



News Release
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Seattle-Washington State Opens Tourism Office in China

*New Air Service, Geographic Location and Trade and Business Alliances
Help Open Highly-Desirable Chinese Travel Market to the Northwest*

SEATTLE –Seattle’s Convention and Visitors Bureau, The Port of Seattle and Washington State Tourism announced the establishment of their first representative tourism office in Beijing, China.

Beginning this week, Beijing-based i2i Group China will be retained jointly by the state’s three overseas destination marketing organizations. The Chinese marketing and public relations firm will help launch a new, comprehensive campaign designed to strengthen tourism ties between China and Washington state, stimulate tourism development and support existing and new air service between China and Seattle.

Early initiatives for i2i will include the launch of a Chinese-language web site for the destination, distribution of a new monthly newsletter and other communications targeted to Chinese travel consumers, development of travel trade and media familiarization trips to Washington state and coordination of a tourism trade mission in China.

“Having tourism representation in China constitutes a major step toward moving this market forward,” said Tom Norwalk, Senior Vice President Sales & Marketing for Seattle’s Convention and Visitors Bureau. “This is the first step to developing a strong, sustainable tourism marketing program in China and we’re extremely excited to be working with i2i, which will act as Washington state’s ears, eyes and voice in this dynamic, emerging tourism market.”

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Washington state is viewed as a highly desirable destination for Chinese travelers. Situated 10½ hours by air from China, Washington state is the closest mainland U.S. destination to China, and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport offers extensive connections to Alaska, Hawaii and throughout the continental U.S.

On June 9, Hainan Airlines, China's only privately-held airline, inaugurated the first non-stop service between Beijing and Seattle, making Seattle the airline's first U.S. destination. Last month, Northwest Airlines announced a new non-stop Beijing-Seattle route beginning March 1, 2009. The Port of Seattle's growing cruise offerings are also expected to draw Chinese travelers, as are the state's visitor attractions, outdoor recreation and professional sports events, shopping and noted food and wine.

China is one of the most sought-after emerging tourism markets in the world with 100 million Chinese projected to travel outside China by 2020. The average Chinese visitor spends approximately \$6,000 per trip.

While the U.S. is currently the eighth most popular destination for Chinese travelers and the top destination for Chinese travelers outside of Asia, Chinese tourism to the United States has been hindered by policy and security obstacles until recently. In December 2007, the Chinese government granted a form of Approved Destination Status (ADS) for travel to the U.S., making travel visas to the U.S. easier to obtain and paving the way for leisure group travel to the U.S. Earlier this month, the first Chinese tour group visited the U.S.

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About Seattle's Convention and Visitors Bureau

Seattle's Convention and Visitors Bureau is a non-profit economic development agency responsible for competitively marketing Seattle as a destination for meeting and convention groups and leisure travelers. Some 9.4 million visitors spend \$4.75 billion in Seattle and King County annually, contributing \$419 million in state and local tax revenues. Direct visitor spending benefits hotels, retailers, restaurants, attractions, transportation services and other businesses, and supports jobs for nearly 60,000 people in the Seattle region.

About Washington State Tourism

Washington State Tourism, a unit of Washington's Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, is charged with competitively marketing and developing Washington as a premier travel destination for both domestic and international travelers. In 2007, visitors to Washington spent a record \$14.8 billion in the state. In the same year, nearly 150,000 jobs were directly generated by travel spending, representing approximately 3.8 percent of all jobs in Washington.

About the Port of Seattle

Port of Seattle facilities support nearly 200,000 jobs in the Puget Sound region and generate more than \$12 billion in business revenue and \$626 million in state and local taxes annually.