

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

LATEST NEWS

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Hawaii should push for 'destination country' deal with China

Howard Dicus

The head of the Hong Kong China Hawaii Chamber of Commerce says if Hawaii really wants more visitor trade from China it needs to press Washington to seek a "destination country agreement" with Beijing.

Johnson Choi, writing Thursday to colleagues with China business ties, said Chinese residents who want to undertake a leisure trip go to countries that have such agreements. There is no such agreement with the United States and Chinese visitors are typically here on business.

"The destination country agreement must be in place before China visitors are allowed to visit Hawaii without forcing many of them to cook up a business reason to come here," Choi said.

The China National Tourism Administration reported this week that almost 90 million people traveled across China during the National Day holidays Oct. 1-7 spending \$4.18 billion in that brief period.

The Pacific Association of Travel Agents has said that the overwhelming majority of international leisure travelers from China visit, not merely adjacent countries, but countries adjacent to their home provinces. The most popular destinations for China outbound tourists are Hong Kong, Macau and Thailand.

"Once the destination country agreement is in place," Choi said, "wealthy Chinese tourists will be able to come to Hawaii."

In order for Hawaii to benefit from a destination country agreement, Choi said the state must convince the federal government to begin the negotiation.

"California, Nevada and New York states are natural partners due to their business, gaming and diverse ethnic appeals," Choi said.

There are 20 countries, most in Southeast Asia, with destination country agreements with China. China travel agents are not allowed to promote a destination like Hawaii that China does not have an agreement with, Choi said.

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