

**21<sup>st</sup> October 2015**

## ***Press Release***

### **Low Cost Visas Will Help Reverse Decline in Chinese Visitor Numbers**

The Tourism Alliance has welcomed today's announcement by the Prime Minister that the cost of long-term visas for Chinese visitors to the UK will be significantly reduced in order to boost tourism.

Although outbound tourism numbers from China have been increasing by over 200% to 109m per annum over the last 10 years, the UK's share of this market has decreased by 45% over the same period, largely due to the poor value of the UK visa compared to a Schengen visa and the introduction of requirements that all Chinese visitors have their fingerprints taken as part of the application process – something not required when applying for a Schengen visa.

Tourism Alliance Chairman, Bernard Donoghue, stated "In 2014, visitor numbers to the UK from mainland China actually decreased by 6.5%, even though the total number of Chinese travelling overseas increased by 12.4%. As a result, the UK is missing out on significant revenue and job creating opportunities. Reducing long-term visa costs will help reverse this decline by presenting the UK as a more welcoming destination".

Last year, only 185,000 mainland Chinese visitors came to the UK, down from 200,000 visitors in 2013. This is less than 20% of the number that visited France. China is the World's most important growth market for tourism, with Chinese visitor spending more than twice the amount of average visitor spend to the UK. It is therefore important that the UK does all it can to secure a larger slice of this market.

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For further information, please contact:

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**Notes to Editors**

- The Tourism Alliance is the Voice of the UK Tourism Industry. It was established in 2001 with the support of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and comprises 55 Tourism Industry Associations that together represent 200,000 businesses of all sizes throughout the UK.
- The purpose of the Tourism Alliance is to identify and develop policies and strategies to raise standards and promote quality within the industry and work with and lobby government on key issues relevant to the growth and development of tourism.
- Tourism is the sixth largest industry in Britain. It generates £127bn p.a. for the UK economy (8.9% of GDP) and directly supports 3.1m jobs (9% of the total workforce) and is the UK's third largest export earner.
- For further details on the Tourism Alliance and its policy objectives, visit the website, [www.tourismalliance.com](http://www.tourismalliance.com)

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