

In the hotels sector the word 'Expo' is not just short for exposition - it can also be short for exponential

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What better way for a city to exponentially increase its visitor numbers than to hold an Expo?

If you were a foreign visitor to Shanghai last week it was almost certainly to attend the first China International Import Expo (CIIE) as the expo had 800,000 visits. With over 3,600 companies exhibiting and over 4,000 reporters in attendance, it was always going to be a sure fire way to boost inbound tourism.

Nearly 8 years after the 2010 Shanghai Expo, last week's event was held in the city's National Exhibition and Convention Center (NECC) from Monday 5 to Saturday 10 November.

The six-day event consisted of two main attractions, the Country Pavilion for Trade and Investment and the Enterprise & Business Exhibition. Additionally, during the Expo the first Hongqiao International Trade Forum was held, an event that gathers government officials, well known business leaders, and international organizations from several countries.

Shanghai's hotel infrastructure is well-prepared for just such a world-class expo. The Municipal Tourism Administration of Shanghai provided a recommended hotel list that included 1,711 hotels in Shanghai, with more than 256,607 rooms and 411,000 beds combined. In addition, hotels in nearby cities provide another 50,000 rooms to ensure accommodation availability.

The city holds a very special place in the heart of Hotelbeds, not just because it is an important destination in terms of the hotel bookings from inbound tourists worldwide, but also because we have an office of 100 employees in the city.

Over the last few years the enormous growth - exponential even - in China outbound travel has drawn the attention of the world. We all know now that China is the the largest outbound travel market in the world. But the inbound travel of foreign tourists into China has increased much more slowly. Last week's event aimed to proactively open up the Chinese market to the world. And with a total of 172 countries, regions, and international organizations attending the show it certainly has achieved its objective.

I myself have worked and lived in China for over 3 years. Shanghai is a very charming city, famous for its unique culture, long history, tasty food, and modern city skyscraper views. These selling points as a tourism destination are boosted further by the fact that the city is a safe destination and as of recently it has introduced more convenient visa policies. Now, visitors from 53 countries can enjoy a 144-hour visa-free transit in certain cities, including Shanghai.

According to our booking data building up to the Expo last week we achieved a significant increase in room night sales for the city, which can only lead to one question from me: when is the next Expo?

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