last year’s summit, both countries remain focused onexpanding cooperation in the tourism industry between China and the United States including reaching a goal of 5,000,000 visitors through two-way tourism.

Also this year, CNTA has a new chairman, Li Jinzao. Li brings extensive experience in local and central government and is revered for his open-mindedness, pragmatism, knowledge, and profound understanding of tourism.

During 2014, a record $1 million Chinese travelers came to California and spent $2.5 billion in the state. And, the number of nonstop flights from China to California is expected to jump by 44 percent in 2015. U.S. gateway cities, such as Los Angeles, have campaigns in place to entice Chinese visitors.

“As LA Tourism values the Chinese visitor market enormously, we engaged leading industry experts to create and implement ‘NiHao China,’ a thoughtful and practical professional-education program,” said Ernest Wooden Jr., president and CEO of the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board. “The ongoing initiative is designed to provide insights and best practices within this growing market to help our hotels, attractions, and other hospitality sectors cater to the preferences of Chinese visitors so we ensure they have best possible experience in Los Angeles.”

Also, last fall, the U.S. and China announced a reciprocal agreement that extends the validity of short-term tourist and business visas issued to each other's citizens from one to 10 years. Student and exchange visas went from one to five years. The State Department has seen a 41-percent increase in Chinese applications for U.S. visas since the announcement, Brand USA reports.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.