

Tai Poutini Polytechnic Media Release

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Adapting to meet demands of outbound China tourism market could have huge positive impact for West Coast economy

Professor Wolfgang Georg Arlt Director of the China Outbound Tourism Research Institute (COTRI) in Hamburg, Germany is convinced that adapting its tourism offering to meet the needs of visitors from China could have huge benefits for the West Coast economy.

Professor Arlt delivered his message at the West Coast Development Think Tank hosted by Tai Poutini Polytechnic in Greymouth on 16-17 February.

“The Chinese outbound tourism market has grown exponentially from 10 million border crossings in 2000 to a projected 151 million crossings for 2016. Those visitors will spend an estimated US\$220 billion in 2016. That is potentially great news for the West Coast, given that there has been an increase of more than 150% in Chinese visitors to New Zealand during the last four years.”

Professor Arlt warns, however, that New Zealand and the West Coast have to cater for the specific expectations of its Chinese visitors to take advantage of this opportunity.

“Visitors from China regard travel as an investment rather than as a leisure activity. The ability to travel brings prestige to the traveller and is a confirmation of status amongst their peers. For the West Coast to take advantage of this aspect of the Chinese traveller’s motivation it needs to clearly articulate why it is a prestigious destination that offers the very best experiences in the world in niche areas such as hiking, bird watching or other activities.

“There isn’t a ‘one size fits all’ Chinese tourist, many Chinese travellers travel in multi-generational groups with grandparents, parents and children all together, for example so packages need to provide niche, bespoke offerings.”

While visitors from China tend to be ‘time poor’ they want their travel to be ‘experience rich’, says Professor Arlt, and they are more than happy to share their views about those experiences via social media at an unprecedented rate.

“Visitors from China are constantly commenting on their travelling experience via social media – every part of their visit is under constant scrutiny. That means that if they arrive in a town and there is nothing to do in the evening that

message will be communicated around the world and have an immediate impact on the desirability of coming to New Zealand and the West Coast for their friends and family back in China.”

The two-day think tank event hosted by Tai Poutini Polytechnic was designed to share ideas about how education and training, in conjunction with the natural environment and tourism, can help grow the West Coast economy.

In addition to Professor Arlt, key speakers at the two-day think tank included David Kennedy of Ngai Tahu Tourism, Dr Peter Varley of Scotland’s West Highland College UHI, Li Xin from the Chinese Embassy Christchurch, Liang Yan of the Guilin Walking Association and Tourism West Coast Chief Executive Jim Little.

About the China Outbound Tourism Research Institute (COTRI):

Founded in 2004 by Professor Arlt, COTRI is a privately-owned and independent institute that is the world’s leading institute for services and insights related to the Chinese outbound tourism market.

COTRI operates with leading international and Chinese tourism organisations, is headquartered in Hamburg, Germany, has an office in Beijing, China, and coordinates a global network of regional partners across all continents.

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