



CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Commercial Service
Shanghai, China

November 20, 2008

To the Tourism or Business Editor

For Immediate Release

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United States Foreign Commercial Service Applauds US-China Tourism Industry Cooperation 135 American Exhibitors Set to Participate In the 2008 China International Travel Mart (CITM)

Shanghai, China- After the U.S. and China signed a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in December 2007, the U.S. travel and tourism industry immediately began preparations to handle the vast potential of the Chinese outbound tourism market. While individual and group leisure travel have long been allowed under U.S. laws, the MOU offered a breakthrough in two key areas: U.S. destinations could now publicly promote themselves in China, and licensed travel agencies could market group tour packages to attract Chinese tourists to America. The opportunity the MOU tourism agreement provided was further enhanced in May 2008 at the Strategic Economic Dialogue, which resulted in supporting the expansion of air services between the United States and China.

David Gossack, U.S. Foreign Commercial Service Shanghai, Principal Commercial Officer, comments, “Almost a year after the ground-breaking tourism (MOU) agreement between the United States and China, there has been a surge in Chinese tourists interested in traveling to the United States. This creates positive economic benefits for both the United States and China, and strengthens the trade relationship between our nations. Now more Chinese visitors have an opportunity to experience America’s hospitality, cultural diversity and natural beauty.”

“China is predicted to be the fastest-growing outbound tourism market in the world over the next twelve years. The number of Chinese traveling abroad has nearly tripled in the past five years to over 34 million – making China the fastest-growing tourism market in the world. By 2020, China is projected to supply 100 million outbound travelers, the fourth largest market in the world,” according to **Kevin Chambers, U.S. Commercial Service Shanghai, Commercial Officer**.

As a result of the MOU, greater affluence in China, and increasing Chinese interest in visiting America, the American tourism industry is preparing to welcome increased numbers of Chinese tourists, thus leading to an increase in American participation in this year’s CITM. The Discover America Pavilion, co-sponsored by the U.S. Commercial Service in Shanghai and Tourism Industry of America (TIA) – has boomed from just 40 American exhibitors to 135 exhibitors this year. Forecasts predict the total number of Chinese travelers to the U.S. will reach 579,000 by 2011, which will increase tourism-related exports. In 2006, spending by Chinese citizens traveling to the United States averaged more than US \$6000. This number is expected to increase as Chinese citizens become wealthier, and as the luxury and business travel markets become more developed for Chinese tourists visiting the U.S.

Some of this year’s CITM’s U.S. tourism exhibitors include: *Utah, Nevada, Hawaii, Vermont Chamber of Commerce, Visit Guam, Visit Florida, Galaxy Tours and Music Express.*

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