

# 14th U.S.—China Tourism Leadership Summit Paves Way for Increased Travel

May 22, 2024

**XI'AN, CHINA (May 22, 2024)** — Brand USA, the destination marketing organization for the United States, joined by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, hosted the 14th U.S.—China Tourism Leadership Summit in Xi'an, China, from May 21-23, 2024. The event brought together government and travel industry leaders from the United States and China to foster the return of Chinese visitors to the United States.

Brand USA President and CEO Chris Thompson highlighted the significance of the return of Chinese travelers for the U.S. tourism economy, "The return of Chinese visitors is critical for the U.S. tourism industry and essential for the full recovery of our economy. The 14th U.S.—China Tourism Leadership Summit plays a crucial role in revitalizing this vital market segment."

"Travel and tourism supports 9.5 million American jobs," said Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Analysis Grant T. Harris. "The U.S.-China Tourism Leadership Summit provided an important opportunity to further the Department of Commerce's mission to enhance the international competitiveness of the U.S. travel and tourism industry. Through our participation, we hope to see more Chinese visitors experience the United States, which will support jobs and economic growth in communities across the country."

The summit laid the groundwork for enhanced relations between the United States and China within the travel industry, encouraging collaboration among key stakeholders and charting a path forward for the future of tourism between the world's two largest economies. This three-day event, occurring for the first time since 2019, facilitated deeper insights into conducting business within the Chinese tourism market while providing opportunities for forging new connections with influential decision-makers.

The U.S. delegation was led by U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Analysis Grant T. Harris, along with Brand USA's President and CEO Chris Thompson. The 75-person contingent also included high-level leaders from across the U.S. government as well as prominent tourism organizations from across the USA. The delegation included representation from the following organizations: Destination DC, Destination Niagara USA, Discover Puerto Rico, Guam Visitors Bureau, Hawaii Tourism Authority, Hilton Worldwide, International Inbound Travel Association, Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board, Marriott International, Mastercard, New York City Tourism + Conventions, San Francisco Travel Association, Travel Oregon, Travel South USA, U.S. Travel Association, Visa, Visit California, Visit San Diego, and Visit Seattle.

"The 14th U.S.—China Tourism Leadership Summit marked a significant milestone in our efforts to strengthen the tourism bridge between our two nations. The insights and collaborations developed during this event were essential for fostering mutual understanding and economic growth. It is great to have restarted the summit and be back in this market after six years as we reunite with our colleagues from the Chinese government and travel industry," said Todd Davidson, President and CEO of Travel Oregon and chair of the Brand USA board of directors.

The Chinese delegation was led by State Councilor Yiqin Shen, Chinese Minister of Culture and Tourism, Sun Yeli, and Shaanxi Party Secretary, Zhao Yide.

On May 21, Brand USA organized a market immersion day to orient U.S. travel industry leaders on China's business environment and macroeconomic outlook, consumer insights, trends in travel and media, and federal policy updates. This education session also brought the delegation together with the founders and leaders of many of the primary Chinese travel and social media channels.

The joint Plenary Day on May 22 began with an opening ceremony featuring speeches from Sun Yeli, Minister of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Grant Harris, Assistant Secretary for Industry & Analysis, who also read congratulatory letters from PRC President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joseph R. Biden. Keynote speeches from industry leaders Chris Nassetta, President & CEO of Hilton Worldwide, and Chris Clark, Chairman for Asia Pacific at Visa Inc., set the stage for bilateral panel discussions on the future of tourism between China and the United States. More than 25 memoranda of understanding to deepen cooperation and increase travel flows were signed between U.S. and Chinese corporate and destination marketing entities.

The Chinese tourism market is significant for the global travel industry. Prior to the pandemic, China was a top-five market for visitors to the United States and the top source of international traveler spending. In 2019, nearly 80 million visitors to the U.S. spent about \$235 billion, with 3 million Chinese visitors contributing \$35 billion. These export revenues create quality U.S. jobs, support public services, and contribute to a positive balance of trade.

There are promising signs of recovery for Chinese visitation to the United States. Weekly flights from China are forecast to increase to 140 by the end of the year, compared to 65 in January 2024. To capitalize on this lucrative market and build the long-term future of the international visitor economy, this month Brand USA launched a high-profile consumer marketing campaign called “Experience It All”, showcasing the diverse attractions and experiences the USA offers Chinese travelers. The campaign will run during peak travel planning months for Chinese travelers and will be on a variety of trip planning, social media, and online travel agency platforms including Xiaohongshu [RED], Ctrip, Fliggy, Douyin, and a mini-program on WeChat.

### **About the 14th U.S.–China Tourism Leadership Summit**

The 14th U.S.–China Tourism Leadership Summit reunites government and travel industry leaders from the United States and China. The summit provides a platform for participants to develop and strengthen relationships, discuss key issues and best practices, and ultimately drive more travel between the United States and China. The summit will set the stage for the future of relations between the United States and China in the travel industry. Jointly produced by Brand USA and China’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism, summit locations alternate each year between China and the United States.

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### **About Brand USA**

Brand USA, the destination marketing organization for the United States, was established by the Travel Promotion Act as the nation’s first public-private partnership to promote the United States as a premier travel destination and to communicate U.S. travel policies and procedures to worldwide travelers. The organization’s mission is to increase international visitation to the United States in order to fuel the U.S. economy and enhance the image of the United States worldwide. Formed as the Corporation for Travel Promotion in 2010, the public-private entity began operations in May 2011 and does business as Brand USA. According to studies by Oxford Economics, over the past ten years Brand USA’s marketing initiatives have helped welcome 8 million incremental visitors to the United States, benefiting the U.S. economy with more than \$58 billion in total economic impact and supporting, on average, more than 37,000 incremental jobs a year.

For industry or partner information about Brand USA, visit [TheBrandUSA.com](https://TheBrandUSA.com) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [X/Twitter](#). To discover more about the USA and the boundless diversity of American travel experiences and authentic, rich culture, please visit Brand USA’s consumer website [VisitTheUSA.com](https://VisitTheUSA.com); follow Visit The USA on [Facebook](#), [TikTok](#), and [Instagram](#); and watch travel shows on [GoUSATV](#).

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