

Insight



State of the Travel Tech Nation in the Year 2040

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What Hotel Industry Trends to Expect in 2017

Leaders in Trade



“In Winter Wonderland”
Interview with Mr. Olli Rehn, Minister of Economic Affairs, Finland

City



Moscow's Artistry, History and Majesty



The Tourism Economy Leads the Global Economy; the Shared Economy Reshapes the Tourism Economy

— Release of Report on World Tourism Economy Trends (2017)

I. Global Tourism Economy Grew Faster than the Global Economy

Global Economy Recovery Remained Weak

Global economy recovered weakly in 2016: some developed economic entities recovered but at unbalanced rates; the growth rate of emerging markets decreased and China entered a new normal economy; many incidents in terms of politics or others added uncertainty to the global economy. Based on this, International Monetary Foundation (IMF) and World Bank lowered the prediction of 2016 world economy growth rate

respectively to 3.1% and 2.4% from original 3.4% and 2.6%.

Growth Rate of Global Tourism Economy was Higher than That of Global Economy

The total global tourist arrivals (i.e. international tourist arrivals and domestic tourist arrivals) and tourism revenue remained high growth speeds in 2016, thanks to the positive factors such as the significant increase of demand in major economic entities, improvement of cross-country tourism infrastructure, lower travel expense caused by lower oil price and greater

(read more please turn to page 3)



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visa facilitation. For the first time, the tourist arrivals in 2016 passed 10 billion, reaching 10.5 billion (1.4 times of global population), up by 4.8 % over last year; total global tourism revenue ran into USD 5.17 trillion which amounted to 7.0% of global GDP, 3.6% growth since last year. The growth rate of tourist arrivals and tourism revenue were significantly greater than that of global GDP.

Tourism Economy Made a Big Contribution to Global GDP Growth

In 2016, the growth of global tourism economy contributed 5.49% to global GDP growth, 9.10% to developed economies' GDP growth and 4.24% to emerging economies'.

Global Tourism Economy Will Outperform Global Economy in 2017

It is apparent that global tourism economy will keep ahead of global economy, because the total tourist arrivals and tourism revenue are expected to increase at the rate of 7.5% and 4.2% respectively in 2017, reaching 11.3 billion and USD 5.39 trillion, while IMF's and World Bank's prediction of global GDP growth in 2017 are 3.4% and 2.8%. Global tourism economy's contribution to global GDP growth will reach 5.87%, 10.13% to developed economies' GDP growth and 4.52% to emerging economies' respectively.

II. Tourism Played a Significant Role in Rebalancing the Global Economy

A Tripartite Structure Formed in the Global Tourism Market Europe, America and Asia Pacific regions dominate the global tourism, in which locate world top 10 tourist destination countries. The proportion of European and American regions keep declining while Asia Pacific region rises significantly, forming the tripartite confrontation situation. From 2005 to 2016, the proportion of tourist arrivals received by Europe to the total global arrivals dropped to 16.3% from 25.6%, that of America dropped to 17.7% from 27.3%, while Asian proportion rose to 63.0% from 43.5%; the proportion of European tourism revenue to the global total revenue reduced from 42.6% to 35.3%, that of America dropped from 32.4% to 31.0%, while Asian proportion jumped from 21.0% to 28.9%.

Growth in Emerging Economies was Remarkable In recent years, emerging economies had a significantly higher growth rate than developed economies in number of tourist arrivals and tourism revenue. Such will be the case in the future. At the same time, they covered a bigger share of total number than before. From 2005 to 2016, emerging economies received 68.8% of total tourists, up 22.2% from 46.6%; their revenue increased from 23.4% to 37.1%.

Tourism Worked as an Important Power in Globalization Progress

After the financial crisis in 2008, especially in the last two to three years, global trade faded its growth, trade protectionism of all kinds woke, labor/population flow decreased, globalization progression differentiated even reversed in some regions. In such a background, tourism stood out in driving globalization. In terms of tourist arrivals, the fluctuation of international tourist was smaller than domestic one, while the growth rate of former was getting closer to the later, even outperformed in some years; In terms of tourism revenue, international tourism grew faster than domestic one, such will be the trend and will be reinforced as well; Tourism trade enjoyed a steady increase, taking up 33.7% of total service trade, the largest share of all.

Report on World Tourism Economy Trends (2017)

III. Super Map: The Impact of Infrastructure Construction on Tourism Industry

Now Comes an Upsurge of Global Infrastructure Construction

The investment in global transportation infrastructure will reach a

record-breaking level during the period between 2014 and 2025, with an expected annual growth rate of 5%. Many infrastructure engineering projects will pave the way for cross-border tourism, such as "the North-South Economic Corridor" in Africa, "Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe Railway", the first Chunnel cross Europe and Asia continents built by Turkey, the first continental highway connecting Asia-Europe-America, and the railway linking Atlantic and Pacific ocean, as well as the increase of airlines all over the world.

Mega Tourism City Nodes are Taking Shape As the global transportation net comes to shape, cities stand out to play the pivot role, replacing country on the key nodes of global supply chain. On the base of six mega city clusters, by 2030, there will be 50 mega city clusters, forming a series of geographic nodes with the most convenient infrastructure and the best-developed supply chain, which will be a magnet for global capital, resources, talents and techniques. Out of the mega city clusters, most will become the mega tourism nodes.

Infrastructure Development Changed Tourism Relationships among Countries Nowadays, every country makes much of the investment in public service in tourism. Countries with better tourism infrastructure are able to provide better tourism public service for tourists, thus more appealing. Consequently, increasingly tense competition between countries in tourism will evolve into competition of tourism infrastructure; leading to cooperation on infrastructure gradually.



“ In 2016, the growth of global tourism economy contributed 5.49% to global GDP growth, 9.10% to developed economies' GDP growth and 4.24% to emerging economies'.”

IV. Tourism Industry Experienced M&A Wave

Tourism M&A Became an Important Part of Industrial M&A Among all the medium-sized merger and acquisition in Asia Pacific region between 2011 and 2016, tourism cases comprised 5% in regard to both the transaction number and trade volume; in Southeast Asia, transaction number 6.9% and trade volume 6.3%; in Australia, the proportion were 8.3% and 7.6% respectively; in Japan, 6.6% and 5.4%; in Great China (including mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan) both proportion were 3.3%. Among the merger and acquisition made in the first nine months in 2016, 5% were in tourism industry, covering 4% of the total trade volume.

Cross-border Tourism M&A Increased Again At present, numerous merger and acquisition cases are cross-border. In recent years, the



cross-border tourism merger and acquisition reversed its downturn, entering an increasing channel in terms of both trade number and trade volume. The M&A in tourism industry covered the whole industrial chain, including the offline and traditional business, such as travel agency, airline service, hotel, duty-free store, airport service and tourism entertainment show, as well as emerging business like online booking for tourism, hotel and restaurant, ticket service and services.

Cross-border Tourism M&A Changed the International Tourism Industrial Chain The recent cross-border mergers and acquisitions involved offline and traditional business, such as travel agency, airline service, hotel, duty-free store, airport service and tourism entertainment show, as well as emerging business like online booking for tourism, hotel and restaurant, ticket service and services from the whole industrial chain. Active cross-border tourism mergers and acquisitions are integrating and changing the international tourism industrial chain, advancing the globalization and industrialization of tourism.

V. Sharing Economy Was Rebuilding Tourism Industry

The Integration of Tourism Industry and Sharing Economy Continued to Increase Sharing economy, an emerging economic model, is developing rapidly. Currently there are over ten thousand of sharing emerging economy enterprises from many industries including transportation, restaurant, housing, idle goods, resources, knowledge, services, healthcare and finance. Tourism fits sharing economy by nature and serves as the most important application area. Enterprises with sharing economy characteristics have covered all aspects of tourism -- food, hotel, transportation, sightseeing, shopping and entertaining, which realized a deep integration with industries of transportation, real estate, tour guide, travel consultation, restaurant, entertainment, logistics and shopping. Sharing economy tourism companies, represented by Airbnb, are spring up.

Sharing Economy Led Tourism Industry to Further Explore New Development Space Sharing facilities and service could expand the tourism service scope and create new supply form. In order to provide

better travel experience and enhance travel quality, World Tourism Cities Federation (WTOF) proactively drove the healthy development of sharing economy in tourism industry. From 19 to 20 September 2016, the Chongqing Fragrant Hills Tourism Summit of WTOF was held. WTOF released the following six-point proposal in "Chongqing Declaration - A New Journey for the Development of World Tourism Cities in the Age of Sharing Economy": fully recognizes the important role of sharing economy to the development of tourism cities; expand the reach of sharing economy to all sectors of tourism cities; promote the transition from tourism based on tourist sites and scenic spots to a holistic model of tourism development; develop the urban management system that can keep up with the rapid growth of sharing economy; abide by the laws and regulations, take the corresponding social responsibilities; study the formulation of policies and regulations that promote the sound development of sharing economy. Currently, many countries have taken measures, such as launching related rules and policy, regulating sharing economy development, mainly focusing on four aspects - establishing regulation organization, exploring public resources, engaging the public and increasing capital support.



Sharing Economy Brought New Challenges to Tourism Industry Inevitably, tourism sharing economy will shock traditional tourism, bringing new challenges to traditional management system. In the future, the advancement of technology and society will constantly enhance the globalization of sharing economy tourism enterprises, facilitate the global allocation of resources and products, and accelerate the maturity and standardization of management of sharing economy enterprises.

VI. Global Tourism Facilitation Improved Continually

The Openness of Visa Improved Continually According to the latest "Visa Openness Report" by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), percent of the visitors required a traditional visa prior to departure kept declining to a record low. 2016 Henley Visa Restrictions Index indicated that the highest score increased remarkably from 2010, while the visa openness and facilitation in every country will continue to be in an active progress in the coming 4 years. In general, people from developed economies and regions enjoy an easy visa policy, such as from European countries like UK, Germany, France, Finland, Sweden; US, Canada in North America; New Zealand, Australia in Oceania; Japan, Korea, Singapore in Asia.

Tourism Competition among Countries Focused on the Visa Facilitation

In recent year, countries constantly put forward new visa policy to improve their attraction and competitiveness in tourism through better facilitation. First, developed tourism countries made "entrance without visa" normal gradually; Second, many countries improved the visa facilitation by increasing visa officers and visa quotas, lowering visa application threshold, prolonging visa validity and launching electronic visa.

VII. Demographic Changes Had Profound Influence on Tourism Development Pattern

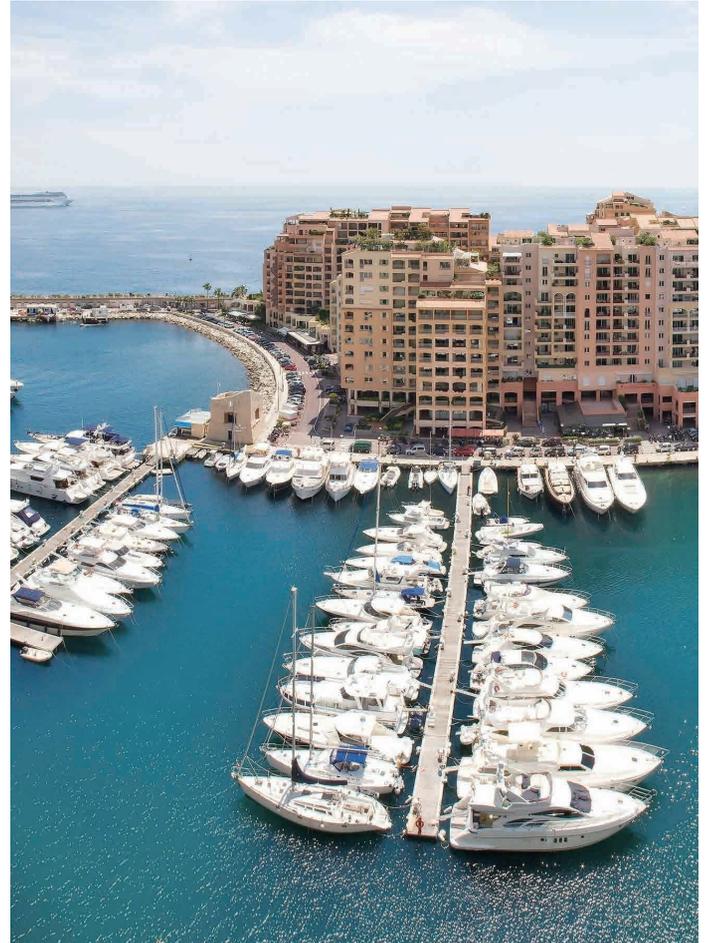
Baby Booms Resulted in Different Market Structures in Different Countries By 2016, Chinese people born in baby booms are about the age of 26-31 or 41-51, therefore, these young and healthy people became dominant in the consumer market and will stay for a period. Parent-child travel could seek opportunity in India and Nigeria, because people born in baby boom there reach the age between 11-26 and 1-16 respectively. Senior market will drive the demand in regions like Russia, Japan, Germany, Hong Kong, UK, Canada, Italy and France. US will see a wave of both senior citizen travel and parent-child travel. Young adults will pull the demand in Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan and Bangladesh. A surge of young and middle aged adults and senior citizen travel will appear in Poland.

The Aging Population Fueled Wellness Travel and Grandparent-child Travel

In 2015, people elder than 65 years old made up 8.3% of global population. Among the top ten population countries, aging population issue was most prominent in Japan, while the proportion of elder residents was also high in US, Russia and China. Consequently, tourism market targeting senior citizens, with strong consumption ability, kept increasing. Wellness tourism and grandparent-child travels that pay attention to health of elder people and entertainment of child will lead a trend in tourism development.

The Rise of the Middle Class Bred Quality Tourism Global middle-class population increased from 524 million in 2000 to 664 million in 2015, making up 14% of global adults, possessing 32% of total fortune. Middle-class people pursue products and service of better quality, which gives rise to the popularity of high quality leisure travel and customized travel.

Female Travel Kept Growing Female-oriented tourism market kept growing as the family structure changes (to fewer children) and the education status and economic independence of females improved.



A report from University of Washington Business School pointed out that almost two thirds of travelers were female, more obvious in leisure travels. Tourism industry is adapting to such market changes.

The Rise in Single Population Led to Diversified Forms of Tourism The rise of divorce rate and late marriage and late childbirth population led to increasing number to singletons who catalyzed the diversification of tourism market.

VIII. Cities Became the Pivots of World Tourism Economy

Cities are the Key Holders of and Home to World Tourism Economy

Cities are the main destination for tourists. The total economy of city tourism played an absolute dominant role in world tourism economy. Meanwhile, world tourism consumption is contributed by residents from cities, a main resource. Core tourism cities are pillars in global tourism development. The consumption of international visitors in top ten cities of international visitors' overnight expense had a share of 10% of total world tourism revenue in the same year.

Cities are the Cradles of World Tourism Innovation Many municipal governments invested heavily in building smart cities and smart tourism projects. The innovation spirit of a city forced its revolution of technology and managing mechanism in tourism, for example, the promotion and application of technologies including internet of things, robot, virtual reality, Beacon and wearable devices in hotels, theme parks and resorts. Cities are the cradle of new models of business, operation and management as well as tourism products.

Cities are the Model Destinations to Explore the Integration of Tourism and Modern Lifestyle Tourism supports cities' update and revival, while cities provide space for sharing and cross-cultural communication. The interaction between city and tourism showcased well the healthy, harmonious and sustainable modern lifestyle.

2017 International Forum on Chinese Outbound Tourism and Release of WTCF Research Result Held in Beijing



Cheng Hong, Executive Deputy Chairperson of WTCF Council and Vice Mayor of Beijing delivered a speech



Song Yu, Secretary-General of World Tourism Cities Federation delivered a speech



Li Baochun, Executive Deputy Secretary-General of WTCF host the forum



Dai Bin, President of China Tourism Academy released the Annual Report on Development of World Tourism Cities 2016



2017 中国出境旅游论坛
2017 International Forum on Chinese Outbound Tourism
主办方: 世界旅游城市联合会 艾威联合旅游顾问机构
Organizers: World Tourism Cities Federation Ivy Alliance Tourism Consulting

2017年1月9日 北京 January 9, 2017 Beijing



2017 China Outbound Tourism—Market Changes and Development Trends



Song Rui, Director of Tourism Research Centre, Chinese Academy of Social Science released the Report on World Tourism Economy Trends (2017)



David Tang, Executive Director of QSC Program introduced the China Outbound Tourism Quality Service Certification Program 2017



Wang Xinjun, CEO of Ivy Alliance Tourism Consulting delivered a speech on China Outbound Tourism Price Index and Analysis of Tourist Source Market



On January 9th, 2017, World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) released two new research results, the Annual Report on Development of World Tourism Cities 2016 and Report on World Tourism Economy Trends (2017). At the same time, WTCF and Ivy Alliance Tourism Consulting co-hosted the 2017 International Forum on Chinese Outbound Tourism (IFCOT). About 200 guests including 5 ambassadors, 70 diplomatic officials of foreign embassies, top executives of tourism organizations, representatives from Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other international organizations, representatives of WTCF members, and China-based leading outbound tour operators attended the forum.

The event began with a speech by Song Yu, Secretary-General of World Tourism Cities



Federation. Mr. Song Yu expressed his gratitude for the attendance of the guests. Cheng Hong, Executive Deputy Chairperson of WTCF Council and Vice Mayor of Beijing, attended the symposium and delivered a welcome speech. Li Baochun, Executive Deputy Secretary-General of WTCF was the host of the event.

The Annual Report on Development of World Tourism Cities 2016 is a research result based on the elements and creative measures such as online tourism and sharing economy that promote the development of tourism. The Annual Report on Development of World Tourism Cities 2016 provides an improved version the index of the development of world tourism cities, which provides a criterion for evaluating 104 cities. WTCF hopes that by introducing the method of tourism cities development index, it can provide intellectual support and services for the development of world tourism cities.

The Report on World Tourism Economy Trends (2017) is a special research aimed at

the development of world tourism economy. It forecasts the trend of the development of the world tourism economy in 2017 based at the core statistics such as the overall scale of world tourism economy and the role in which tourism play in the world economy. The report indicates that under the background of the weakness of the world economy recovery and slowdown of the international trade in 2016, the world tourism economy kept on growing rapidly to become the main force in promoting the development of the world economy. The world economy contributed 5.49% to world GDP. In 2017, the population of world tourists and world tourism income will be at 7.5% and 4.2%, respectively. Song Yu, Secretary-General of World Tourism Cities Federation, said that after 20 years of high-speed growth of China's outbound tourism market, it has now approached a new stage of transformation. There are many new changes within the outbound tourism market and demands are ever changing. In order to assist the world tourism organizations and tourism enterprises and provide a better understanding of the new trends and characteristics of the China outbound tourism market, thus promote the cooperation between tourism organizations domestic and abroad, WTCF and Ivy Alliance Tourism Consulting joined hands again to co-host the 2017 International Forum on Chinese Outbound Tourism (IFCOT). The last forum of its kind, the 11th International Forum on Chinese Outbound Tourism (IFCOT)

was held in 2015. Mr. Yan Han, Deputy Secretary-General of World Tourism Cities Federation; Mr. Cao Jian, President of Beijing UTour International Travel Service; Mr. Ren Jun, Vice President of CAISSA International Travel Service; Mr. Guo Ming, COO of HHtravel; Mr. Duan Dongdong, Vice President of Alitrip.com; and Mr. Sun Changwei, Vice President of Baicheng.com attended the forum and participated in the discussion. They shared their professional ideas on the characteristics and trends of the 2017 China outbound tourism market, potential of the development of high-end customized tourism, demand and consumption behavior of young tourists, and self-service tourism products.

During the forum, the China Outbound Tourism Quality Service Certification Program 2017(QSC) was released. The QSC is a program that recognizes overseas tourism suppliers which provide services for Chinese tourists. It aims at promoting the convenience and high quality services of overseas tourism suppliers to provide better services for Chinese tourists. All types of tourism suppliers including overseas travel agencies, retailers, hotels, tourism spots, restaurants, airports, and tax refund agencies can receive a free application and join the program as soon as they meet the criteria of the QSC program. Up until now, thousands of tourism suppliers from 42 countries have applied to join the QSC program. In the future, WTCF will support and guide the QSC program and cooperate with



world tourism cities to assist them to attract more Chinese tourists.

Mr. Wang Xinjun, CEO of Ivy Alliance Tourism Consulting introduced the Report on 2017 China Outbound Tourism Price Index



during National Day Holiday and analyzed the tourist's source market of the China outbound tourism market.

World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) is a non-government, non-profit international

tourism organization voluntarily formed by well-known tourism cities and tourism-related institutions around the world under the initiative of Beijing. WTCF currently has 119 city members and 62 institutional members. WTCF consists of 6 branches including the Expert Committee, Committee of Civil Aviation, Committee of Tourism-Related Businesses, Committee of Media Organizations, Committee of Cruise Industry, and Committee of Investment. Established on 15, September, 2012 in Beijing, it is committed to facilitating exchanges and cooperation between members and promoting sustainable growth in the tourism sector. WTCF is considered as one of the fastest growing international organization in the tourism sector.

WTCF Asia Pacific Tourism Conference to Be Held in Penang

Between March 25 and 29, 2017, WTCF and its city member, Penang in Malaysia, will jointly hold the WTCF Asia Pacific Tourism Conference. It will be the first large regional conference that WTCF will hold in one of its member cities. The aim of the conference is to discuss the sustainable development of tourism cities in the Asia-Pacific region.

WTCF city and institutional members in the Asia-Pacific region, representatives of the tourism industry, media and other parties will be invited to attend the conference. The theme of the conference will be "One Belt One Road: Tourism City Corridor and Urban Node Construction." Also, reputable experts and elites of the tourism industry will discuss and exchange ideas on popular and meaningful topics: City

and Tourism Economy, Driving Force of Cultural Tourism to the Tourism Industry, Development of MICE Tourism, Development of Cruise Tourism and so on. As the co-organizer of the conference, Penang will share its successful experience in constructing the "One Belt One Road" Tourism City Corridor and Node Cities.

This conference will also include activities such as exhibitions, tourism promotions, tourism exchange conferences, etc. These will positively boost and strengthen market development and cooperation between WTCF's members.



International Tourism Destination (City) Promotion and Marketing Training 2017 Will be Held Again in April

Common concerns of most WTCF members are the booming development of Chinese outbound tourism market in recent years, how to promote destinations and tourism resources in the Chinese tourism market, how to better serve Chinese tourists, and how to develop China's MICE tourism market.

After the success of last year's training program, WTCF is scheduled to hold a

four-day "International Tourism Destination (City) Promotion and Marketing Training" program again in Beijing from April 17th to 20th, 2017. The training program will feature renowned Chinese tourism experts, senior executives of Chinese tourism enterprises, and tourism media professionals as trainers and honored guests. During the training program, WTCF will also invite China's most renowned

tourism enterprises, online tourism platforms (OTA), and tourism media to offer members a comprehensive learning experience. Activities will include field case analyses and studies, tourist attraction surveys, and talks with tourism administrators.

For more information about the training program, please stay tune to WTCF official website.



State of the Travel Tech Nation in the Year 2040

“ We live in a fascinating – if uncertain – period for travel tech, as intermediaries, suppliers and, indeed, consumers evolve at an unstoppable rate. ”

Such progress is inevitable, for example, as consumer behaviour is influenced by mobility, connectivity and a barrage of choices.

As the number of people travelling is expected to double in the next 25 years, the role and function of travel tech will be influenced whether those that use it like or not.

So, alongside the volume of travellers in the marketplace, what other elements are likely to change?

1. Customers Will Split in Two

Two distinct groups of holidaymakers have begun to emerge: those who value low-cost holidays above all else and those who require bespoke, tailor-made experiences.

Over the next 25 years, this gap will continue to grow. As tour operators diversify their offerings to meet the different needs of their respective markets, a clear winner may come out on top. Established tour operators such as TUI and Thomas Cook in Europe, for example, will fulfil the needs of the low-cost market, while smaller, more agile operators and OTAs can offer flexible and dynamic packages. However, the dynamic packagers have their own problems...

2. There Will Be a Decline in Dynamic Packaging

For decades travel agents have offered dynamic packaging as a way of providing flexibility, ease of use and value for money.

However, OTAs and dynamic packaging tour operators will need to add considerable value to what they offer if they are going to survive.

While suppliers make it easier to book direct, hotel chains will increasingly move away from using generic hotel booking sites.

As customers start to take matters into their own hands by booking directly through a supplier's website and creating their own bespoke packages, they will no longer require the services of an OTA.

The OTA must re-evaluate their offering to provide a cost-effective service or add value if they are to survive for the next 25 years.

3. The Demise of the GDS

Once the long-standing providers of multi-functionality systems for travel agents, the role of the Global Distribution System (GDS) is changing.

An increasing number of airlines and other suppliers are now offering direct access to their stock via an API and, as reservation technology suppliers take advantage of this, there is less demand for the GDS offerings from tour operators.

4. The Survivors

Ski companies will survive as most major tour operators offering transfers to resorts still only cover about 20% of the European ski market.

Independents still have room to grow by marketing niche, tailor-made ski holidays.

While low-cost airlines continue to prosper, it makes little sense for them to cover long-haul as the marketplace is too large and volumes too small to truly compete.

Long-haul operators will also continue to survive as the “DIY trip” trend is unlikely to affect them as much.

Holidaymakers looking for all-inclusive vacations will be attracted to package deals rather than tailor-made experiences, therefore cruise operators, coach companies, adventure holidays and theme parks will also come out on top.

5. Understanding Customers

Over the next 25 years, as demand for more comprehensive data continues to increase, the software industry will produce off-the-shelf technology to suit the needs of individual suppliers and provide more efficient solutions for data analysis and reporting.

While the adoption of advanced analytics tools is not yet mainstream, key trends show the industry focus is turning away from complex data processing systems.

Instead, companies are managing and analysing data in a user-friendly and simplistic way.

As suppliers gain a deeper understanding of their own data, tailor-made analysis and reporting will continue to replace traditional methods and satisfy customer needs. 📊

(Source: tnooz)



What Hotel Industry Trends to Expect in 2017

“ It goes without saying that in 2016 hotel industry was recognized as a rapidly developing industry that raises solid investments. It is not strange taking into account the fact that over the last few years hotel industry has been regarded as one of the most attractive businesses. ”

This is due to unstable position of world economy since 2013. Hotel business is the industry that can rapidly response to external changes. Hotel industry is flexible and profitable due to chance of effective work in a down economy and maximized revenue in the time of economic growth.

Today hospitality industry attracts more and more attention of people who have experience in it and newcomers. It is possible to define major industry trends in 2017 taking into account main events in hotel industry that took place in 2016.

1. Collaboration

Collaboration means joint activities of people or companies aimed at achieving common goals. This is one of the most remarkable trends both in hotel industry and in many other industries. Collaborations mix completely different and even fantastic ideas and as a result new welcome and successful products emerge. For example, one of the latest collaborations in 2016 united world's largest professional network LinkedIn and world's leading hotel group AccorHotels.

Companies introduced new service called Business Check available for users of AccorHotels app. Business Check helps the user to find his/her business “contacts” currently staying in the same place and get in touch with them either directly by E-mail or via Inmail. Business Check supports 18 languages. Cooperation allows companies to exchange and get experience, new ideas to develop business, new partners and (the most important thing) new customers.

Moreover, due to mutual efforts in the result of collaboration new things are created; these things attract public attention and become great news hooks.

2. Companies That Are Not Focused on Hotel Business Entering Hotel Market

Due the fact that hotel business is more adaptive to external environment than any other industry it becomes highly popular among companies that are not focused directly on hotel business. Thus, International Direct Investments Fund Hermes-Sojitz that is

focused on mining projects for oil & gas and metallurgy as well as on development and food industry and implements its boutique hotel chain investment project.

The chain will include 12 exclusive hotels with 20–50 rooms located in the north of Italy. According to media reports, a well-known hotel group will manage hotels. Real estate items for construction have already been determined and will be commissioned on a step-by-step basis. An opening of a fully implemented chain is planned by the end of 2017.

At the present time, construction and design of Palazzo Gallo is almost finished. It is the first boutique hotel of the future chain that is located in Piedmont, the largest region of Italy. US lifestyle retailer West Elm and hospitality management company DDK implement one more hotel project. They launched a chain of hotels called West Elm Hotels characterized by a unique design and local color and located in five cities within the USA. An opening of the first hotel is planned by the end of 2017. The fact that new players enter hotel market shows that the interest to hotel business is growing. Such interest is caused by various factors, e.g. Increasing flow of tourists.

According to World Travel & Tourism Council, world tourist rates (arrived/departed tourists) have increased, at average, by 3.1 % advancing global economic growth forecast by 2.3 %.

3. Opening Hotels on Behalf of Well-Known Brands

The trend of opening hotels on behalf of fashion brands is still under way. Fashion has moved beyond clothes and accessories. Today fashion is a global concept that helps to introduce new products in this or that way related to well-known names and famous brands to the market. Versace, Armani, Missoni, Moschino and other well-known brands open their own hotels all over the world. A new luxury hotel from Bulgari jewelry manufacturer that will be opened in Moscow in 2019 is just one more proof. This project will be seventh hotel together with others opened under Bulgari Hotels and Resorts brand all over the world. Other brands keep up with famous jewelry company. For example, Italian fashion house Missoni plans to open four hotels located in Kuwait, Cape Town, Oman and Brazil. Now a hotel on behalf of Missoni functions in Great Britain.

4. Management Under Large Hotel Operators

World's largest hotel groups, e.g. Marriott, Accor, Hilton, Wyndham, etc. close deals and buy hotels all over the world to expand their chains. Both luxury hotels and lower class hotels attract attention of hotel operators. There are obvious benefits that a hotel gets from a famous brands. First of all, well-known name, i.e. guests are sure that they will have certain service level that local hotels cannot offer. World service quality standards offered in branded chain hotels are indicators for guests who visit a country or a city for the first time. Secondly, use of brands in hotel projects allows to attract hotel long-standing customers who visited the hotel before. It is necessary to point out that often this or that chain becomes corporate partner for companies that make the chain really profitable. Finally, in addition to evident profits cooperations with brands offer other advantages. For example, advertising, positioning, servicing, training of the personnel, concept development and design form the proven development and promotion scheme for existing brands. The scheme is set and proven after years of its implementation. This fact allows to relieve some pressure that the project manager has to deal with. Due to these advantages owners of local hotels will go on closing deals with major hotel market players in order to save and develop their business.

5. Exclusive Luxury and Customized Services

Well-known name supported by world quality standards is not enough to make a hotel project successful. Moreover, new hotel industry trends must be taken into account. A modern traveler is looking for more than just a place to sleep and spend time when free from entertainments. Now tourists tend to choose hotels with specific features that offer them unusual environment.

Such places are called boutique hotels. Boutique hotel is a small hotel with about 40-50 rooms. Staff in such hotels does its best to offer guests exclusive luxury and high-level services. Attention to such hotels from well-known chains and big companies proves that boutique hotels are really popular. For example, famous hotel group Marriott opened a chain of "boutiques" called Autograph Collection Hotels. Interior and exterior designs of each hotel are characterized by high quality, creativity, atmosphere of wealth and peculiar features. Autograph Collection Hotels are aimed at free independent travelers who prefer something unpredictable to standard hotels.



“ Today fashion is a global concept that helps to introduce new products in this or that way related to well-known names and famous brands to the market. ”

Sports elite also follows this trend. CR7 Hotel is one more interesting hotel project that proves that “boutiques” are highly popular. CR7 boutique hotel is a result of cooperation between one of Europe's largest hotel operators Pestana Group and famous football player Cristiano Ronaldo. The hotel is located in Funchal (Portugal), administrative center and largest sea port of Madeira. According to Dionisio Pestana, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Pestana Group, CR7 boutique hotel chain will expand. Thus, in 2017 Pestana CR7 hotels shall be opened in Madrid and New York. The fact that boutique hotels become more and more attractive for investors allows to conclude that customers' priorities change.

Today a hotel is more than just a place for temporary staying, for guests it is more like home and it has to look like home. World hospitality industry develops rapidly. Changes in priorities of large hotel operators concerning development of chains are evident; more and more market players from other industries emerge and democratization takes place: hotels try to attract both wealthy and middle-class guests. Due to these and other external factors new hotel industry trends are developed. We shall witness them in 2017. 🍷

(Source: traveldailynews)

“In Winter Wonderland” Interview with Mr. Olli Rehn, Minister of Economic Affairs, Finland

“ Mr. Olli Rehn, Minister of Economic Affairs, Finland, shares his opinions on tourism development in Finland. Whether spending 24 hours or 5 days on a Stop Over in Finland, travellers will be able to enjoy the breathtaking experience of nature, wellness, and beauty in the land of Santa Claus and the Northern Lights. ”



Mr. Olli Rehn, Minister of Economic Affairs, Finland

Launched in early 2016, there's now a quicker and easier way for Chinese customers to schedule their stopovers in Finland and discover two destinations during one trip. Over 12 million travelers go between Europe and China annually and now these travellers will be able to quickly and easily book a stopover for their connecting flight to or from Helsinki on the recently launched Finnair. com/stopover website.

StopOver Finland offers a wide range of suggested activities that are easy and fun to plan whether staying for 5 hours or up to 5 days. Only half an hour from the airport, Finland's capital city, Helsinki, is consistently ranked as a top ten most-livable city by the Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Livability Rankings year after year. Helsinki offers a unique coastal environment with world-class dining, captivating Art Nouveau architecture, and a design district where 200 of the city's best artists, designers, and creative agencies are based. Shopping lovers will appreciate world famous brands like Marimekko fashions and Iittala glassware. Helsinki is also home to four Michelin star restaurants, perfect for culinary enthusiasts.

Experience life as a local by immersing yourself in Finnish sauna culture. An invigorating process of immersion in alternating hot and cold baths energizes and detoxifies the body and soul. A central part of the culture, sauna is a family activity and a part of daily life as whole families visit together including children and the elderly as well as a popular place to meet friends and hold business meetings. Finnish Sauna is a perfect way for travellers to care for their wellness as part of the StopOver experience.

Visitors to Finland love the friendly and easy-going lifestyle of the country and the unique combination of sophisticated urban living and incredible natural beauty. The appreciation of the outdoors is a Finnish national pastime and travellers can easily spend a day cruising through

the Finnish archipelago made up of 315 small islands or exploring one of Finland's 38 national parks offering a taste of unspoiled rivers, forests, and lakes. Finland is a source of some of the best berries in the world with 37 edible berries growing naturally in the wild and visitors can experience picking these in the forests and marshes, including blueberries, lingonberries, raspberries, cranberries, and bilberries, all highly desired for their antioxidant properties.

Dear Minister, how do you welcome tourists in Finland?

Olli Rehn: I would like to welcome you all to Finland – “Winter Wonderland”. It might be cold outside during the winter months but the warmth of Finnish hospitality makes you feel welcome.

Besides winter, one should not forget that we have four seasons with four reasons – so Finland is worth visiting all year round.

What is the special charm of Finland?

Olli Rehn: It is Finland's contrasts.

Firstly Finland is a land of countless lakes, forests, fells and archipelagos – it is one of the most extensive and unspoiled natural environments in Europe. There is clean air to breathe and nature with many activities to experience. Finland tops the Environmental Performance Index 2016 EPI that ranks the greenest countries in the world. Secondly Finland's authentic and unique culture ranges from modern design to heavy metal music. For example Finnish design isn't just something you see – it's something you experience. It begins the moment you step off the plane at Helsinki-Vantaa airport, follows you everywhere and stays with you long after you've gone.

Helsinki, our capital, is a compact, vibrant and trendy city with nice architecture, urban events, culture and shopping, not to forget our creative and vibrant food and restaurant scene for example Restaurant

day when anyone can open a restaurant anywhere. And finally Finland is a modern and innovative country that functions well.

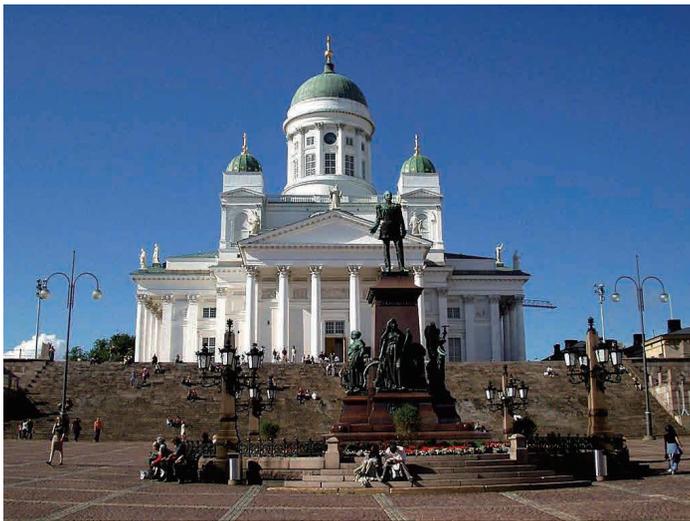
What is your personal hint to the foreign visitors in Finland? What should nobody miss when visiting your country?

Olli Rehn: I believe everyone should experience a relaxing stay at the lakeside cottage with amazing view. A cottage life is an essential part of Finnish summer and most summer activities revolve around water, such as fishing, swimming and going to the sauna. We climb on the sauna benches to relax, enjoy a bit of peace and quietness, collect our thoughts, or exchange the latest news.

How you say “Enjoy your meal!” in Finnish and what local dishes would you personally offer to a friend and visitor?

Olli Rehn: Hyvaa ruokahalua! In Finland local food is part of a high-quality tourism product. It makes us an even more attractive destination for tourists. With regard to purity Finnish food is among the tops in Europe. I would offer a Vendace, or “muikku” in Finnish. It is not only a very tasty little fish but also a central part of any visit to Saimaa area in Finnish Lakeland. Vendace is usually pan-fried or smoked. It can be eaten complete with head, bones, fins and tail since they are so soft and almost melt in the mouth. It makes for a delicious meal, best served as a snack or appetizer. Vendace roe is also very popular as a delicacy.

In addition forests are places where Finnish superfood is growing and waiting to be picked up. You will find traditional ingredients such as blueberries and wild mushrooms there. Using these ingredients I could offer creamy chanterelle soup and blueberry pie as a dessert.



In 2017 is Centenary of Finland’s Independence with various celebrations, festivals and events. What cultural highlights will the foreign visitor be able to experience in Finland during this festive year?

Olli Rehn: The theme of the centenary year is “Together”. Accordingly, the Finland 100 programme is a joint effort, built together by the Finnish people and the friends of Finland. At the moment there are already almost 3 000 official smaller and bigger Finland 100 events and the amount is increasing all the time.

Let me point out few of them.

Snow Tango World Championship, 4.2.2017. A Tango competition held at the snowy Tampere Central Square in the middle of winter.

Opening of Moomin Museum, 17.6.2017, Tampere. The world’s only Moomin Museum will open in Tampere Hall, exhibiting original art by Tove Jansson. Tampere Hall also houses an international Moomin reading library and souvenir shop.

Finnish Sauna Festival. World’s biggest sauna festival in Helsinki 8.-11.6.2017, in Turku 15.-18.6.2017 and in Jyvaskyla 10.-13.8.2017. There will be available 40 different kinds of saunas, a giant sauna for 250 people, sauna yoga, sauna pilates and a lot of good food, complemented with music by Finnish top artists.

The world’s largest village festival. A hundred days before Finland’s 100th birthday, from 25 to 27 August 2017, all of Finland will get and eat together at the world’s largest village festival. Hundreds of actors in the food sector throughout Finland are organizing special village festivals to be held in national parks, in the open air places, in garrisons, in schools and in restaurants. The “Let’s Eat Together” event aims to promote a culture of eating together and sharing – an opportunity to find new, enduring ways to enjoy our unique food culture and have meals together.

How important is tourism in Finland?

Olli Rehn: In recent years, tourism in Finland has grown more strongly and become more international at a faster pace than other sectors. It has become a nationally significant export sector and provider of employment. For several years, the annual tourism consumption has been more than 14 billion Euros, and it has possibilities of growing to even 20 billion Euros by 2025.

The number of international travelers has doubled since the year 2000, and in 2014 international travelers left revenue of 4.1 billion Euros in Finland. The value added generated by tourism amounted to 4.4 billion Euros, i.e. 2.5 % of Finland’s GDP. It is bigger than for example food and beverage industries, and forest industry.

Tourism employs 140,000 people, about 5.6 % of all employed people. In addition tourism is a regionally significant industry and it has also very significant multiplier effects on other sectors, such as construction, transport, and commerce.

The largest markets are the neighboring countries of Russia and Sweden, followed by Germany and the United Kingdom. Overnight stays by Chinese visitors increased most in 2015, 41.3 per cent compared to 2014.

Finland is an important destination for Cruise ships and at the same time on of the major production sites of Cruise ships. How important is the Cruise Business for Finland?

Olli Rehn: The Finnish maritime companies are well placed for further export growth over the next ten years thanks to the historically high level of demand for cruise ships and passenger ferries. In 2010-2014, the cluster’s turnover increased by 23% to EUR 7.9 billion and about 90% of its products and services already go for export.

The strengths of the Finnish maritime cluster are in the design of the largest cruise ships and passenger ferries, the ability of the leading companies to offer turnkey deliveries, and in Finland’s maritime network of more than 1000 subcontractors.

Furthermore about 60 % of the largest luxury cruise ships in the world are built or designed in Finland. In 2015 close to 450 000 cruiser passengers visited Finland. Its direct expenditure accounted for 627 million Euros and created jobs for close to 10 000 people. In summer 2016 240 cruise ships visited Helsinki. Most of the visitors came from Germany.

The Finnish Region of Lapland is the legendary homeland of Santa Claus and one of the most popular winter destinations in Europe. What would you recommend to a foreign visitor in Lapland?

Olli Rehn: I would recommend a dogsled or a reindeer safari followed by a dinner by camp fire and an overnight stay in a snow castle or an ice igloo. Naturally for children a visit in Santa Claus Village is a must!☺

(Source: traveldailynews)



Moscow's Artistry, History and Majesty

“ As the former capital of the Soviet Union, Moscow has undergone huge economic and political transformations. Fortunately for visitors, it's now the centre of a cultural renaissance with new design hubs, chic bars and restaurants springing to life. ”

The Russian capital never ceases to inspire, confound, disgust or delight me in some unexpected way. This time I was thrilled to discover the capital's new obsession with 'park life'. Not just summer cafes – I've always appreciated that – but also bike paths, ping-pong clubs, outdoor theatres and dance parties. It's hip to be outside and active; and the city has accommodated with gorgeous green spaces. The Park of Culture and Leisure (aka Gorky Park) has finally come into its own – along with a new generation of health-conscious, hopeful Muscovites.

Kremlin & Red Square

The very founding site of the city (and arguably, the country), the Kremlin and Red Square are still at the heart of Moscow – historically, geographically and spiritually. Feel the weight of this significance as you wander within the walls of the ancient fortress, marvel at the mind-boggling magnificence of St Basil's Cathedral, and pay your respects to the revered leader of a now-defunct state. Moscow will move you. She'll tantalise your senses, soothe your spirit, and boggle your mind; and it all starts right here.

Performing Arts

What is more thrilling than watching a nimble ballerina defy gravity, as she leaps and spins across the stage at the glittering Bolshoi Theatre? Or feeling the force of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, just a few blocks away from where it premiered more than a century ago? Or oohing and aahing as circus performers soar under the big tent? The classical performing arts in Moscow are still among the best in the world. Nowadays, even the most traditional theatres are experimenting with innovative arrangements, reviving lost favourites and hosting world premieres. Whether you appreciate the classics or experiment with the contemporary, the capital's performing arts are sure to impress.

Communist History

The remains of the Soviet state are scattered all around the city. Monuments remember fallen heroes and victorious battles, while museums attempt to analyse and synthesise the past. See Lenin and Stalin – off their pedestals – at the whimsical Art Muzeon. Step into

the Socialist Realist fantasy at VDNKh. Descend into the depths of the Soviet system at Bunker-42 Cold War Museum. And remember the millions who suffered at the Gulag History Museum. Nowadays, many fun or clever retro clubs and cafes give their guests a taste of the Soviet experience. You can even try your hand at Soviet-era arcade games (beyond Tetris).

Nightlife

People like to talk about 'the city that never sleeps,' but they should talk about Moscow. You don't have to be a high-heeled glamour girl or a deep-pocketed man about town to enjoy the capital by night. Moscow has a club or a cafe for everyone, from nostalgia-rich retro to rocked-out indie, from contemporary-cool art cafes to let-loose dance clubs. And no matter where you spend the evening, all are invited to gather in the wee hours to watch the sunrise over Moscow's golden domes and silver skyscrapers.

Kandinsky by the River

There's plenty of art to see in Moscow, but the one unmissable stop is the new wing of the Tretyakov Gallery, in a vast Soviet building on the river embankment. The gallery houses Russian 20th-century art, and the centrepiece of the collection comprises Russian avant garde works.

Feast your eyes on Kandinsky and Chagall, including little-known sets the latter artist completed in 1920 for the Moscow Jewish Theatre. Malevich's famous Black Square is also here. Anywhere in the west there would be long queues for this art; here, you'll probably have the place almost to yourself. The gallery also houses a large collection of later Socialist realist art, impressive in its own way.

Cutting-edge Theatre

Moscow has some great theatre, but most of it is off-limits to non-Russophone visitors for obvious language reasons. Gogol-Center, run by director Kirill Serebrennikov, has English subtitles for many of its performances. The modern stagings have often proved controversial in a city that still likes its art traditional, and not everything they put on here works. But the space itself is beautiful, the crowd is young and interesting, and many of the productions are innovative. Frequently in the repertoire is *An Ordinary Story*, a play by Ivan Goncharov, about a man coming to Moscow from the provinces, written more than 150 years ago and updated to the present day.

Posh but Simple Cafe Food

Dr Zhivago cafe, inside the Hotel National, just across the road from the Kremlin, is the place to go for posh but simple Russian food. The high-kitsch Socialist realist interiors are fun, and the serving staff are friendly. Open 24 hours, it has different vibes at different times: watch brawny businessmen do breakfast deals over trout and cream cheese pancakes (£5), raucous family parties eat dinner, or bleary-eyed revellers pop in for post-boozing caviar (£32.50) at 4am. The golubtsy (stuffed cabbage leaves) with crayfish (£10.50) are divine, as are the fat juicy kamchatka crab legs smeared in butter (£11).

Feast and Fun in a Historic Theme Park

VDNKh (pronounced veh-deh-en-kha), in the Ostankinsky district of the city, is a great place to spend an afternoon. Designed as a kind of Disneyland to show off the achievements of the socialist economy, each of the Soviet republics had a grand pavilion which used to hold exhibits. Now, many have shops or cafes in them (the restaurant in the Armenian pavilion is excellent). The huge grounds have been given a makeover of late and are now a pleasant place for a walk as you admire

the architecture. Don't miss the legendary Worker and Kolkhoz Woman statue outside.

Gorgeous Georgian Grub

The Soviet Union was not known as a culinary paradise but, of all the different national cuisines, Georgian was the best, and Moscow has some of the best Georgian food outside Tbilisi. Sahli is one of the top places to try it; it's not the cheapest, but worth every rouble. Non-intrusive live music on some evenings adds to the family atmosphere and cosy surroundings. Particularly worth ordering: succulent lyulya kebab (£9) and khachapuri, the indulgent Georgian cheesy bread (£6).

Maxim Gorky House Museum

The area between New Arbat and Patriarch's Ponds is stuffed with sumptuous art nouveau mansions, built for the wealthy merchant class in the years before the Russian revolution. Many are now embassies, but one you can get inside to gawp at (free of charge) is the magnificent Gorky House Museum. The house's owners fled in 1917, and the mansion was handed over to the writer to live out his last years, after he returned from exile. Marvel at the extraordinary swirling shapes in the doors, windows and railings, and the overwrought Gaudi-esque staircase inside.



Get naked - in a Good Clean Fun Way

The banya is a quintessential Russian experience – the Slavic version of a sauna. The tourist-friendly Sandunovskie baths have impressive interiors but, for a more down-to-earth experience, try the Rzhnevskie baths. The steam room is roasting hot and very humid; cool down by plunging into ice water; repeat. Men and women have separate sections. Banya etiquette is to purchase bunches of birch twigs and whip each other's bodies. Afterwards, people relax with tea, beer and snacks in the changing area. It's especially invigorating on a cold winter's day, or with a hangover. Nothing quite matches the buzzy post-banya warmth and you will have never felt so clean. You'll have to be comfortable with total nudity.

Cocktails and 'Concept Drinks'

Necking vodka out of plastic cups at a bus stop is so 1990s. Today's young Muscovites prefer to sip glasses of wine or and hipster-made cocktails. One of the best places to see this new Moscow in all its glory is Public Bar, a sharply designed subterranean cocktail haunt with low-key interiors and high-concept drinks. It's tiny, so being turned away is always possible. In which case, retire to the perfectly decent café Iskra upstairs for food or drinks.

A Night at the Opera

Moscow has four opera houses and, while you shouldn't miss the chance to see something on the stage of the Bolshoi – if you can get a ticket – the others are also worth checking out. My personal favourite is the Helikon, where tickets are not much more expensive than a cup of coffee. For a small fee, you get sharp stagings of a mixture of classic and lesser-known operas in extremely intimate surroundings. Many performances have English subtitles. The Helikon also stages 40-minute performances in the foyer, during which the singers might pour you a coffee or a beer.

Stroll on a Sunday Walk

Start with brunch at Strelka (in summer, have lunch on the terrace), before setting off on a long, lazy walk along the river embankment. Call into the Tretyakov (see above) and then walk on through Gorky park which, in recent years, has been turned from a gloomy weed-strewn mess into a fun and pleasant space, full of cafes and activities. Pop into Garazh, the museum of contemporary art run by Roman Abramovich's wife, Dasha Zhukova, then continue all the way along the river until you reach Sparrow Hills (Vorobyovy Gory), from where you can take the metro back into town.



If You Have 3 Days

Start with a stroll across Red Square, a tour of St. Basil's Cathedral, the shopping arcades of GUM, and, if you're a devoted student of Soviet history and/or embalming techniques, the Lenin Mausoleum. Then walk through Alexander Garden to reach the tourist entrance to the Kremlin. Plan on spending the better part of your first day exploring the churches, monuments, and exhibits within the grounds of this most famous of Russian fortresses. On the second day, spend the morning sightseeing and shopping on ulitsa Tverskaya. In the afternoon, head to Kitai Gorod; this neighborhood has churches and historic buildings on ulitsa Varvarka, which extends from the eastern edge of Red Square, just behind St. Basil's. Try also, toward the end of the day, to squeeze in a stroll across ploshchad Teatralnaya to see the Bolshoi and Maly theaters. If there's time, don't miss the Gulag Museum. Devote the third morning to the Tretyakov Gallery, which has the finest collection of Russian art in the country. In the afternoon stroll down the Arbat, where you can find plenty of options for haggling over Russian souvenirs.

If You Have 7 Days

On the fourth day explore ulitsa Bolshaya Nikitskaya and the surrounding neighborhood, with its enchanting mansions, and the chic and attractive neighborhood around Patriarch's Ponds. Devote the fifth day to the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, the Cathedral of Christ Our

Savior, and an exploration of some of the streets in the surrounding Kropotkinsky District. Come back the next day and walk from the Russian State Library to the Kropotkinsky District. Be sure to include the Pushkin Memorial Museum and a walk along the naberezhnaya Kremlyovskaya (the embankment of the Moskva River) in the late afternoon for the spectacular views of the cupolas and towers of the Kremlin. Depending on whether your interests tend toward the religious or the secular, you could spend your last day visiting either the New Maiden's Convent and the adjoining cemetery or Gorky Park and the Tolstoy House Estate Museum, where the legendary author of Russian classics once lived.

Moscow is one of the largest cities that may still, in the minds of many Westerners, seem to qualify as "adventure travel" thanks to the combination of mafia portrayals in Hollywood movies and the unrelenting bad press in Western media. Take it all with a huge grain of salt, and don't let it dissuade you from exploring Moscow's many cultural wonders, from top-notch exhibits at the Tretyakov Gallery to some of the world's most gorgeous subway stations replete with stained glass, marble and intricate mosaics.

1. Apply for your Russian visa three months before your arrival date. You can't apply earlier than three months for it, but you also don't want to wait until the last minute due to processing times.

2. Fly first class to Moscow on a Lufthansa or Singapore Airlines award ticket. Treat yourself to some luxury even before you get to Russia by flying Lufthansa New First Class to Moscow via Germany (67,500 United miles each way), or Singapore Airlines First Class from Houston to Moscow, using KrisFlyer miles.

3. Take the Aeroexpress to and from the airport. There's really no reason to haggle with taxi drivers, since the Aeroexpress train takes even less time between the airport and Moscow city center, and you can connect to the Metro at Paveletskaya to get to wherever you need to go (just pack light).

4. Where to Stay, Luxury: For modern luxury, stay at The Lotte Hotel Moscow. It's no wonder the hotel was named the best city hotel in Russia in the 2012 Conde Nast Traveller Readers' Choice Awards and has quickly become a favorite among both discerning business travelers and well-heeled Muscovites alike. The attention to detail and consistently high quality service at The Lotte is still a relative rarity in Moscow. And don't miss stellar French cuisine at Les Menus par Pierre Gagnaire, or a soothing Balinese massage at Mandara Spa.

5. Where to Stay, Budget: While there are Moscow hostels and rented apartments, your best bet for an almost-free stay that is still conveniently located in the center is to use loyalty points. Hyatt, Marriott, InterContinental and Radisson all have hotels in Moscow, so by earning points either with hotel stays or by signing up for the best travel credit cards, you can enjoy some free nights in one of the most expensive cities in the world.

6. Try Georgian Food: Georgian food and wine was beloved during the Soviet Union and continues to be popular in Moscow. Try hip local chain Café Khachapuri which specializes in different varieties of the namesake khachapuri, a traditional Georgian bread stuffed with melted Georgian sulguni cheese. There are plenty of other Georgian dishes on offer as well. The business lunch special on weekdays is also a good deal.



7. Take in the View: The City Space Bar, on the top floor of the Swissotel Krasnye Holmy, is your best bet for incredible 360-degree views of Moscow while sipping elegant and innovative (albeit very pricey) cocktails and excellent service. In the summer, another great place is the terrace of the Sky Lounge, located atop the Russian Academy of Sciences. Here, cocktails aren't as innovative as the City Space Bar but the food menu is far more extensive. Reserve a table here for just before sunset. Another option is the O2 Lounge atop the Ritz-Carlton Moscow, with its lovely view of Red Square and the Kremlin.

8. Go Underground: Chances are, unless you've experienced other Russian or former Soviet subway systems, you've never seen more beautiful stations. Don't miss Novoslobodskaya, Komsomolskaya, Mayakovskaya and Ploschad Revolyutsii, to name a few, whether you visit on your own or as part of a Moscow Metro Tour. Just as impressive is the subway's efficiency — you'll often wait less than a minute for the next train to come.

9. Go to Church: You'll probably visit Red Square and the Kremlin, but don't forget to buy a cathedral pass so that you can visit Uspensky Sobor, the masterpiece of Italian architect Aristotele Fioravanti and the coronation site of Russian monarchs from 1547 to 1896. Take in the beautiful frescos and icons, but note that photography isn't allowed inside.

10. Visit a Russian Versailles: Arkhangelskoe Estate takes a bit of getting to (take Metro Line 7 to Tushinskaya, then a 20-30 minute Number 151 mini-bus ride) but is well worth the trek on a beautiful summer or crisp autumn day. Take a picnic with you and enjoy walking around this Russian version of Versailles.

“ This time I was thrilled to discover the capital's new obsession with 'park life'. Not just summer cafes – I've always appreciated that – but also bike paths, ping-pong clubs, outdoor theatres and dance parties. ”

When to Go

Far and away the best time to visit Moscow is in the late spring or summer. During the months of May to September, the weather is usually balmy, with averages in the 70s. It should be said that in recent years, it has also become uncomfortably and even dangerously hot at stretches. Even so, the warm temperatures and long days are ideal for enjoying outdoor terraces at restaurants, music festivals at countryside estates, and lounging in the city's parks. From October to April, the weather is unpredictable, usually with a lot of rain and snow, making it inconvenient for touring the city on foot.

Visitor Information

Travel agents in all the major hotels offer their guests (and anyone else willing to pay their fees) various tourist services, including help in booking group or individual excursions, making a restaurant reservation, or purchasing theater or ballet tickets. The Moscow city government offers very little assistance to tourists, in part because the established Soviet travel service monopoly, Intourist, was sold off by the government during the '90s privatization spree. However, there's an official Moscow tourist office that runs a hotline you can call to ask questions and obtain information regarding museums, tour agencies, emergency services, and other tourist activities. The operators speak English, but don't count on them for a great deal of detailed information. ➤

(Source: Lonely Planet; Fodors)

Eiffel Tower to Undergo 15-year €300m Renovation

France's most iconic landmark is about to undergo a €300m (US\$320m, £260m) renovation, with officials announcing a massive 15-year project that will preserve the attraction for many decades.

The 128-year-old structure, originally designed by Gustave Eiffel as a temporary



structure for the 1889 Universal Exhibition, now attracts more than 7 million visitors a year and is a symbol of the French capital.

Works will include a full structural analysis, with plans also to replace the structure's lighting systems and elevators some of which use the tower's original workings. Improvements will also include modernisation of security technology and enhancement of visitor experience through improved facilities.

Around €20m (US\$21.4m, £17.4m) will be invested each year over a 15-year period, an increase from the €13.7m (US\$14.6m, £11.9m) spent each year on essential maintenance of the tower, which is also repainted every seven years over the course of 20 months.

The announcement coincides with Parisian officials' plans to host the 2024 Olympic Games and the 2025 World Expo.

The project will be managed by the tower's operator, the Société d'Exploitation de la Tour Eiffel. The renovation proposal will be presented to Paris council at the end of January for final approval.

London Marked a Bumper Tourism Year in 2016

London welcomed a record 14 million international visits in the first nine months of 2016 putting the city on course for another bumper tourism year, according to International Passenger Survey (IPS). From July to September 2016 there were 5.2 million overseas visits to the city, a decrease of 0.8 percent when compared to the same period in 2015 but the second highest summer period on record. Last summer visitors flocked to the opening of Buckingham Palace, David Hockney at the Royal Academy and Prudential RideLondon, which saw over 25,000 amateur

and professional cyclists take to the closed roads of the capital and Surrey.

The River Thames was also a focal point. To commemorate the 350th anniversary of the great fire of London a 100ft wooden replica of the city in 1666 was set alight. And 'Floating Dreams' by South Korean Artist Ik-Joong Kang, was another major installation on the river, as part of the 2016 Totally Thames Festival, which was enjoyed by over 2.2 million people.

Separate analysis from Forward Keys, a company that predicts the number of overseas travel agent bookings to London, forecasts that in the first three months of 2017 bookings from American tourists will go up 25% and up 40% from China, when compared to the same period in 2016.



The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: "These figures demonstrate the phenomenal draw of our city's world-class sport, culture, art, history and architecture. London remains well and truly open and welcomes visitors from every corner of the globe."

The opening of new hotels, such as the five star Great Scotland Yard Hotel and Nobu Hotel Shoreditch, as well as events marking the 125th anniversary of the publication of the first Sherlock Holmes story, 20 years since the first Harry Potter book, a world class season of American art and the Pink Floyd exhibition at the V&A, will hopefully continue to draw in tourists from all over the world this year.

The tourism industry is a major contributor to the London economy. Overall the sector contributes more than £36 billion to the capital every year and supports around 700,000 thousand jobs.

St Petersburg Won World Travel Awards Success

The Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, Taleb Rifai, has congratulated St Petersburg on its recent success at the World Travel Awards. The Russian cultural hotspot was recognised with the title of World's Leading Cultural City Destination by voters at the World Travel Awards during the Grand Final Gala Ceremony in the Maldives earlier this month. The title is in addition to that of Europe's Leading Destination, which St Petersburg won for the second year in succession in September.



Commenting on the awards, Rifai said: "I believe St Petersburg deserves both awards; the European award and the international award, particularly when it is connect to culture.

"Cultural assets are one of the most powerful advantages of St Petersburg. I believe these awards are well deserved and that St Petersburg should take pride in them."

UK Welsh Folly Farm One Step Closer to Building Lodges and Glamping Facilities

A Welsh farm attraction in Pembrokeshire is investing £10m (US\$12.7m, €11.9m) to build on-site accommodation for its guests, who will be able to choose from a variety of styles of tepees and lodges.



Folly Farm, a family-friendly adventure and animal park in Kilgetty, submitted a planning application for the Holiday Village expansion to help it keep up with current demand and add to the local tourism offer. Planning permission has been granted for a total of seven lodges, 29 wagons, 43 caravan sites and more than 35 tents, including bell tents and yurts. Folly Farm will now need to get approval from the council. Guests will have a choice of luxury glamping or staying in a cosy themed timber lodge on the 11-hectare (27-acre) site, which will be divided into a safari-themed zone, a fairground-themed zone and a farm-themed zone. There are also plans for a refreshments area, shop and games room.

The attraction currently consists of a 90-species zoo, amusement park and petting farm. Having opened in the late 1980s when the existing farm sought new revenue streams, the attraction now welcomes almost half a million visitors every year and is one of the most popular in Wales.

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