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World Tourism City Development Shifts to High Gear in the New Era of Globalization

2017 WTCF Los Angeles Fragrant Hills Tourism Summit was Grandly Held

> **September 19-20, 2017, Los Angeles – WTCF Los Angeles Fragrant Hills Tourism Summit 2017 was grandly held. The Summit, themed "Impact of Globalization on World Tourism City Development", attracted about 400 delegates from 51 countries and 87 cities. A total of 37 ministers and mayors, senior managers from international tourism organization and representatives from international organization including UNWTO and PATA were invited to attend the summit.**

The opening ceremony was hosted by Mr. Ernest Wooden Jr., Vice-Chairman of WTCF Council and President and CEO of Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board. Chen Jining, Chairman of WTCF Council and acting Mayor of Beijing; Li Jinzao, Chairman of China National Tourism Administration; Zhu Shanzhong, Executive Director of UNWTO; and Mr. Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles delivered remarks at the ceremony.

The opening ceremony was hosted by Ernest Wooden Jr., Pres. and CEO of Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board. Song Yu,

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世界旅游城市联合会
World Tourism Cities Federation

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Secretary-General of WTCF; Ms. Pia Riika Birgitta Pakarinen, Vice Mayor of Helsinki; Karl Wöber, Director of the Expert Committeeof WTCF; and Jeanie Buss, Controlling Owner and President of the Los Angeles Lakers made keynote speeches under the theme of "Globalization and its Impact on World Tourism City Development".

In his remarks, Chen Jining, Chairman of WTCF Council and Acting Mayor of Beijing, expressed his hope that a deeper understanding of globalization would be obtained through the insightful discussions during the summit. He also noted that a more open collaborative platform should be built as a result of the summit to promote a more inclusive and balanced globalization in favor of robust tourism growth worldwide.

In the opening ceremony, 19 new members were sworn into WTCF and Mrs. Raisa Banfiled, Vice-Mayor of Panama City, delivered a speech on behalf of all new members. WTCF Database and Tourism Investment Platform were launched through the form of promo releasing.

During the ceremony, the Los Angeles Declaration of World Tourism Cities Federation was unveiled. Under the theme of globalization and collaborative development of world tourism cities, the declaration makes the following six-point proposal to all its members: 1) further boost the tourism industry worldwide; 2) improve tourism service quality across the world; 3) facilitate a collaborative and balanced development of world tourism; 4) make tourism service more accessible and efficient; 5) build up security to assure tourists; 6) effectively protect tourism resources.

Three bid cities made presentation to the Council Meeting, and Helsinki was finally chosen to host the WTCF Fragrant Hills Tourism Summit 2019.

During this Summit, events such as Tourism Investment Fair, Tourism Trade Fair, Tourism Exhibition and Tourism Presentation were held by WTCF. The Tourism Investment Fair co-organized by WTCF Investment Committee and World Trade Center Los Angeles. There were 16 large financial and fund institutions in China attended this event and communicated with 32 tourism enterprises from countries including America, Spain, etc. over 40 tourism projects.

The Tourism Trade Fair attracted 17 Chinese major tourist companies attended the event and negotiated in pairs with enterprises from other countries. Those Chinese major tourist companies are large-scale tourism groups which take both online and offline business activities, including China International Travel Service Ltd.; China Travel Service Head Office Co., Ltd. and China CYTS Tours Holding Co., Ltd.; Beijing Tourism Group; Ctrip; Tuniu.com, and so on. The Fair is an opportunity for them to mutually develop new tourism hot spots and fresh ways of deep travelling. It is also a chance for them to jointly
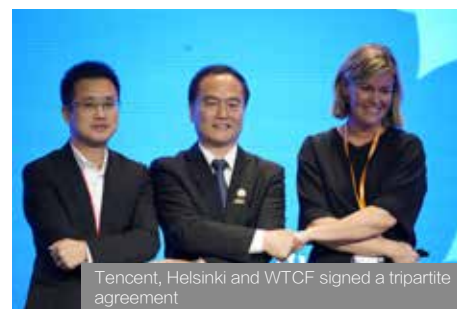

Chen Jining, Chairman of WTCF Council and Acting Mayor of Beijing and Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles

Hands over the WTCF Flag to the Qingdao, the host city of Fragrant Hills Tourism Summit 2018

Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board, Qingdao Tourism Development Committee, and Xiamen Airlines signed a tripartite agreement

Tencent, Helsinki and WTCF signed a tripartite agreement

Tourism Presentation

Helsinki won the hosting right of Fragrant Hills Tourism Summit 2019

Tourism Investment Fair

Summit Forum

seek new products, new routes, new scenics and new programs which can further developing mutual tourism market.

WTCF members such as Beijing, Los Angeles, Qingdao, Mudanjiang, Penang, Lima, Kunming, DFS, Air China, as well as the 3 bidding cities for the 2019 Summit: Seville, Helsinki and Cartagena. The city members actively promote their tourism resources and urban cultures, while the institutional members introducing their featuring products to the audiences.

WTCF will continually pushing forward cooperation between and among cities and institutions, expanding cooperative fields, improving the level of cooperation, so that to effectively promote win-win development between those parties. During the press briefings, WTCF, Helsink and Tecent signed a tripartite agreement for offering Chinese tourists with pilot services of diversified overseas intellectual tourism.

The Summit proceeded to the four themed sessions, namely "Solutions to Challenges Faced by Tourism Cities, Competitive Strengths and Brand Building of Tourism Cities, Policy Environment Promotes Tourism Investment, and China's Outbound Tourism: New Trend and Market Dynamics". The four themed forum sessions witnessed a host of discussions contributed by both academia and industry professionals, and tackled the most pertinent issues affecting tourism development. The findings of the latest development research are based on data and facts, and in return, will call attention to the core values and visions shared by the tourism industry across the world, and pave a new path for sustainable development and efficiency transformation of tourism market.

The Research Report on World Tourism City Development 2017 and UNWTO-WTCF City Tourism Performance Research was released during the 2017 Summit. The former aims to steer world tourism development along the modern, standardized, and collaborative path by analyzing individual cases of tourism cities and benchmarking evaluation criteria. The other report was jointly developed by WTCF and UNWTO base on a strategic cooperation agreement in 2016 signed by the two parties. So far, case studies conducted in 16 sample cities have been completed, which lead to the discovery of 25 profound issues that may determine the development of world tourism cities.

2017 WTCF Fragrant Hills Tourism Summit has won WTCF worldwide acclaim by exhibiting its quality service, superb leadership, and increasing influence on its members and the global tourism industry.

Member representatives group photo
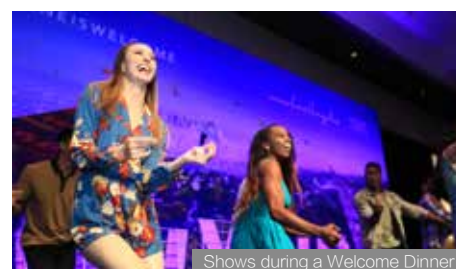

Opening Ceremony

Representative of tourism exhibition participants

Tourism Trade Fair

Press Conference

Shows during a Welcome Dinner

WTCF Jointly Hosted the "Foreign Tourism Expert Lecture" with BJTA and Beijing Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs

On August 31st, 2017, the special event "Foreign Tourism Expert Lecture" was successfully held in Beijing. The lecture was jointly hosted by the Beijing Municipal Commission of Tourism Development, Beijing Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs, and World Tourism Cities Federation. Managers from Beijing tourism departments, tourism association, hotel, and marketing leaders of Beijing's hotels, travel agencies and scenic areas, attended the event.

The lecture was hosted by Mr. Li Baochun, Executive Deputy Secretary-General of WTCF, and was taught by Ms. Esencan Terzibasoglu, Director of the Destination Management and Quality Programme at the UNWTO. During the lecture, several topics were discussed, including

"Urban Tourism and Destination Management, Destination Competitiveness Models, Destination Quality Management, and New Model of Urban Tourism Development". At the end of the lecture, she showed the audience tourism promotion videos from famous cities and patiently answered any questions.

As a part of the tourism training program launched by the Beijing Municipal Commission of Tourism Development, the lecture, one of many in the series of lectures, will promote the development of Beijing's tourism industry and become a platform for learning and exchanging for Beijing's industrial managers to acquire professional knowledge and discuss popular topics. This series of the lectures was well

received and provided new ideas and insights for managers and operators in the field of policy making, economic, and cultural problems solving. In the future, the Beijing Municipal Commission of Tourism Development will build the lecture into an international influential tourism training brand to better promote the development of Beijing tourism industry.

UNWTO – WTCF City Tourism Performance Research Workshop Launches in Tianjin

On September 2, the UNWTO – World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) City Tourism Performance Research Workshop was launched in Tianjin Meijiang Convention Center, from a joint effort of UNWTO, WTCF and Tianjin Tourism Administration. The research was conducted by a dozen of experts from Chinese cities including Beijing, Hangzhou and Macau, and from the UK, Japan and Korea. Mr. Yan Han, Deputy Secretary-General of WTCF; Ms. Esencan Terzibasoglu, UNWTO Program Director Destination Management and Quality; Dr. Roger Carter, Vice Director of the WTCF Expert Committee; and Prof. Song Rui from CASS were invited to attend the Workshop.

City tourism has been considered as a powerful engine for the local economic development of cities by creating job opportunities, increasing foreign currency revenue along with its contribution to GDP and services exports. It is essential to monitor city tourism performance and to find the areas for improvement for each individual city. To this end, UNWTO and WTCF jointly launched "City Tourism Performance Research" in 2015, an instrument with a set of criteria that can be used globally to benchmark tourism performance and streamline the decision-making process for policy makers. Over the two years, 16 cities across the world were selected for their favorable performance. With a clear objective and with a standardized survey process, which includes data collection, field research, and tourism development experience, a comprehensive list of performance criteria that can be used worldwide, which has a link to policy making, has been built. Cases of tourism performance studies in Tianjin, Beijing, Hangzhou, Tokyo, and Sapporo were discussed at this Workshop.

In a speech delivered at the Opening Ceremony, Yan Han, Deputy Secretary-General of WTCF, said that over the past 6 years, guided by its core vision of "Better City Life through Tourism", WTCF had committed itself to the sustainable development of cities, creating a better link between cities and organizations, and promoting prosperity of tourist destinations. Destination development and the tourism industry were at the top of the agenda of WTCF over the past 6 years, during which, consecutive surveys of tourism performance and researches on the evaluation standards of a city brand were conducted on a regular basis.

UNWTO and WTCF, bounded by their deep sense of duty as well as a common interest, strive to upgrade the tourism industry by conducting quality research on city tourism performance and its impact.The objective of this global research includes, but is not limited to, measuring and benchmarking the performance of cities, improving the tourism performance of individual cities, and enhancing mutual understanding of cities involved in the initiative. It is hoped that a partnership characterized by mutual learning, mutual exchanges, and cooperation between cities will be forged through this joint endeavor.

2017 Asian Tourism Industry Annual Conference Kicks off
WTCF Deputy Secretary-General Yan Han Delivers a Speech and Is Awarded Tourism Contributor of the Year

On August 31st, the "2017 Asian Tourism Industry Annual Conference", launched and hosted by 21st Century Business Herald and College of Tourism and Service Management of Nankai University, was grandly held in Shanghai. This annual conference paid close attention to the new direction and opportunities that the cooperation and development of the tourism industries of the Asian nations have under the Belt and Road Initiative. WTCF Deputy Secretary-General Yan Han delivered a keynote speech on the challenges that the tourism cities along the Belt and Road face at the main forum.

Deputy Secretary-General Yan Han thinks that the Belt and Road connects the world's most important tourism source areas and tourist destinations. According to the statistics of the China National Tourism Administration, 80% of the world's cultural heritages are found along the Silk Road, with more than 60 nations and 4.4 billion people involved. In the next five years, China will contribute 150 million visitors to the nations along the Silk Road, and attract 209,000 visitors from these countries. The tourism consumption transactions will surpass $300 billion during the process. Therefore, WTCF actively proposes that the Belt and Road has an important strategic meaning in the building of the Corridor Cities and Node Cities, and in the boosting of the world tourism development. The next task will mainly focus on increasing the building of node cities, fostering boutique tourist routes, and setting up multi-dimensional cooperation platforms. The land Silk Road is based on the building of railways and airports, and the Committee of Cruise Industry will make its own contribution to the maritime Silk Road. In addition, building the Belt and Road tourism free trade zone and fostering leading tourism enterprises is also part of building up the investment platform. When talking about innovation, Mr. Yan Han thought that we should begin with the development of the service model, tourism market standard system, and promotion of cities along the Silk Road to promote the visa facilitation, sea port construction, and the establishment of tourism reception system, which is decentralized and free enough. At the same time, we should promote the ability to provide personalized tourism services, and utilize the function of WTCF Expert Committee to study the features of Belt and Road tourism.

Mr. Yan Han was interviewed by journalist from TBO. During the interview, he analyzed the Chinese tourism from two aspects: outbound tourism and inbound tourism. He shared his opinion on the consumption structure of outbound tourists and the breakdown of the population, as well as and how to optimize and promote tourism by using big data. Under the background of the Belt and Road Initiative, he also point out how cities along the Silk Road can reveal their own characteristics when participating in the Belt and Road Initiative.

During the meeting, the 2nd Red Coral Award of Asia Tourism was unveiled. The Red Coral Award was established by the 21st Century Business Herald and College of Tourism and Service Management of Nankai University in 2016 and data supported by Diagaid Marketing Research. It objectively evaluates the performance of each segment of Asian tourism market by analyzing and studying the consumption data of Asian tourism market, organizing online surveys and interactive voting among the tourists, and collecting the opinions of experts from the tourism industry, institutional experts, investors and media groups. Mr. Yan Han was awarded the Asian Tourism Contributor of the Year.

Promoting the Globalization of World Tourism Cities
Los Angeles Declaration of WTCF

The WTCF Fragrant Hills Tourism Summit 2017 is held in Los Angeles, USA on September 19th, 2017, under the theme Impact of Globalization on World Tourism City Development. We, WTCF members from 128 cities and 65 institutions of 62 countries and regions across the world, have conducted discussions and reached consensus on a wide range of major issues concerning globalization and tourism city development. We believe that globalization is the most important trend of development in the world since the 1980s and the basic characteristic of today's world. It plays a significant role in promoting trade prosperity, investment development, personnel exchanges and technology dissemination.

Tourism is an important means for communication of human civilization, playing an irreplaceable role in promoting friendly exchanges among people of different countries and regions. The tourism industry and globalization, which are interdependent, integrated and mutually reinforcing, together form a community of common destiny. The robust development of world tourism industry plays an important role in leading and adjusting the future globalization. With its industrial chain extended to all sectors and areas in the world, the tourism industry has a strong pulling effect on global economic growth. The tourism industry is both a propeller and a beneficiary of globalization. Against the backdrop of sluggish global growth, tourism is emerging as the most dynamic source of strengths for the world economy.

Cities are both the major destinations and major tourist sources of world tourism. They carry the important function of tourism hubs. We attach high importance to the role of tourism cities as the connecting points for world tourism development and encourage tourism cities to engage in broad-based and in-depth cooperation to promote protection and utilization of tourism resources, launch more diversified and high-quality tourism products, boost the brand visibility of tourism cities, strengthen building of tourism infrastructures and service facilities, and achieve sustainable development of world tourism industry.

In keeping with the strategic focus of advancing globalization and promoting coordinated development of world tourism cities, WTCF would like to put forward the following initiatives:

1.Establishing a more prosperous world tourism market. Tourism cities should actively explore multilateral cooperation mechanisms to promote all-round opening of tourism

markets and resources in various countries and help more tourism cities become world famous tourism destinations. With the goal of building a new international architecture of win-win tourism cooperation, WTCF calls for the efforts to open up channels for tourism resources and markets, strengthen brand promotion, achieve the full circulation and effective utilization of tourism resources and factors across the world and promote coordinated development of world tourism market.

2.Improving world tourism comprehensive services. We should give attention to the role of tourism cities as the hub and pillar, strengthen the building of ecological environment, infrastructure and tourism service facilities of cities, and improve the accessibility of tourism cities in the areas of inter-continental tourism, regional tourism and in-depth tours. We should develop the broader hospitality industry such as commercial, accommodation and catering industries that can meet the diversified needs of the public and the new generation of tourists and expand the overall capacity of tourism cities. We should encourage the building of smart cities, expand the coverage of information network and promote the diversified travel modes.

3.Promoting coordinated development of world tourism. We should support the relevant cities to explore their local tourism resources and unique cultural tradition, and develop distinctive tourism products suited to diversified tourist needs. We should leverage the role of WTCF as a media platform, and step up the publicity of tourism brands. We should promote civilized tourism, abide by local laws and regulations, and respect local cultural traditions and customs. We should respect the normal life of local residents, promote the coordinated development of tourism and non-tourism, and reduce the adverse effects of excessive tourism. We should actively promote internationalization of tourism businesses and direct more capital and technology to the emerging tourism destination. We should connect to the Belt and Road Initiative and other international cooperation mechanisms, and speed up the building of tourism corridor and node cities.

4.Providing more convenient and efficient tourism services. We should encourage the relevant countries to establish management systems that meet the needs of public tourism, further relax restrictions on border entry and exit, improve the mechanisms for mutual certificate recognition and promote the facilitation of tourism visa. Tourism cities should deliver services in more commonly used languages, improve

the system of tourist signs, and promote the internationalization of tourism services. We support tourism cities to leverage the role of modern science and technology in driving tourism, and employ multiple technologies including the internet to develop tourism reception services suited to the needs of individual tourists. We should make full use of WTCF's data platform to provide services for world tourism cities to make scientific decisions.

5.Strengthening the safety and security of world tourism. To address the public concern of safety and security, we encourage relevant countries and tourism cities to actively carry out multilateral cooperation and explore the establishment of regional mechanism for tourism safety and security. We should focus on strengthening the exchange and communication of tourist safety information, and providing open and transparent safety information as well as timely and effective travel alerts to tourists. We should support the establishment of a multi-party system for

quick dispute settlement, and foster a safe and orderly inter-regional tourism environment. We should strengthen public order and tourism market management in tourism cities, set up a tourism insurance and rescue system, and improve the emergency service system of tourism cities.

6. Ensuring the effective protection of tourism resources. We should scientifically manage the tourism development and promote the sustainability of various tourism resources. We should properly solve the ecological and environmental problems caused by massive tourist flow, and encourage scientific tourism development with consideration of tourism carrying capacity. We should promote low carbon and environmentally friendly travel mode with public transport as the main body. We should adopt the development model of sharing economy, vigorously consolidate idle resources in cities, and strive to enhance the comprehensive utilization of urban tourism resources.

The Big Data Revolution in Tourism

" **What real and tangible advantages does Big Data brings for tourism? What are the business opportunities offered by this technology?** "

As a first consequence, digital transformation and technological advances can radically change the way people consume and get informed. A digital scenario that brings with it new forms of business management. To ensure their survival, all businesses are being forced to adapt to the online environment.

Tourism sector is not an exception. The data analysis benefits tourism in all its areas, exploiting its possibilities and presenting new business opportunities.

The implementation of Big Data in tourism means having real-time information about users, their movements and their preferences.

Information about the movement of individual travelers, their buying preferences, their aspirations... these data, if correctly treated, represents a huge advantage for companies in the tourism sector which now have the opportunity to define and optimize their strategies to increase their sales.

The online activity of tourists provides macro data that delivers a better picture of their behavior. Because of that, studies based on surveys or interviews with experts, lacking the necessary objectivity to get conclusive answers on the real situation of tourism now belong in the past. In particular, this technology allows to gather some parameters which make possible to improve the services, the decision making process and the management of tourism businesses.

Parameters such as the number of visitors, as well as where they come from; the average time people stay according to their nationalities; what are the most common trips in the cities; places preferred by tourists to spend the night; or average expenditure.

What Does Big Data Contribute to Tourism?

Compared to traditional methods, data analytics provides six important advantages.

Reliability

The data extracted with the Big Data application are based on actual consumer actions and not on data obtained from surveys, predictions or projections. Therefore, the results obtained are objective, not valuations subjected to different interpretations.

Representation

The more sources of data collection, the better the sample representation is. A sampling frame based on data accurately gathered which increases considerably compared to that extracted from conventional research studies.

Information detail and segmentation capacity

By handling the contrasted data, the information obtained is easily readable and can be converted into more accurate and effective actions which allows optimizing the results of tourism management by knowing in detail what the customer wants.

Thanks to Big Data, companies know the actual volume of customers, their habits and their preferences and, based on it, they can predict, for example, the price that best suits each customer and improve their experience.

Hybridization of data with other current or future sources

Both current or future data can be combined with other sources of information such as the social media data or public data. Merging the obtained data with other variables leads to new conclusions.

For example, the possibility of having not only an attendance record but an attendance record sorted by time, place of origin and average expenditure.

New flows of information

Big Data emerges as a new source of data extraction through technologies that the tourist provides himself (such as card payment or the connection of his mobile device).

In addition, the rise of portable technology and the boom of smartphone apps allows to rate and share opinions so the chances of obtaining a much larger sampling frame increases significantly.

Chances of new business opportunities

Companies can compare their internal data with the results obtained by applying the Big Data, this allows to determine if the offers are adjusting to the tourists' demands and to have the necessary information to redefine them in case they're not adjusting. This way, the opportunity to innovate, generate new lines of business and to customize the experience of tourists emerges.

Challenges to Solve

The combination of traditional architectures with Big Data management architectures. The gap between the amount of professionals with Big Data knowledge and the large amount of companies dedicated to the tourism sector.

Set the data privacy level of the client, as well as the responsible use of the data to ensure the client to benefit without violating their privacy.

Through Big Data, tourism companies will develop a serious, costly, ambitious and highly technological customer understanding work. The large volumes of data will allow the implementation of highly useful predictive models to improve the efficiency of customer service and the products we all demand.

In this way, distribution channels will gradually move into the hands of purely technological companies, these are the only companies capable of facing huge investments in the development of Big Data analytics.

Chinese Tourism: Travel Tech to Shape the Sector

The rapid development of modern technology
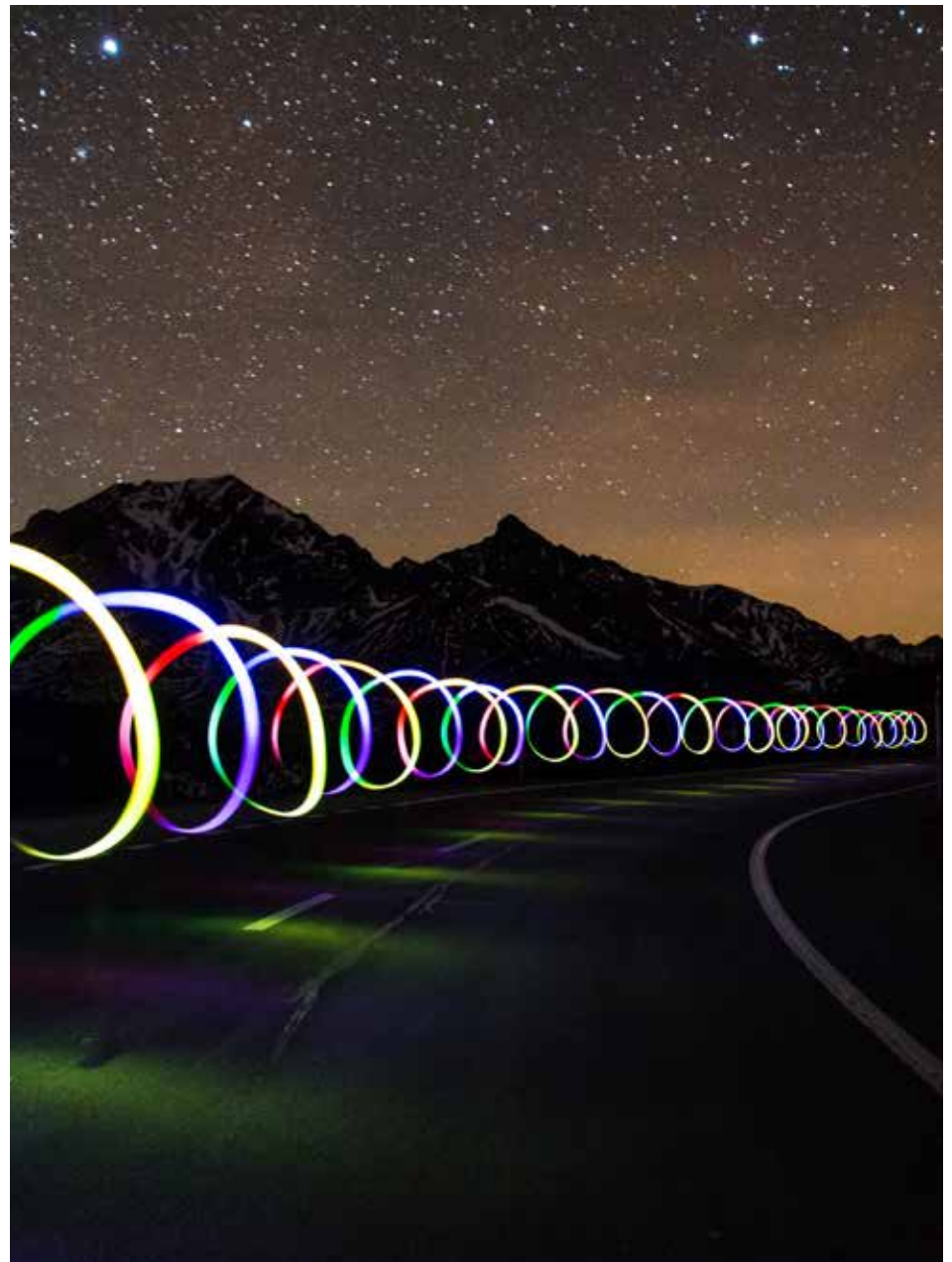
introduces smartness and convenience to all aspects of our modern life and environment, including the efficient operations of private businesses, government/non-government organizations alike.

With travel technologies being maximized and embedded in planned developmental goals of the Chinese government to grow and revolutionize Chinese tourism industry, the standard of living and quality of life and services is bound to improve.

The total revenue of the travel and tourism industry in China is currently estimated to be valued at a whopping 3 trillion Yuan. As the sector continues to flourish the country is strategically positioned to become the world's second largest tourism economy after the United States of America.

The China National Tourism Administration released a five year roadmap of Chinese tourism.

The initiative intends to equip all 4A and 5A rated scenic spots with online booking service, electronic tour guides, and free Wi-Fi to all tourists by the year 2020.

Through the use and proper application of information and digital travel technologies, popular tourist destinations in China will be able to address traveler's needs, provide better services with real time information, and enhance the overall experience of thrill seekers and visitors.

Hot spots and cities through ICT will become accessible and enjoyable for tourists and residents alike.

Technology will be used as an innovative tool to boost interconnectivity of transport, leisure and entertainment services using data collation and coordination.

Despite the unavailability of sufficient information about tourist services online, itineraries online, the Chinese tourism industry is expected to entertain 6.7 billion visits by 2020 according to Xue Yaping, the spokesperson of the association. Hence the need for quick innovation and improvement to the internet side of things in this core sector of the economy.

The aim is to create a seamless and personalized experience for tourists from the beginning to the end of their stay. This will also encourage small and big tourism service providers like tour operators, sightseeing service providers, and hotels that have been reluctant to establish a digital foot print or online presence for their business to explore those options to their benefit.

The advent of travel technologies has generated a series of new patterns in the dynamics of production and consumption of tourism, therefore increasing competition existing in the sector, prompting the need for service providers to diversify the way they promote their offers using this tool.

This plan will set in motion a realistic target of increasing tourism expenditure by at least 20 percent by 2020.

Tourism Tech Changed the Way We Travel

Technology and, more specifically, Internet, are changing the way tourism is organized and commercialized. On the one hand, users do not travel the same way they did a few years ago because they now have many more possibilities. And, on the other, the companies of the sector and even the tourist destinations themselves are immersed in full digital adaptation.

User's digitalization has managed to implement the transformation of a business

model. Tourism technology is now essential for any travel company.

The customer is much more demanding and has a more experienced and digital profile. The target is changing and the tourist has gone from being a passive subject that needs a service to a key piece immensely involved in the process.

Collaborative economy, travel apps, virtual tour guides... Tourism is implementing a great quantity of apps.

How are the travelers themselves taking advantage of these possibilities? Are companies in the sector facing this challenge well? What is the strategy of new initiatives born on the Internet? And finally, how are future prospects in the field of tourism presented?

Tourism Technology - The Most Drastic Changes

There is no doubt that the tourism sector has taken a 180 degrees turn in recent years. Gone are the analogous processes loaded with intermediaries. What have been the most significant changes?

One of the great advantages of the Internet is the reduction of costs. With fewer intermediaries, processes are streamlined and companies can save time and expense, which translates into cheaper deals for the tourist.

In fact, low cost tourism is one of the most powerful trends and business focused especially on millennial generation.

Generally, millennial's profile is that of a young man with limited resources but with extensive knowledge on ICTs and the Internet, forcing companies to offer new options and more competitive prices.

The user wants to be listened to and the companies in the sector can get a lot of feedback from the customer by using tourism technology.

Without going any further, they can learn firsthand the needs of users and use this information to improve their services.

But not only is the internal opinion of the tourists relevant, but also externally. Hotels, transportation companies or price comparators care a lot about what their customers say about them on the Internet, whether in forums, in the comments section of their own websites or in social networks.

On the Internet, geographical barriers disappear. This allows tourism companies to enter foreign markets and reach more customers. Opportunities, therefore, multiply in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world.

Another great advantage is the possibility of forging alliances with other international companies. Strength lies in unity and in a sector as competitive and changing as tourism, being strong is fundamental.

The Era of the Collaborative Economy

The new members of the tourism sector are collaborative management businesses using tourism technology – whether they are related to transportation (such as users sharing their car for trips), accommodation (private accommodation in marketplaces such as Airbnb) or shopping (buying or renting tourist items on digital platforms such as Wallapop).

There is a big discussion surrounding this new business model. On the one hand, it has revitalized the sector by increasing tourist influx but, on the other hand, it can be a threat for the traditional companies. Time will eventually respond to this controversy.

The advance of tourism technology makes companies experience major changes in a limited time. What is obvious is that user's needs are changing and companies must continue to adapt to them. Tourists are more active, social and digital, and only innovative ideas that fit their needs will survive.

(Source: tourism-review)

10 Years On, Airlines Begin to See the Benefits of Inflight WiFi

> **Over 70 airlines worldwide offer this service in most regions globally. JetBlue CIO said its FlyFi inflight connectivity product has proven extremely popular, boosting the airline's Net Promoter Score.**

Timing is everything.

Perhaps it's no coincidence that the 10th anniversary of the iPhone and the 10th anniversary of the introduction of inflight connectivity, more commonly known as inflight wifi, somewhat overlap.

Technically, the first powerful inflight wifi option, Connexion by Boeing, which was officially launched in April of 2000, pre-dates the smartphone and today's more commonly available IFC services.

Promising though the Connexion program was, it had to contend with the strains of post-9/11 airline economic reality.

The airframe manufacturer abandoned the visionary project in August of 2006.

At the time, Boeing chairman, president and CEO, Jim McNerney said:"Over the last six years, we have invested substantial time, resources and technology in Connexion by Boeing. Regrettably, the market for this service has not materialized as had been expected."

Of course, it was only one year later that the iPhone first hit the market. One could wonder what might have been if only Steve Jobs had made a quick call to Seattle.

What we mark as the anniversary of IFC, therefore, is not so much its birthday as

its rebirth in 2006. Though the service re-emerged in a much more hospitable digital landscape, it has been touch and go, and is only now properly getting off the ground. And consumer technology habits can take full credit.

As the capabilities of smartphones have improved, our expectations of being connected at all times, able to access an endless stream of information and entertainment in the palm of our hands, has intensified.

Airlines around the world are recognising that passengers want to be connected at all times, including at 40,000 feet, and are finding

ways to work around the costs of In-Flight Connectivity (IFC) to reap the goodwill and revenue benefits.

Speaking at the Aviation Festival in London last week, JetBlue CIO, Eash Sundaram, said that the airline's popular high-speed FlyFi inflight connectivity product has proven extremely popular, boosting the airline's Net Promoter Score.

"The philosophy was: when you go home you have wifi, and you go to your hotel and have Wi-Fi, why is the airplane different? When you take a step back, we've had access to wifi on our cellphones for a few years, and we think that it's part of our customers' everyday experience."Sundaram said customer feedback on the WiFi service onboard has been very positive, and that the demand is high, with as many as 250 devices connected and streaming content on a high-density A321 aircraft.

Since JetBlue seats 200 passengers on their newest, large capacity A321s, that would imply that many passengers connect more than one device at a time.

The airline's FlyFi product, powered by Viasat, can keep up with that demand.

Of course, JetBlue offers customers FlyFi for free, and not all airlines do that. Some have opted for revenue sharing programs with suppliers which help off-set costs, and others are charging nominal fees which serve more to limit demand on available bandwidth than they do to pay-off the costs of the system.

Those airlines offering free wifi are finding other ways to offset costs, including advertising and brand partnerships. JetBlue established a number of partnerships which, through added content, make its FlyFi more attractive to users, including with Amazon Prime.

During his talk at the Aviation Festival, Sundaram said of this deal:"Our partnership with Amazon has been very successful. We started with content streaming and extended into shopping. I think it's a great opportunity.. it's not so much about charging but about fining a way to fund [WiFi] but keep it as part of the passenger experience."

Routehappy's annual report on IFC, published in January of this year, focused on progress over the past ten years. The statistics were promising:

· 70+ airlines worldwide offer inflight wifi in most regions of the globe, with several large global airlines preparing for full or near full rollouts.

· 39% of available seat miles (ASM) worldwide now offer at least a chance of wifi.

· US airlines offer at least a chance of wifi on 83% of their ASMs.

· Non-US airlines offer at least a chance of wifi on 28% of their ASMs.

Airline IFC news is now moving at such a pace that the figures presented by Routehappy in January can already be revised upward.

For example, Icelandair, Scoot, Virgin America and JetBlue have now equipped 100% of their fleet for IFC, with service availability limited only by coverage area; and more international carriers are offering Wi-Fi services onboard both long-haul and domestic flights.

In the announcement accompanying the annual report, Robert Albert, CEO of Routehappy described progress on IFC as: "Quite extraordinary considering less than a decade ago it wasn't even possible.

Inflight wifi is no longer just for early adopters — just look at the number of people on your next flight using WiFi."

Adoption is high even in Europe, where IFC is not as common as the US. Norwegian, which was first to offer free wifi on all of its continental flights, has reported very high adoption rates.

In a special report published last year, marking the 5th anniversary of the service, the airline reported that over 19 million passengers had logged in to the service in-flight since 2011, with over 500 terabytes of data consumed. On average, 18,000 passengers log-in to Norwegian's wifi every day.

While the hurdles for airline IFC installation are lower than they were for the unfortunately timed Connexion by Boeing service, the costs are still significant.

While infrastructure for global connectivity is advancing, but coverage areas still vary between suppliers, as do data capacity and data costs.

Routehappy analyst Jason Rabinowitz, believes that the economies of scale are beginning to kick-in.

As he said: "Lower bandwidth and equipment costs are the key to making WiFi more readily available and sustainable for airlines. Costs have been trending down for years and this has enabled dozens of airlines to begin offering wifi across their fleets."

(Source: Tnooz)
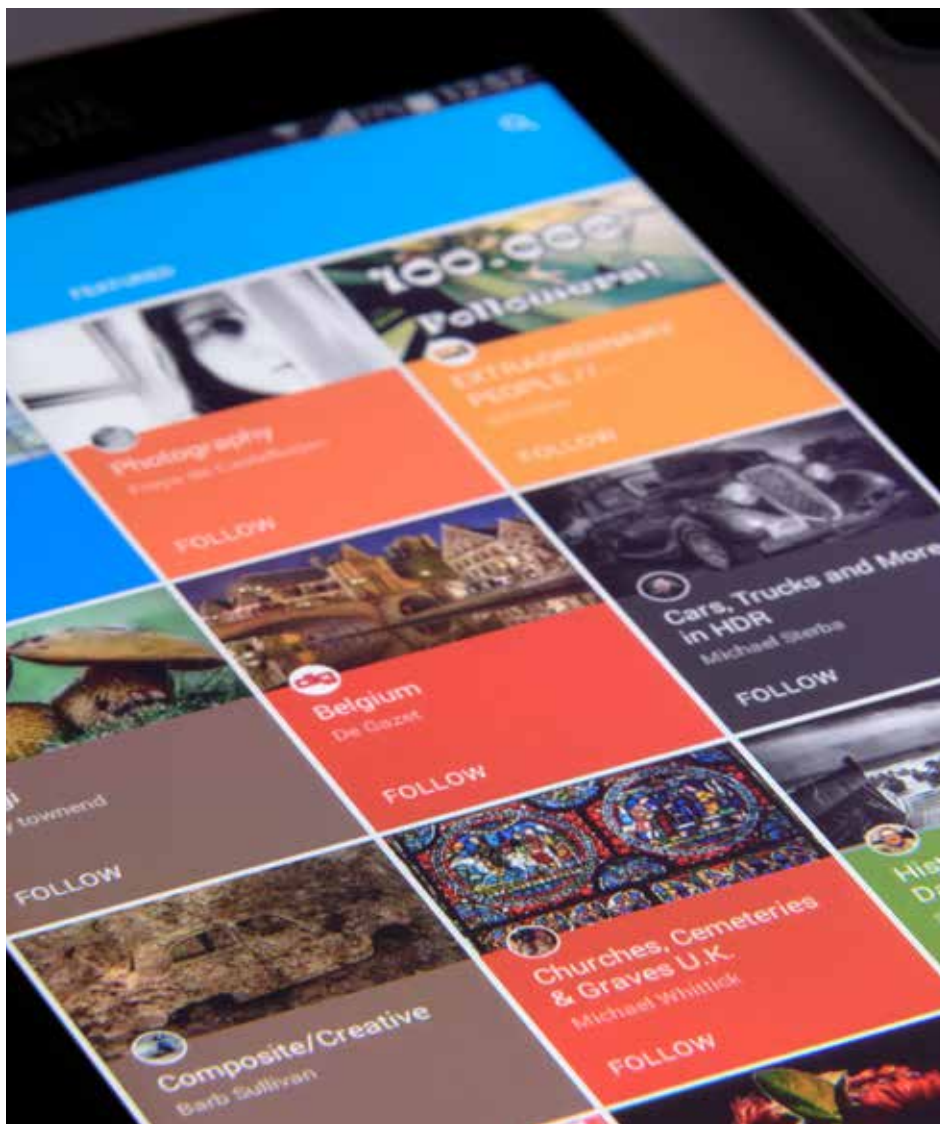
Mobike's CEO Wang Xiaofeng with His True Vision

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On August 30, Mobike announced the entry into Malaysia, Thailand, Japan, Italy, and other first 65 overseas countries. Mobike's CEO Wang Xiaofeng said in an interview that the starting point of the creation of Mount Pope is not limited to domestic, but to the world's big cities.

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Mobike's CEO Wang Xiaofeng

Mobike means "free to move the bikes". Its English name "Mobike" transliteration combined with the English word "mobile" and "bike". Wang Xiaofeng said, "This year may be a bit arrogant, but you cannot look down on our lofty ideals.

In the second half of 2015, Mobike hired former general manager of Uber Shanghai, Wang Xiaofeng as the CEO. Since then, Wang Xiaofeng became the co-founder of

this little-known entrepreneurial company, together with the founders Hu Weiwei and CTO Xia Yiping, they formed Mobike's core management.

This is over forty years old Wang Xiaofeng's first adventure. Wang Xiaofeng has publicly said that in Mobike as CEO, his monthly salary was only 6,000 yuan. For a professional Wang Xiaofeng, to join Mobike, it is more like to open a big adventure.

On April 22, 2016 World Earth Day, Mobike released the first smart bike in Shanghai. Only four months later, Mobike began to register in Singapore.

In the domestic "war situation" stalemate, Wang Xiaofeng led the young company to choose to continue "native + overseas" two-lane "combat." Wang Xiaofeng mouthed "lofty ideals" to guide them to continue to open up a new overseas "battlefields", that may

be some kind of I do not know the depth of the arrogance, or some kind of duty-bound insistence.

Expansion

For Wang Xiaofeng, the scale of the expansion seems into almost a bit surprising speed. Throughout the year 2016, since the release of the first Mobike bike in Shanghai in April, Mobike has entered a total of nine cities. And in 2017, only in the first 7 months, about 200 days, Mobike "captured" the 170140 city.

"Very difficult." Wang Xiaofeng said. Mobike's expansion rate, whether compared with traditional companies or Internet companies, is not easy. Even with his former owner Uber, there was no fast than Mobike.

In October 2015, Mobike announced the completion of the first round of financing. August 2016 the B round, June 2017 E round. Less than 1 year, Mobike completed before and after the 7 rounds of financing. Since the establishment, the cumulative amount of financing has exceeded 1 billion US dollars.

This two years, Wang Xiaofeng began to be frequently invited to participate in various industry conferences, high-end forums. Unless necessary, he rarely dressed in suits. Each time, Wang Xiaofeng always wears Mobike logo T-shirt or Polo shirt, plus the Internet company CEO's "standard" - jeans and sports shoes. He still thinks he is an entrepreneur, "We are still staying in the economy hotel, and we are still in a hard and simple entrepreneurial company style."

Competition

Wang Xiaofeng disagrees the "money burn" argument. In his view, the bicycle sharing industry with less than 10% of the penetration rate is still at a low level. At this stage of the promotion and delivery, more is to cultivate the user habits.

Mobike and ofo are firmly in the first echelon in this shared cycling rally. Mobile Internet big data monitoring platform - Tordata released "2017 Q2 China shared bicycle industry development analysis report" shows that the second quarter Mobike and ofo two shared bike company's new user industry accounted for nearly 80%.

Mr. Wang Xiaofeng, the former general manager of Uber Shanghai, did not think that the competition for the shared bicycle industry was homogeneous, and that "intelligence" was the main keyword when he spoke about Mobike. "Do you say that a PHS is the same as a smartphone? It looks like a person is holding a cell phone, but it is not the same."

Mobike and Uber, the two Internet companies in their respective areas have been actively labeled as their own "technology company" label. Wang Xiaofeng said Mobike's positioning is a big data technology company, rather than a simple bike rental company or manufacturing company.

He said Mobike, like some other Internet companies in the past, is a replica of Silicon Valley in China. In the United States, you cannot find the Mobike originator, which is a "rare Chinese original service" model.

A Sense of Crisis

Wang Xiaofeng feels the sense of crisis, even as a young entrepreneurial company who could avoid profit pressure. To a large extent, 2016 can be defined as the first year of sharing bicycles. Into 2017, more and more incoming challenges have entered into the industry of shared bicycles

According to the incomplete statistics from the Ministry of Transport, as of July this year, the country shared a total of nearly 70 bicycle operating companies, the cumulative delivery of more than 16 million vehicles. Wang Xiaofeng also lamented, "The whole industry development and rise too fast. We all need time to learn, all need time to think."

Challenges and Opportunities

Delivery and scheduling, after all, is to share the issue of cycling. On August 3, the Ministry of Transport issued the Guiding Opinions on Encouraging and Regulating the Development of Internet Rental Bicycles (hereinafter referred to as the "Guidance Opinions"), and it was clear that the vehicle delivery mechanism should be established based on the characteristics of the city and the actual situation. Soon, Guangzhou, Nanjing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and other cities began to halt the sharing of bicycles new vehicles placement.

Users, industry and city managers are all not alone. Eliminating the negative effects of shared cycling growth need to be work together by all three areas. Wang Xiaofeng said that this is the normal development of the challenges encountered, and the core issue is how to make better use of technology and data, and how to better operate with different agencies.

This is the challenge for Wang Xiaofeng now, but also the industry's opportunities. For urban managers, sharing the bicycle industry precipitation large data in the decision-making process is undoubtedly a reference value.

In April, Mobike announced the establishment of Urban Travel Open Research Institute, jointly by 11 ministries and commissions,

research institutes and NGOs. Wang Xiaofeng believes that shared bicycle accumulated data for urban planning to play a healthy and positive role. One of the possible scenarios is that urban managers plan to build bike lanes by analyzing time-sharing riding data on different roads, including the number of trips and the average speed.

A Sense of Accomplishment

In the end, what is Wang Xiaofeng's "lofty ideals"?

In early June, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) awarded Mobike the new "Climate Trader" title and awarded the company the "Sustainable Urban Transport Special Award". Wang Xiaofeng is pleased that Mobike's contribution to the city's low-carbon travel has been recognized.

Wang Xiaofeng said that two or three years ago, several founders came together to think about if you want to set up a business, which must help solve the traffic congestion and air pollution - every big city in China cannot escape the two problems.

They were eager to know, "is there anything other than making money?"

This year is the 200th anniversary of the invention of bicycles. On August 29, Mobike and the United Nations Environment Program, UN-HABITAT, the World Resources Institute and other five international organizations and agencies jointly launched the "917 World Riding Day". The first riding day theme is "riding change city".

"Recognized by the public" is very important for Wang Xiaofeng, which is different from being recognized by the capital. "Recognized by the public" means that a certain social value is recognized, and he enjoyed the process. ❯

(Source: haiwainet)

The Complete Guide To Andorra

> **It's tiny, sandwiched between France and Spain, and its football team come to Wembley this week. But this miniature gem should never be underestimated.**

Height of Success?

For this strange geopolitical anomaly, squeezed in the high Pyrenees between France and Spain, success is unlikely on the football field; Andorra's entire population of about 85,000 would not even fill Wembley Stadium, where the national team play England in a World Cup qualifier on Wednesday.

The plucky Pyreneans have managed only a single goal so far in the tournament, and they currently sit at the very bottom of Group 6, with no points and a -13 goal difference. But as an example of how much interest and adventure can be packed into a mountainous co-principality of only 181 square miles, Andorra is supreme.

The landscape basically comprises three long, narrow valleys: Eastern Valira (including Canillo and Encamp), Northern Valira (La Massana and Ordino) and Gran Valira (Andorra la Vella, Sant Julià de Lòria and Escaldes-Engordany).

Andorra la Vella is the diminutive capital. The tiny nation is administered from here, but bizarrely its joint heads of state are the President of France and the bishop of Urgell, a small, overlooked town in Spain.

Seclusion from the rest of the world has left a legacy of well-preserved Romanesque architecture in Andorra, of solid medieval churches and monuments hewn from mottled-brown Pyrenean granite and roofed in black slate.

A Brief History?

The existence of the Basque Andosinos tribe was noted by the ancient Greeks. At the turn of the ninth century, Charlemagne allegedly granted a charter to their descendants in return for fighting off the Moors, and after a few centuries of feudal disputes over the territory between the neighbouring French and Spaniards, a co-principality agreement was signed in 1278.

Today, though, the Principality of the Valleys of Andorra (to give it its full title) is now a sovereign democracy, with Catalan the official language. Yet it remains outside the EU, which has long given it advantages as a glorified duty-free supermarket.

Where do I Begin?

Pal: a sleepy medieval village, whose church, Sant Climent de Pal, dates from the late 11th century.

The main reason to come here, though, is the Romanesque Andorra Interpretation Centre in Pal. It opens 9.30am–1.30pm and 3pm–6.30pm Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–2pm on Sundays, admission free.

Besides the exhibits, this is also the place to sign up for an audio-guided bus excursion covering one of the three valleys.

Next, you could hike or bus the Iron Route around the town of Ordino. This is a comprehensive, carefully constructed tour that covers the history and geography of Andorra as much as it does mining and metalworking.

The trip ends at the Rossell Forge, a 19th-century workshop turned interpretative centre; €3, open 9.30am-1.30pm and 3pm-6.30pm Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-2pm on Sundays.

Social and architectural history buffs should take the Rural Heritage Route. The Casa Cristo in Encamp, Casa Rull in Sispony and Casa Areny-Plandolit in Ordino reflect Andorran life during the 18th to the early 20th century, from the austere to the country's only aristocrats; a Three Museum passport (€6) will get you into all of them.

Going Green?

Andorra's industrial past hardly touched the wild Pyrenean landscape, and recent development has been primarily limited to the valley floors. Get out into the mountains proper on one of the newly instated "Ecotourist" hiking tours.

In the Coma Pedrosa Nature Park, guides offer two easy two-hour rambles to introduce the local flora and fauna, while keen (and properly equipped) hikers can sign up for a day trip to the summit of Coma Pedrosa peak (2,942m), the highest in Andorra.

Pick up an "Ecotourism Trails" leaflet at any tourist office for information on trek departures; similar walks are organised in the glacial Incles Valley, the lush Sorteny Valley,

and the extensive Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley, which was recently designated a World Heritage Site by Unesco.

Experienced trekkers will find a wealth of walking maps and guidebooks in the local tourist offices, covering an extensive network of walking trails up and around Andorra's 65 peaks, including "Grandes Routes" that cross into France and Spain.

This little country boasts close on 30 hikers' refuges, most unmanned and sleeping somewhere between five and 15 people on a "first come" basis; avoid the larger Compedrosa and the Cortals de Sispony in La Massana, the L'Illa in Encamp and the Juclar at Canillo if you prefer not to sleep in close proximity to other hikers.

Up the Adrenalin?

Andorra's 15-odd vias ferratas – mountainous trails with fixed metalwork to help you across the trickier stretches – are well maintained, designed for a range of abilities and free.

A large proportion of the routes are located around Canillo, where you can take an introductory lesson at the Grandvalira resort (00 376 801 074: grandval ira.com) for €30, then rent the necessary equipment (helmet, harness and lanyard) to explore the easier routes at your own pace.

More experienced climbers have a wide choice of sport routes and peak summits; contact Naturai Aventura for guided itineraries. Experiencia en Muntanya offers week-long programmes that include canyoning, via ferrata, climbing and treetop circuits, from €53 to €113.Grandvalira ski resort has a decent, mostly downhill bike park, but the Vallnord resort bike park at Pal is a destination in its own right.

There are cross-country and downhill trails to suit all abilities, a free bike trials park, north-shore inspired Wood Park, BMX track and a giant supercross. Lift passes cost €21, bike school from €30 and bike hire from €20, but the real bargain is the resort accommodation: three nights in an eight-person apartment costs just €27.75 per person, less than €10 a night.

Both ski resorts offer a vast range of activities for children. In Grandvalira's family park at Canillo, free activities include mini-golf, bouldering and a giant playground; pony treks, electric buggies, canoeing and trampolining cost between €2.50 and €5 a pop, with husky-drawn wheeled-trike rides – snowless mushing, if you will – at €15. Vallnord boasts a mountain bike park for three- to 10-year-olds at Pal, along with a downhill kart track, quad bikes and zip lines.

Brave the strain on your wallet for adventure in miniature and on tap at the so-called "eco theme park" Naturlandia (00 376 844 962; naturlandia.ad), close to the southern border. There's the obligatory adventure playground, horse riding, archery, paintball, trekking – and the Tobo Tronc, the main attraction, the longest tobogganu o ride in the world, at 5.2 kilometres.

Forget old-fashioned dodgy, white tubes; this is more like a rollercoaster track, whipping through the Rabassa forest. Admission is €9 for adults, €5.50 for children.

Or get into nature proper: the Adventure Company runs week-long family adventure holidays in Andorra from £729pp; based in little Soldeu, participants hike Pic Maia, bike the Iron Route and raft on whitewater.

Can I Rest Yet?

Finish up at Caldea , a watery theme park which harnesses the region's sulphur-rich hot springs.

It is housed inside a glass structure in the centre of Andorra la Vella. Avoid the hordes marauding through the mock "Indo-Roman" caves and outdoor thermal river by paying an extra €50 on top of the €33 general admission rates: not cheap, but a passport to a quiet world of grapefruit baths and rooftop hot-tubs. Quieter still is the Sport Wellness Mountain Spa in Soldeu. You don't have to be a resident of the neighbouring five-star hotel to enjoy the four floors of water and pampering; admission is a very reasonable €27.Hit the family-friendly ski slopes for winter fun .

Pick up a bargain

Blizzards start to bombard the high Pyrenees in earnest in December, and the country turns into a giant ski resort. Well, two, officially: busy Grand Valira, incorporating the villages and lifts of Pas de la Casa, Soldeu, El Tarter, Canillo and Encamp; and quieter Vallnord, to the west, which includes Pal, Arinsal and remote Arcalis.

The latter is worth the trip on a powder day, with some of the best free-riding on offer in the Pyrenees.

Well-tuned to the needs of beginners and younger customers, with plenty of mellow terrain and a wide assortment of terrain parks, the Andorran resorts are inexpensive and not busy outside the main European holidays.Inghams is currently offering a week in a self-catering apartment in Pas de la Casa next season from £230, flights and transfers included.

Andorra has taken on a self-appointed role as the duty-free shop of Europe. Close to the borders, the roads are dotted with barns advertising alcohol, cigarettes and that third duty-free staple, cured meats.

Head to Avinguda Meritxell in Andorra la Vella for a selection of perfumeries, boutiques, jewellers and electronic shops; imagine a large airport shopping area, outdoors, and you'll have an idea of what to expect.Escaldes-Engordany and Pas de la Casa also have large shopping centres; and Pas de la Casa is a good spot to pick up discounted streetwear and snowbrands.

Traveller's Guide

Getting there

Andorra has no airport, but there are several options in both France and Spain. Barcelona is the best served, with up to five buses a day during winter; prices start at €48 return. Barcelona is also the most sensible route during the winter for those planning to rent a car, as, coming from the south rather than crossing the Pyrenees from the north, the roads are usually clearer. Girona is also served by bus during the winter months.

The main airports in France are Toulouse and Perpignan. The approach from Toulouse is faster (around two hours by road) than from Perpignan, but the latter is more scenic. Travelling by rail is the most agreeable way to reach Andorra, though it takes a bit of planning.

Begin by reaching Paris, for example by Eurostar from London St Pancras. From the Gare d'Austerlitz in the French capital, you take the train via Toulouse to L'Hospitalet, just beside the Andorra border. There is a direct train from Paris at about 10pm to L'Hospitalet, arriving at 7.20 the following morning.

From L'Hospitalet, connecting buses run to Pas de la Casa, Soldeu, Encamp, or Andorra la Vella. You can also approach Andorra from Barcelona to La Seu d'Urgell, again with connecting buses, or from Perpignan; change at Villefranche for the Petit Train Jaune to Latour-de-Carol.

Getting around

The roads are good, if winding. Renting a car may be the easiest way to explore except in the towns, particularly the capital, in which the one-way systems and narrow streets are far better navigated by foot. The local bus service, the Clipol , is pretty comprehensive. Eight routes depart Andorra la Vella from 7am–9.30pm daily.

There are also free buses connecting the villages within the umbrella resorts of Grandvalira and Vallnord. ❯

(Source: Independent.co.uk)

Dubai Expects 20 Million Visitors by 2020

Travel and tourism industry analysts expects a record steady surge in spending of over $56 billion in 2022 in UAE from the travel and tourism sector which is a major economy growth driver.

The Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry based on new data from Business Monitor International and the World Travel and Tourism Council predicted that UAE economy was on a fast track diversification with new mega projects coming to the market. The total spending in the tourism sector will increase by 4.5 per cent year on in 2017 and will reach over $42 billion. The total tourism spending of UAE accounted for 77 percent and the leisure travel spending in UAE reached over $31 billion in the year 2016.

Marsa Al Arab, a $1.7 billion mega tourist resort near the Burj Al Arab, the new IMG Worlds of Legends theme park, a Formula One theme park at Dubai's Motor City, Six Flags at Dubai Parks and Resorts and many other planned shopping malls and cultural venues will add to the growth of the UAE's travel market.

Dubai will at par with London and Paris, expecting a target of 20m million visitors by 2020, that will be higher than New York and Tokyo as per the Global Destination Cities Index. A record 8.06 million international overnight tourists arrived in Dubai showing and increase of 10.6 per cent over the same period as compared to last year. Dubai's hotel room inventory was also five per cent more as compared to the same period last year.

Abu Dhabi has become the world's third fastest-growing destination for international visitors while Dubai ranks as the world's fourth-ranked destination city by international overnight visitors after Bangkok, London and Paris. The visitor spending of Dubai is 431.3 billion.

Sultan bin Saeed Al Manouri, the UAE Minister of Economy that the tourism sector contributes to 5.4 per cent over the next 10 years to reach Dh 238.8 billion by 2026. The rich cultural heritage of UAE, natural diversity and developed infrastructure makes it a strong

competitor. UAE is ranked 29th globally by the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017.V.A. Hassan, the chairman of the Flora Group of Hotels said that Dubai will expand the range of tourist and holiday attraction with its new segment of global travel market geographically.

AECOM to Oversee Multi-million-pound Center Parcs-style Activity Resort in Wales

A major adventure resort offering a wide variety of physical, thrilling and wellness activities, a 100-bedroom hotel and 400 luxury lodges on a 480-acre (194-hectare) Welsh site will be project managed by AECOM.

Afan Valley Adventure Resort – the brainchild of the man who launched Center Parcs in the UK in 1987, Peter Moore, and Gavin Woodhouse, chairman of Northern Powerhouse Developments – will offer a mix of healthy and exhilarating pastimes, including water sports, mountain biking, survival training, trampolining, surfing and zorbing, in response to rising demand for British holidays with a stronger emphasis on being active outdoors.

Northern Powerhouse appointed AECOM to deliver project management, cost consultancy and wider multi-disciplinary services on the £130m (US$172m, €142m) project.The active lifestyle resort, which is expected to create 1,000 full time jobs, is divided into a number of themes, such as alpine, forest, trails, Zen and "Xtreme", and will boast – among other things – ski slopes, an aqua adventure park, ice skating, gyms, steam rooms and saunas, zip wires, indoor climbing walls, Laser Quest, a soft play centre, a virtual reality centre, BMX and skate parks, aqua caving, an equestrian centre, bars, restaurants and retail outlets. There will also be a Bear Grylls Survival Academy.

AECOM director James Gundy said: "The plans for Afan Valley Adventure Resort have caught the imagination of all who have seen it and we were no exception.

Having met Gavin, Peter and the team

behind it, the partners involved and seen the site where it will be built, we are immensely excited to be part of what promises to be a truly unique and inspirational project." Construction work on Afan Valley Adventure Resort is set to begin in 2018.

EICC Boosts Team to Reflect Increased Business Heading for Edinburgh

The Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) has boosted its Association team with two senior appointments to reflect an increase in UK and International conferences heading for Scotland's capital.

Gayle McGuinn is now in place as Senior Associations Business Development Manager, bringing over a decade of Associations experience to the role. Gayle joins from event production company Speakeasy after previous roles at Conference Partners and In Conference. Kim Kjaerside joins from Apex Hotels group and takes up the role of Associations Business Development Manager.

The EICC is building on the most prolific year in its 22-year history, having hosted a record number of events and delegates in 2016. Association business totals over 60 per cent of the EICC's revenues, with more international associations now choosing Edinburgh than ever before. Last week, the EICC announced the latest of these wins with news that the biennial Pangborn Sensory Symposium is coming to Scotland for the first time in 2019 with projected economic benefit to Edinburgh over around £2.4 million.

Marshall Dallas, Chief Executive of the EICC, said: "We're excited to welcome Gayle and Kim to boost our already strong Associations team.

They both bring first class industry experience and high levels of customer service, which are key characteristics to working at the EICC. It's encouraging that we are seeing more international associations choosing Edinburgh for their conferences – we have a strong pipeline of business going forward with a few more association wins soon to be announced."