

THE NEW RULES OF AFFLUENT CHINESE TRAVEL

By Lee Folland

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With 100m new outbound Chinese tourists forecast in the next decade, travel brands will witness a seismic shift in their quest for experiences and adventure.



Charismatic China by TryFu

‘ Wealthy Chinese Millennial parents are actively seeking adventure. Over half are very interested in taking their child to visit the Antarctic ’

— Lee Folland, director of research, Reuter Communications

China travel and tourism figures can be mind-boggling. In 2017, inbound and outbound tourists from Mainland China reached 139m and 131m, respectively. In the first half of 2018 alone, the number of Chinese outbound tourist trips grew by a healthy 15% to 71.31m.

These figures and analysis by the [China Tourism Academy](#) also shows that outbound Chinese tourists spent a total of £91bn (\$115.29bn, €100bn) in 2017. So it is easy to see why everyone from national, regional and local tourism boards to businesses big and small are eyeing the Chinese outbound traveller.

True, the ubiquitous tour bus (and the accompanying tour guide flags) will not go away any time soon – the China National Tourism Administration forecasts 100m new outbound tourists getting their passports for the first time in the next decade. The number of senior travellers, those aged 60 and over, **has grown** 50% year on year since 2013. At the same time, parents are increasingly including their children on trips. In fact, 18-year-old Chinese traveller figures have been soaring with **90% growth** in 2016.

But it is the young, affluent families travelling independently, who are looking for customised or self-organised safari and Arctic adventures beyond the must-see sights on tour bus itineraries.

In **our report**, *The Next-Gen Luxury Traveller: Affluent Chinese Families*, we found that China's affluent Millennial families are embracing the popular Chinese proverb *It's better to walk thousands of miles than to read thousands of books* – referring to experience outdoing theory. Our survey of 400 respondents from first-tier cities shows these families are already well travelled, with 65% having travelled overseas with their child at least four times in the past 12 months. During the same period almost half (45%) had travelled domestically at least four times with their child.

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Zallinger resort by Studio noa*, Italy

Looking ahead, affluent Chinese Millennial parents are planning to venture further than Asia. In the next 24 months, their itineraries will include Australia (38%), which is also considered the most family-friendly destination, France, Canada, the UK and the US. The more outdoorsy Canada appears to appeal more to the younger generation of parents aged 18–30 than those aged 31–38.

Interestingly, our survey shows that this new generation of Chinese luxury travellers may not even be staying at the **latest five-star hotels** – instead, many want private rental accommodation through Airbnb, or its Chinese equivalent of Tujia, for a more authentic local family experience. Instead of sitting by the pool sipping cocktails while their child plays in the water, they will be at a local venue, sitting as a family watching the latest musical or concert together.

There are other signs that the preferences and behaviours of the Chinese traveller are changing. Wealthy Millennial parents are actively seeking adventure. Over half (54%) of our survey respondents said they are very interested in taking their child to visit the Antarctic and the same proportion (54%) said they are keen to go on a round-the-world trip. Half (52%) of respondents also shared a keen interest in cruise holidays.

So while the tourist buses take the masses to see the Eiffel Tower, next year we can expect affluent Chinese young parents to take their kids to the lavender fields of Provence and visit a vineyard or two on the way.

For hospitality and travel brands, when developing summer holiday campaigns targeted at the affluent Chinese **Millennial family traveller**, the messaging may be stickier if you consider the insight that travel is no longer about ticking off the list of major sights of the world, but about seeking experiences that bond their family together even more. Instead of following the tour guide's flag, affluent Millennial parents are looking to plant their own family flag on their travels.

*Lee Folland is director of research at **Reuter Communications**, an integrated agency helping luxury brands succeed in China and Asia. For a global stance, explore our **Millennial Family Travel** market.*