Edinburgh China-Ready Business Opportunities Guide

欢迎
China’s fast-growing visitor market, increased direct flights to the UK and a simplified visa process is great news for Edinburgh’s tourism industry. Is your business China-Ready?
Ni Hao. (or Hello!)

At the 2015 ETAG Conference, the CEO of Edinburgh Airport, Gordon Dewar, laid down a challenge to the capital’s tourism industry. He said that one of the single most important areas for collaboration in the coming years would be tourism from China.

China’s importance across the global tourism, talent and trade agenda has already seen Edinburgh’s businesses, universities and festivals forge strong trade, knowledge and cultural links. Edinburgh is the second-most visited destination in the UK for Chinese visitors, and with over 100,000 Chinese nationals passing through the turnstiles of Edinburgh Castle in 2014 alone, there’s never been a better time to focus on Chinese tourism.

Our ambition is for Edinburgh to be one of the UK’s most China-Friendly destinations. We want to increase the volume and value of Chinese visitors and win the race to attract Scotland’s first direct flight from China. And to do this we need to be China-Ready.

A number of Edinburgh businesses, inspired and informed by the China-focused foundations laid by a group of industry leaders as part of the Destination Leaders Programme, have been developing a China-Ready plan for the city. This involves:

– Industry Familiarisation: training opportunities and resources such as this guide
– Industry Collaboration: making the most of opportunities such as media visits, #blogmanay, linking with Chinese Students and celebrating Chinese New Year
– Industry Support for the Edinburgh China Air Link Project

As a key part of this China-Ready plan, this introductory guide will help you understand more about Chinese visitors and the simple steps you can take to begin to engage with and benefit from this growing market. You can find this guide and many other resources, such as information on workshops and training opportunities, on the China-Ready page of the ETAG website (www.etag.org.uk).

Robin Worsnop, Chair, Edinburgh Tourism Action Group (ETAG)
Rob Lang, Chair, ETAG China-Ready Delivery Group

To Chinese people, Scotland is a wonderful land with long history, unique culture, fascinating scenery and warm people. It has opened its arms to Chinese people, making the nation and its capital must-go destinations for Chinese tourists.

Moreover, Edinburgh is working even harder to accommodate Chinese tourists, to make them feel at home. Their efforts are greatly appreciated and will pay off in the end. The people to people exchange is an important part of the relations between China and Scotland and the Chinese Consulate General is looking forward to working closely with Scotland to strengthen tourism cooperation between the two sides.

Pan Xinchun
Consul General of People’s Republic of China in Edinburgh
Why focus on China?

£62m

→ Worth £62m in 2014, China is in the top 5 growth markets for Scotland.

1st

→ Edinburgh is the most visited destination in the UK for Chinese visitors, outside London.

9,000

→ There are approximately 9,000 Chinese students studying in Scotland, of which 3,400 are in Edinburgh.
2
→ Edinburgh is the only city in the UK to have been chosen by the Chinese Government to care for two giant pandas, creating a unique link between Edinburgh and China.

53%
→ 53% of Chinese students living in Edinburgh welcome visiting friends and family at least once a year.

4x
→ Chinese visitors to the UK spend four times more than average (£2600 per visit).

7%
→ In 2014 Chinese visitors to National Museums Scotland more than doubled, from 3% to 7% of overseas visitors.

100,000+
→ There were over 100,000 Chinese nationals counted through Edinburgh Castle’s turnstiles in 2014.

20million+
→ As part of Edinburgh’s Hogmanay 2015 celebrations, six influential travel bloggers from China came to the capital to share their experiences on important blogs and social media sites back home. So far, the content has been viewed more than 20m times.
The Chinese visitor market

- International travel is quickly gaining popularity amongst the middle class – global travel, and in particular visiting well-known places and landmarks, is a status symbol.
- Dramatically increasing numbers of luxury travelers and Gen Y/millennials aged 35 and below are seen as key to Chinese tourism trends globally.
- Shopping is also very popular, and many Chinese travelers may often economise on travel and accommodation so they can spend more on gifts and experiences.

Visitors from China to the UK (IPS, 2014)

- **Total visits to UK**: 185,099
- **Total nights to UK**: 4.49m
- **Average length of stay in UK**: 24.2 days
- **Total spend in UK**: £498m
- **Average spend per day**: £111
- **Average spend per visit**: £2,688

Purpose of visit

1. **Holiday**: 46%
2. **Business**: 21%
3. **VFR**: 16%
4. **Study**: 12%
5. **Other**: 5%
Most common requests received from Chinese guests

- 75% Free Wi-Fi
- 31% Kettle
- 21% Translated travel guides
- 20% Mandarin speaking staff
- 18% China Union Pay facilities

Volume and Value Trend 2005 - 2013 (IPS)

Visitor Age profile 2011 - 2013 (IPS)

Travel bookings made by mobile phone are soaring

Digital and mobile is hugely important for Chinese visitors, 75% of Chinese tourists rely on reviews and word of mouth via Chinese blogs, websites and social media platforms.

They use different tools such as Weibo (a cross between Facebook and Twitter) or WeChat (like WhatsApp). They can’t access Google and mostly use a search engine called Baidu instead. Rather than creating and managing Chinese accounts, don’t underestimate the power of encouraging your Chinese visitors to share your product or business on their social networks.
Top tips

There are so many differences between Scottish and Chinese culture that you may feel that truly accommodating Chinese visitors is a daunting or expensive task. But with these simple tips, you can take the first steps to becoming China-Ready; and implementing even just one recommendation could put you ahead of the competition.
General

– China is a vast, changing, multi-ethnic country with different traditions, so your efforts should be flexible and targeted. Whilst luxury travelers and younger travelers are seen as key trends, take time to understand the socio-demographic profile of your own existing Chinese visitors and adapt to suit.

– Language is one of the main challenges, but download and practice using translation apps such as Baidu Translate (which can translate speech, text or pictures) or Google Translate.

– Never underestimate the power of a pictorial sign – no smoking, photo stop, drinking water etc., or visit the VisitScotland site to download simple signs in Mandarin.

– Many Chinese tourists research brands, places, products and prices prior to departure. If Chinese customers are an important segment for you, reach them before they leave China by setting up a profile on social media like Weibo or WeChat. Go to ETAS's China-Ready webpage to check for any upcoming Chinese Social Media Workshops.

– Travel trade links are important, with a large number of tourists still visiting in organised groups. Be sure to connect with VisitScotland and VisitBritain who can advise you on opportunities to promote your product to agents and tour companies via their marketing channels or sales missions.

– UnionPay is the payment card for most Chinese travelers (who don’t have Visa or Mastercard). Like most tourists, they prefer not to carry large amounts of cash. Check with your bank or card merchant or visit www.moneyswap.com to look at opportunities for accepting UnionPay at your business.

– Respect and status are pillars of Chinese culture, so when exchanging business cards, hold your card with both hands and with your personal details facing the recipient. In return, take time to read their card closely before putting it in your wallet/pocket. Likewise, when handing over hotel accounts and shopping receipts use both hands rather than one as a mark of respect.

→ Use pictorial or translated signage.

→ Use both hands when exchanging business cards, receipts or hotel documents as a sign of respect.

→ Remember: At the end of the day, it is about service and understanding – the cornerstones of a great Scottish and Edinburgh welcome – as you offer them some home comforts whilst giving them opportunities to try new things in a world-class, historic city.
Eating & Drinking

- Meal times in China tend to be earlier than in the West. Typical meal times are Breakfast (from 6.30am), Lunch (from 11.30am) and dinner (from 6pm). Breakfast is the most important meal of the day for Chinese visitors – and usually a substantial, hot breakfast. Getting the breakfast right will win over your Chinese customers.

- Don’t worry if you’re not able to prepare Chinese breakfast (such as congee or steamed buns). Consider providing instant pot noodles as a breakfast choice (easy and cheap from one of Edinburgh's Chinese supermarkets) which Chinese visitors will customize with other breakfast items, such as cold meats and boiled eggs.

- Hot water is a key drink for the Chinese, asked for at almost every mealtime and considered to have huge health benefits. Tea is also very popular, but mostly Green Tea or Herbal Teas rather than Western black or breakfast teas.

- Visiting bars is not a hugely popular pastime with Chinese tourists. Most Chinese visitors only drink alcohol whilst eating their evening meal, if at all.

- Trying and purchasing whisky, however, is very popular – and Chinese visitors want to hear about the history, heritage and popularity of whisky (especially if it is linked to famous or important whisky lovers).

- Chinese guests are keen to try new dishes and different styles of eating, but also like a degree of familiarity to enjoy their travel experience. Something as simple as ensuring there is an option with rice on your menu will make them feel at home. Note that many Chinese are lactose intolerant, so sauces heavy with cream or other dairy products are best avoided.

- It’s not unusual for Chinese guests, especially those staying more than a night or two, to seek out Chinese cuisine after trying Scottish food and drink.

- Where menus are not provided in Mandarin, consider providing a separate picture menu to break language barriers.

- Like most tourists, they use apps and websites to seek out the most popular dining opportunities. Photographing and sharing their experiences and dishes are not uncommon.

- It is not normal practice for Chinese diners to tip restaurants in China.


Accommodation

- Prepare a welcome letter in Mandarin from the General Manager. You can download a sample letter from the VisitScotland.org website.

- If possible, provide your Chinese guests with a Mandarin version of your ‘services and facilities’ (outlining mealtimes, check out times, wifi, smoking policy etc).

- The numbers 8 and 888 are lucky numbers in China, so where possible, allocate rooms with either of these numbers to your Chinese guests. Avoid allocating room or floor number 4 as this is seen as an unlucky number.

- Status is hugely important, so allocate the best rooms to the most senior person(s) of the group and ensure this is clearly acknowledged at check-in.

- Smoking is still far more common in China than the UK, and in China nearly all hotel rooms are smoking rooms. To prevent confusion, provide clear signage for guests in Chinese explaining your non-smoking policy, and signpost any smoking areas if you have them.

- Wifi access is very important to all travellers and to Chinese visitors in particular. If you can, provide the login/access instructions in Chinese. In return, your guests will share their experience via Chinese social media channels including Weixin and Weibo.

- If you are able to provide a selection of Chinese branded products at reception or in your welcome tray, your Chinese guests will highly appreciate it. For example, Chinese brand green tea and instant noodles are readily and cheaply accessible online or at Edinburgh’s Chinese supermarkets.

- A kettle with bottled still water is also popular: Chinese visitors love hot water and back home can’t (and don’t) drink water from a tap.

- In Chinese 3* hotels and above, toiletries (including toothbrushes) are complimentary and provided in the room. They expect the same from your hotel, so if you only provide some items on demand, mention this in your welcome letter. Slippers are also very common in Chinese hotels – they would rather not walk around only wearing socks.
Visitor Attractions

- Chinese visitors love to take photographs, so creating photograph/scenery stops is an ideal way to promote your attraction (and including your attraction’s name beside designated photostops/statues ensures more publicity). Where photographs are not allowed to be taken, it is important to state so clearly in language or using visual signs.

- If your attraction has lunch/dinner facilities on site, make the travel agency and guide aware of this.

- Invest in imagery that shows Chinese visitors enjoying your attraction or product.

- Edinburgh’s Chinese student population is significant and growing. Targeted promotions to these students, especially at significant moments for the Chinese (such as Chinese New Year) will help them discover your attraction; and encourage repeat visits if they return with their friends and family.

- Bookings for attractions tend to be made last minute. Prepare to be flexible and where possible, provide fast track lanes for large groups who are most likely on a tight schedule.

- Celebrities and superlatives are key selling points for Chinese visitors. If you’ve welcomed any celebrities or Heads of State to your attraction, especially Chinese superstars or members of the British Royal Family, share this with your group as it will be a status symbol.

- Likewise, superlatives (Scotland’s largest, Edinburgh’s oldest, Scotland’s first ever..) are important facts that Chinese visitors will share back home to demonstrate the importance and significance of their trip.

- If your attraction has an audio guide system, consider having a Chinese version made. Audio guides are relatively popular at attractions in China, so will be a familiar way of sightseeing.

Retail

- The Chinese love shopping and enjoy buying souvenirs, tartan, whisky, cashmere and luxury brands when in Scotland. They are motivated by the tax refund opportunities for their purchases – visit www.globalrefund.com.

- The Chinese are not typically familiar with Scottish brands and lean towards global luxury consumer goods. Tell the story of your brand while emphasising authenticity, quality and heritage and, where appropriate, the high level of craftsmanship of the brand.

- Items clearly “Made in Scotland” are popular as proof back home of their global adventures. For the same reason, they generally won’t buy items “Made in China”.

- Gifts are a hugely important part of Chinese culture and it is not rare to see Chinese customers purchase several identical items as presents for friends, family or business relations. Incentivising such purchases through a bulk discount or sliding scale for multiple purchases would be very well received by Chinese visitors.

- Given the importance of gifting, and only if you can, offer small, free gifts with medium to larger purchases. This helps show appreciation of Chinese culture and also confers special status on the recipient – a very important feeling for Chinese. It could be something as simple as a pen or a key ring with your logo.

- Significant Chinese holidays such as Chinese New Year (see p13 for more details) are great opportunities for targeted promotions and store discounts.

- Most Western sales techniques involve familiarity and warmth, but Chinese shopping is more about status and the transaction itself. Avoid personal questions or unnecessary jokes when communicating with your Chinese customers, which may be seen as a lack of respect.

- In a country of 1.5billion people, it’s the norm for retail assistants to serve multiple customers simultaneously. Therefore, it’s not uncommon for some Chinese customers to try and interrupt while serving another customer.

- Whisky, cashmere, luxury items and “Made In Scotland” souvenirs are hugely popular from Chinese culture.

- Remember that gifts and gifting are a huge part of Chinese culture.
When the Chinese meet Edinburgh

April Tsai helps you understand Chinese visitors, and shares her first hand experiences of welcoming and supporting Chinese students and visitors to Edinburgh.
What do Chinese people like about Edinburgh?

Lots of people already have a romantic perception of Edinburgh because of its name. In Mandarin the name ài dìng bāo translates literally as Love-People-Castle! Many also connect it with big movies in China like Harry Potter or One Day (which was set in Edinburgh).

In my experience, visitors love the fresh air, the architecture, the history and tradition, the festive atmosphere all year round, the friendly and polite people, the landscape.

What do your Chinese students and visitors find hard to adjust to?

We don't really have a bar culture, so it can be difficult to find things to do in the evening (other than go to Primark!). We do find the business opening hours quite strange.

And the food! Lots of people assume we will want to eat only Chinese food, but that isn't true. The main difference is that our eating habits are very different. In China, we have a saying: “Breakfast like a Queen, Lunch like a Noble, Dinner like a Servant”, so it is very unusual for us to only have cold sandwiches for lunch and a huge meal at night!

We also love hot water, but get some odd looks when we keep asking for it. In China, it is the number one health drink. Not cold water, and definitely not with ice – in China we don’t think you should waste your body’s precious energy warming up cold water.

How important is shopping?

Very! It is a lot cheaper for us to buy luxury items, like branded bags or watches, outside of China. We are huge fans of the big luxury brands, and especially the designer outlet villages! Gifts are also really important – for parents, sisters, classmates, the dog, the neighbour’s cat… It's an important part of our culture and also a way of sharing your travels with people back home.

What do you miss when you are in Edinburgh?

We will communicate with family and friends a lot, mostly via social media nowadays, whilst on our travels giving them detailed accounts of our activities and experiences. Many students also miss family at key cultural times of the year for the Chinese such as Chinese New Year (also called Spring Festival, normally a week long celebration around February 6th in 2016), the Winter Solstice (usually on either the 21, 22 and 23 December) and “Golden Week” – the big vacation week in China from the 1st October, China National Day. Events, promotions or even a sign recognising a special Chinese holiday will go down very well with the Chinese visitors!

What can you tell us about Chinese visitors?

Many visitors are very keen to learn about Scotland and meet Scottish people but are worried about how they come across and not knowing English very well. And then I learn that Scottish businesses are worried about not being able to properly accommodate Chinese visitors or speak Mandarin! So I think the main thing is to appreciate that it is about a meeting of cultures. In China, there is a lot of publicity about tourists’ behaviour overseas. Queuing is not a Chinese concept – at all! – and our volume is a sign of excitement and enjoyment, not rudeness! With such a big population back home, we have to behave differently in shops and attractions to get served or seen, so we do have to adjust when we come to somewhere peaceful like Edinburgh.

What do visitors like to do when in Edinburgh?

For this question I visited the Chinese equivalent of tripadvisor called Xia Yi Han. The top “things to do” ranked and recommended, in order, are: Edinburgh Castle, Royal Mile, Scott Monument, Calton Hill, Princes St Gardens, National Gallery, Holyrood Palace & St Giles Cathedral. The top restaurants are: The Ship on the Shore, Castle Terrace, La Favorita, Wedgewood, Ondine, Whitmuir Organic Farm, The Mussel Inn and Amber. Films are also a very important influencer for Chinese young people – the Harry Potter trail is a must (locations like the Elephant House) and the Old Town setting of the romantic comedy One Day starring Anne Hathaway is also popular. The closing scene of the film is on top of Arthur’s Seat, and many visitors follow their footsteps.

April is the Programme Coordinator of English as a Foreign Language at the Edinburgh Institute, part of Edinburgh Napier University. A former postgraduate student studying Advertising & Marketing in Leeds, she was attracted by the beauty of Edinburgh and moved here after finishing studies and now oversees up to 500 Chinese students every year. Edinburgh Napier University is one of the Leading Summer School/Short Course Providers in Scotland.

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Fiona Hunter talks about Edinburgh’s ambitions to increase Chinese passenger numbers to Scotland’s capital.

How do Chinese visitors travel to Edinburgh?

As the UK’s most-visited destination after London, we know that large numbers of Chinese visitors are already transiting through other cities to get to Edinburgh. The airport is well served by indirect air routes from China: there are 25 routes from China to Edinburgh with British Airways and 32 with KLM. Finnair is also developing its strategy as a Chinese hub carrier, with 6 routes from China via Helsinki. And our long-haul routes with Qatar and Etihad offer 7 and 5 routes respectively. A new direct route from China has also just opened in Manchester, which is also easily connected with Edinburgh via air, road and rail links.

The big prize: China air route

International Passenger Survey (IPS) Statistics show that 33,000 Chinese visit Scotland, but the sample sizes involved are small. We know many more visit the capital and the city is trying to establish a more accurate picture. Edinburgh Castle alone welcomes over 100,000 Chinese nationals every year. Rail connections from London and group coach travel (Chinese visitors including Edinburgh and other Scottish locations as part of a wider UK Tour) are also very important.

What is the Edinburgh China Air Link Project?

The Scottish Government’s External Relations Committee is clear that a direct air link between China and Scotland will support growth in tourism, trade and investment. Edinburgh Airport, Marketing Edinburgh and the City of Edinburgh Council have pulled together to put the city in the best possible position to be chosen as the preferred airport for any future direct link. My job is about building links with airlines and the local and international Chinese communities and decision makers; and working with Edinburgh businesses to ensure there is support and a strong business case for a direct flight from China to Edinburgh. Having lived and worked in China for a number of years, I also think the opportunities for Scots to visit and discover China more easily is a truly exciting prospect.

How can businesses get involved?

Taking steps to become China-Ready will make a huge difference to our efforts. Being able to demonstrate a city-wide commitment to welcoming Chinese visitors is a big selling point in our discussions with airlines, and we hope will be a key factor setting us apart from other cities. For businesses that rely heavily on Chinese visitors, students and business travel, there are also commercial opportunities to support our airline negotiations.

Fiona Hunter is Project Manager for the Edinburgh China Air Link Project, set up to attract Scotland’s first direct flights with China. This project is a collaboration between Marketing Edinburgh, City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Airport.

Having lived and worked in China’s Zhejiang province for a number of years, Fiona managed the Chinese market at VisitScotland before taking on her role at Marketing Edinburgh. She works closely with the Chinese travel trade and other industry bodies and regularly delivers seminars on China to local tourism businesses.

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Top towns visited in UK
1 London
2 Edinburgh
3 Manchester
4 Oxford
5 Cambridge
A number of local, national and UK-wide organisations are able to help.

**ETAG**

Register for updates, training opportunities and links to further information and insights on the China-Ready section of ETAG’s website: [www.etag.org.uk](http://www.etag.org.uk)

**VisitScotland**

Scotland’s national tourism agency has helpful online resources, featuring market statistics and insights as well as useful and practical tools like downloadable signage and welcome letters. They are also a key partner for your travel trade strategy – maintaining strong links with major operators and undertaking annual sales missions to key Chinese cities. They’re also working hard to develop links with Chinese travel media – if your product has particular interest for the Chinese, you might be able to collaborate on future media trip itineraries. For more information, find the China Toolkit and visitor research on [www.visitscotland.org](http://www.visitscotland.org)

**Scottish Government**

The Scottish Government has offices in China and facilitate or coordinate political, business or tourism engagement in China. They also manage Scotland’s Chinese website and social media accounts – sending them content or press releases targeted at Chinese visitors is an effective way to ensure your brand is featured on influential Chinese digital platforms. For more information visit: [www.scotland.cn](http://www.scotland.cn)

**VisitBritain**

VisitBritain is the national tourism body for the UK. They have representation in China and work closely with VisitScotland to promote Scotland in China. VisitBritain run a series of travel trade events in market, including the International Luxury Travel Market (June) and Destination Britain and China (November). VisitBritain also runs the GREAT China Welcome Charter, a free accreditation programme that offers support and promotion for tourism businesses taking steps to become China-Ready. For more information visit: [www.visitbritain.org/great-china-welcome](http://www.visitbritain.org/great-china-welcome)

**Universities**

With a significant number of Chinese students in the city, the ETAG China-Ready Delivery Group has started working with Edinburgh and Napier universities and hopes to collaborate further with more institutions in the future. The China or Asia specific International Offices of universities can help advise on the best approach to connect with and support Edinburgh’s Chinese student population. Universities’ partner organisations also offer a number of services, such as Chinese translation and training. For more information contact April Tsai (see p12/13) or visit [www.confuciusinstitute.ac.uk](http://www.confuciusinstitute.ac.uk)

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**Key cities for Chinese tourists to the UK**

1. Beijing
2. Shanghai
3. Chengdu
4. Guangzhou
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