

# Chengdu hosts global online tourism event

## Province boosts industry through integration and series of expos

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The tourism industry is using the Internet for innovative development, Hao Kangli, head of the Sichuan Tourism Administration, told a tourism conference.

The fourth Global Travel E-commerce Conference, which was hosted in Dujiangyan in Chengdu, from Sept 21 to 23, attracted more than 30 online travel companies and Internet companies from 20 countries and regions, including Google, Facebook, Agoda and C-trip, well as domestic tourism companies.

At the event, which is also known as GTEC2015, representatives discussed the development of global online tourism and the integration of tourism with other industries.

The GTEC2015 facilitated one-to-one talks to ensure effective deals could be made. It offered networking for 150 global representatives from online travel agencies and 150 Chinese tourism service providers.

Hao delivered a speech on "Internet plus tourism and tourism plus Internet".

He said that the wave of Internet plus tourism has spread all over the world, while tourism plus Internet, where travel companies play a leading role, has just started.

Other participants of the three-day event included Liao Ming, head of APAC Marketing Science at Facebook, and Chen Jianhao, vice-president of Google China.

The Sichuan Tourism Administration and the Cheng-

du city government organized the conference. It comprised eight activities where enterprises and government agencies talked about integration and development of "Internet plus" and "tourism plus" and sought cooperation.

A part of the conference, an O2O fair adopted the one-on-one model and offered domestic and foreign online tourism agencies opportunities to discuss business with local offline travel providers and those who have tourism resources.

Global leaders from online tourism agencies and travel administrators in Sichuan gave advice and suggestions on long-term development of Sichuan's tourism at the CEO roundtable meeting.

An O2O marketing alliance of China inbound tourism was set up at the roundtable meeting, which will help integrate offline providers' resources and global distribution channels, officials at the provincial tourism administration said.

### Important topics

Important topics at the GTEC2015 included the win-win methods of social media and e-commerce as well as future development of the Internet.

Some participants were executives at international travel organizations, websites and network operators from the United States, Spain, Germany and South Korea.

The Global Travel E-commerce Conference has been held four times since 2012. The other three sessions took place in Chengdu, Deyang and

Mianyang in Sichuan province.

All four sessions resulted in a number of cooperation projects in online tourism, especially online marketing, the provincial tourism authorities said.

This year's conference focused on a combination of the Internet and tourism.

With the support of the State tourism authority, the integration of tourism and the Internet has gained momentum recently.

Li Jinzao, chief of the National Tourism Administration, said on Sept 20 that they were committed to fostering an open and inclusive environment for the tourism plus Internet practice.

He said China has become the world's largest outbound travel market and the fourth-largest inbound tourism destination.

The nation also has the biggest number of netizens since the Internet developed in the country more than two decades ago.

China is the world's largest manufacturing hub of electronic products and its information consumption market has huge potential.

Li said tourism plus Internet integrates two fields that have more customers than any other sector and will definitely involve huge demand.

He estimated that 1 trillion yuan (\$157 billion) would be needed in the next five years to develop China's tourism Internet infrastructure and upgrade basic infrastructure including scenic spots, hotels and travel agencies in an intelligent way

and via the Internet.

### Golden opportunity

It will be a golden opportunity for basic network operators and Internet-related companies, according to Li.

Like Internet plus, tourism plus has become a hot word as tourism penetrates many other industries, insiders said.

According to them, Sichuan has entered an era where tourism-plus industries are developing.

A report issued in July by Sichuan Tourism Administration and Southwestern University of Finance and Economics showed that the province's tourist sector has integrated into related traditional industries, which resulted in new industries such as tourism-plus agriculture, tourism-plus real estate and tourism-plus finance.

Chengdu won the bid for the 22nd the United Nations World Tourism Organization's General Assembly on Sept 15. The UNWTO event will be held in 2017.

Li Jinzao said China's national tourism authority welcomes travel companies and Internet companies to join in the assembly and help develop Chinese tourism as well as the global tourist industry.

The biennial UNWTO General Assembly is the highest-level meeting in the international tourist circle.

China will host the event for the second time after it was held in Beijing in 2003.

Insiders said the fact that the event will be held in a city in western China for the first time shows the world's increas-



Representatives for travel and Internet companies from 20 countries and regions meet to discuss the integration of the two industries. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Liu Suibin, head of the Qingcheng faction of Taoism, teaches participants of the conference to practice tai chi at the gate of Qingcheng Mountain. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ing interest on development in the region.

Success in winning the bid is significant for Sichuan to become an influential province in tourism economy and a

world-class travel destination, insiders said.

The second Sichuan International Travel Expo took place in Emeishan city from Sept 24 to 26.

Officials at the provincial tourism bureau said Sichuan is boosting development of its local tourist industry through large-scale and insightful events.

## Internet giants issue Sichuan tourism reports

By HAO NAN  
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The fourth Global Travel E-commerce Conference held in Dujiangyan, Chengdu included forums, city tours and the launch of a white paper to help participants learn about and discuss the worldwide development of online tourism.

On Sept 21, a national competition for tourism-related entrepreneurial projects was held during the GTEC2015. Of the eight projects in the final, three won the chance to discuss investment cooperation with venture capital funds.

The three projects were all developed by young Chengdu entrepreneurs.

Tourism, as one of the first

traditional industries to offer Internet services, has many large and leading companies who have captured most of the market share.

Startups, therefore, should pay more attention to niche segments to respond to customers' diversified needs, if they want to survive and develop amid fierce market competition, organizers of competition said.

The top winner, meyouone.com, focuses on honeymoon travel and sells services mainly on Tmall, a leading Chinese shopping portal, and WeChat, an instant messaging app like Whatsapp.

Li Rui, founder of the company, said honeymooner's look to travel over various lengths of time and often have large budgets, so the compa-

ny arranges services such as special cars, candlelit dinners and large honeymoon beds for couple.

In the first month after opening in December last year, the company gained profits of nearly 60,000 yuan (\$9,408).

Li said Chengdu "has everything needed to start a business".

"Chengdu has high-quality human resources in information technology. It also has a good business environment and entrepreneurial atmosphere," he added.

During the three-day conference, some corporate representatives visited Qingcheng Mountain, one of the birthplaces of the Taoist religion.

On Sept 22, Liu Suibin, head

of the Qingcheng faction of Taoism, took 12 people to play tai chi at seven o'clock in the morning at the gate of the mountain. The participants included Tony D' Astolfo, general manager of Phocuswright, and Timothy Hughes, vice-president of Agoda's business development department.

They also visited Lidui Park, the Panda Base and the 2,000-year-old Dujiangyan irrigation system.

On Sept 23, Jones Lang LaSalle, an investment management company specializing in real estate, as well as Internet giants Baidu and Google independently issued their white papers on tourism.

JLL's white paper on tourism in west China analyzed

consumer behaviors and demands, explored the local market features and discussed how to develop different tourist spots in different cities in the region.

Baidu's white paper on Sichuan tourism was based on the company's big data and said most searches for Sichuan's tourism are made between spring and autumn, and reach the peak in the summer. The paper said Sichuan now ranks fourth in a tourism search list of provinces and regions, after Beijing, Zhejiang and Shaanxi. Chengdu ranks 11th among Chinese cities for tourism, and its top five tourist spots netizens searched for are Dujiangyan, Jiuzhaigou Valley, Ermei Mountain, Happy Valley and Qingcheng Mountain.

### What they say

"In recent years, Sichuan has focused on developing intelligent tourism by building three intelligent systems of management, service and marketing."

**Wang Qizhang**, deputy secretary-general of the Sichuan provincial government

"Tourism Plus is a multi-directional, multi-level and multi-dimensional concept. The integration of tourism and Internet is not only a technical reform, but also a comprehensive revolution in terms of ideas and actions, demand and supply, planning and construction, service and management."

**Hao Kangli**, director of Sichuan Tourism Administration

"Chengdu recently won the right to stage the 22nd session of UNWTO General Assembly in 2017, which we hope could promote the innovative development of the city's tourism industry. Also, GTEC 2015 has raised the city's level of opening-up and sped up its process of becoming a worldwide tourism destination."

**Fu Yonglin**, deputy mayor of Chengdu

"As of May 2012, Facebook had about 900 million users, and 37 percent of them became interested in tourism by viewing travel photos and articles on Facebook."

**Liao Ming**, head of marketing science at Facebook Asia Pacific

"We have two provinces, Yunnan and Sichuan, which have made records in independent tourism this year, with each accepting over 20,000 independent travelers. We have also seen rapid development in group tours."



Dujiangyan, the host city for the Global Travel E-commerce Conference 2015, is a renowned tourist destination in Sichuan province because of a massive irrigation project built more than 2,200 years ago. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

