

## **Turisme de Barcelona targets Chinese visitors at the start of the Chinese New Year holidays**

- **The consortium remembers the importance of the Chinese market with a New Year greeting and a webinar to give an update on the current situation**
- **Turisme de Barcelona renews its WeChat channel, the most widely used messaging app by the Chinese, with new content and 200% growth in the number of followers**
- **In 2021, 13,626 Chinese tourists stayed at the city's hotels compared with 181,366 in 2019**

**Barcelona, 1st February 2022.- Turisme de Barcelona**, with its sights set on the mid-term, is working towards the reactivation of one of its most interesting inbound markets, with very high-growth potential and an average spend that is double that of other countries, and is the highest-spending nation ahead of other markets like the USA and Russia. In 2019, 181,366 Chinese tourists visited Barcelona but in 2021 Chinese visitors to the city numbered only 13,626, due to travel restrictions and the reduced number of flights. Despite this, the Asian market is expected to recover towards the end of 2022 or in 2023.

For this reason, Turisme de Barcelona's communications with this market remain active through its different initiatives and channels. The first of these ties in with the celebration of [Chinese New Year](#) with a greeting sent to the entire Chinese community in Barcelona and all the agents and tour operators in China.

The New Year celebrations are one of the highlights on the traditional Chinese calendar and this is why Barcelona's Chinese community wants to share its culture with the rest of the city. To tie in with the New Year, which starts today with the tiger as the protagonist,



and the holiday period for the Chinese, the consortium has launched different initiatives that will continue throughout the year in order to keep the city uppermost in the minds of Chinese visitors. The first is the greeting sent out to all the travel-trade representatives (travel agencies, tour operators, OTAs etc) featuring the WeChat logo. The consortium has also recorded a [video](#) which will go viral on the networks. It features people from the city's Chinese community, at the China Crown restaurant in the Eixample district, talking about culture, food and traditions.

### **WeChat for the Chinese market**

Turisme de Barcelona has just renewed its agreement with Europass to keep its WeChat channel open. WeChat is the programme used to distribute content to thousands of users of what is currently the most widely used network in China. WeChat has multiple social functions: messaging, geolocation, verified accounts that allow it to send notifications to its followers, and features WeChat Moments (which is similar to Instagram or Facebook), mini programmes, etc. WeChat brings together, on a single channel, all the messaging and social networking tools, including WhatsApp, Facebook, Uber, Tinder, etc. And it is one of the most widely used by the Chinese, with more than one billion active users every month.

Turisme de Barcelona's new WeChat channel distributes content at three levels:



1. Information about Destination Barcelona and everything you need to know before you travel.
2. Travel guide, with arts and culture highlights, visitor trails and Destination Barcelona as a gateway to the region with its great choice of sea- and mountain-related activities.
3. Practical guides on WeChat Barcelona Experience, with mini programmes for shopping, foodie experiences, festivals and sporting events.

The WeChat mini programme is a “sub application” within WeChat, which allows users to access advanced functions, such as e-commerce, task management, etc. It is an operating system that interacts with its users and, among other things, allows businesses to have their own app enabling them to contact this market directly. When Chinese users look for “Barcelona” in the search bar, Turisme de Barcelona’s mini programme appears with all kinds of content about the travel professionals who are consortium members, meaning they can enjoy substantial savings and giving them access to the entire market. The consortium’s WeChat channel has been operational for a year, and the number of followers has increased with an average growth of +200% a month. In 2021, 24 articles were published and there were 28,177 page views by 25,898 unique visitors. More than 25% of the readers weren’t followers of the account, and this showed the potential to reach and attract new users and ensure they follow the account. The two most visited menus were the “Travel guide” (43.28%) and “Get ready for your trip” (40.3%). The most visited submenus were “Recommended routes” “About Barcelona” and “Experience Barcelona” with 490 clicks.

Our Promotions Division continued with its travel-agent training programme about Barcelona/Catalonia via the CTA (Chinese Travel Academy) platform. The initiative has been made possible through an agreement with Dragon Trail International, the Chinese travel-trade training platform, which has more than 55,000 people enrolled and features all the contents being promoted.

### **Webinar “Tourism 2022: when will the Chinese market be back?”**

One of the actions taking place to tie in with the Chinese New Year will be a webinar on 15th February, organised in conjunction with Casa Asia, the Barcelona Confucius

Institute, Barcelona City Council and the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Barcelona. An online presentation, moderated by the consortium's promotions director, **Mateo Asensio**, took place to give an update and provide information about the key points in order to prepare for the return of the Chinese market, trends and evolution. Also taking part were the director of economics and business programmes at Casa Asia, **Amadeo Jensana**; the tourism councillor for Turespaña in Beijing, **María Llinares**; the director of the Catalan Tourism Agency in continental China, **Antonio Li**; the associate director of market development for Dragon Trail International, **José Sánchez**; and the CEO of Asialink Spain – Ctrip Spain, **Jennifer Zhang**. Before the pandemic, continental China was the most important inbound tourism market for a number of countries. Now the world is waiting expectantly to find out when Chinese visitors will be back, which will almost certainly be in 2022, but when? What is the current situation of the Chinese market? What should destinations do during the time before they arrive?

### **An expanding market**

China is the world's biggest inbound tourism market. It remains an emerging market for our destination (with 2.7% of the market share at hotels in 2019, representing an increase of 27.2% over 2018) but with high potential over the coming years, which makes it one of the world's most interesting markets.

The number of Chinese people who chose Spain as a destination has grown and it is now the fourth European destination after France, Italy and the United Kingdom. Catalonia is the preferred destination for 49% of the Chinese visitors who have chosen Spain, followed by Madrid (34%) and Andalusia (10%).

The peculiarity of this market is the changing trend being observed, which has shifted from travelling in groups to solo travellers. Over 55% make their own travel arrangements, especially millennials and young middle- to upper-middle-class visitors.

The average spend of the Chinese is double that of other nationalities, with a very positive impact on the city's economy. According to data provided by Global Blue, China is the leading country in tax free spending, ahead of other markets such as the USA and Russia. This is still in spite of the fact that the number of Chinese who visit us is still lower than these markets. In 2019, spending totalled 11,502,335.00€, a figure showing an increase of 53.1% over the previous year. The average value of each till receipt in the case of Chinese tourists was 774€.



The average Chinese visitor to Catalonia comes from a city, is aged 35, uses a smartphone and looks up the relevant information about the destination on the internet. They are university graduates or have a post-graduate degree and come from the middle or upper-middle class. They have been on long-distance trips to other destinations before and are generally more exacting than visitors from South-East Asia. 61.2% are leisure travellers and 33% come here on business.

Most Chinese visitors who choose Catalonia stay overnight mainly in Barcelona and travel by plane with the traditional travel agencies after visiting other European destinations. Three- and four-star hotels are the preferred accommodation for leisure travellers, whereas business travellers mostly stay at four- and five-star hotels.

Architecture is the most highly rated aspect of the city, with a score of 9.12 and culture, with 8.73. There are currently no direct flights from any Chinese cities and they are not expected to come back this year. China's current airline policies mean that airlines only operate flights to country capitals but they are still small in number. It is estimated that almost 95% of flights operated by China are domestic.

In 2021, 13,626 Chinese tourists stayed at hotels, compared with 181,366 in 2019. Studies carried out before the pandemic show that they came to Barcelona for the lifestyle, which they understood to mean climate and ambiance.

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