



Dragon Trail
INTERNATIONAL

PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR NEW JOURNEYS

Chinese Traveler Sentiment Report

Dragon Trail Research

April 2025

Photo by Andy Luo for Unsplash

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What will define Chinese outbound tourism in 2025? Sustained recovery, social platforms, and regional destinations are top trends

It has now been more than two years since China reopened for outbound tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic. The recovery has been gradual but sustained, with traveler numbers reaching or even surpassing pre-pandemic levels in many destinations in 2024. This upwards trend is set to continue in 2025, as evidenced by flight bookings and destinations' arrivals numbers over the Chinese New Year period earlier in the year, and by the findings of our newest Chinese Traveler Sentiment Survey, conducted between 12–18 March, with 1,022 respondents. In the survey data, we continue to see increased openness and interest in outbound travel among Chinese consumers, as the fears and obstacles of the pandemic years fade away.

The results of the survey highlight many key trends in the post-pandemic Chinese outbound tourism market. One of these is the strength of regional travel, particularly Northeast Asia, where Japan has emerged as a significant hotspot in the last year.

This edition of our survey takes an in-depth look at the Chinese outbound traveler's digital journey, from inspiration and information gathering to booking and sharing. Here, we repeatedly see the importance of Chinese social media platforms, especially for younger generations. The most influential of these now is undoubtedly Xiaohongshu, also known by its new English name, RedNote. While OTAs such as Ctrip remain essential for booking and planning, Xiaohongshu has become the most important source of travel information for under-35s.

Safety is another major topic to come up once again in the current survey – it's far and away the biggest concern for Chinese travelers when planning an outbound trip. The good news is that safety perceptions continue to improve for nearly all destinations on our list, though safety fears definitely seem to be holding back tourism recovery to Thailand and its neighbors.

Looking forward to the future of global travel, we delved into the topic of sustainability in this survey – with findings that may surprise readers and illuminate how Chinese consumers understand the topic. With greater emphasis on communities rather than carbon emissions, the Chinese take on sustainable travel is also an important one to consider as we reimagine the future of tourism.

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Chinese traveler survey findings: Our 6 top takeaways from the report

1) Chinese travelers' intentions to travel outbound continue to increase

We have seen a continuous increase in outbound travel intention among Chinese consumers over the past several years. As of mid-March 2025, 75% of survey respondents were interested in traveling outbound this year or had already made an outbound trip. This is the highest percentage since we began asking Chinese travelers about their outbound travel plans in December 2022.

2) Most trips will be within Asia, but interest in all other regions has grown

Hong Kong, Macau, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and Singapore all ranked highest for trips that survey respondents have already taken in 2025 or plan to take later in the year. The proportion of survey respondents traveling within Asia is even higher than one year ago, and Northeast Asia has surpassed Europe to be the most coveted travel destination. At the same time, interest in travel to all other world regions has also grown since last year.

3) Safety perceptions continue to improve, but concerns about Southeast Asia persist

Perceptions of safety have improved for almost every destination included in our survey. However, safety perceptions for Thailand have declined, and Vietnam and Cambodia also received relatively low safety scores. It's likely that worries about organized crime in the region is an important factor behind survey respondents' decreasing interest in traveling to Southeast Asia.

4) There's a generational divide when it comes to destination information sources

Ctrip is the most widely used channel for outbound destination information among Chinese outbound travelers (69%), especially for the 45–65 age group, with 76% of them choosing the OTA. But among travelers aged 18–34, Xiaohongshu (aka RedNote) ranks higher as a source of destination information.

5) Social connections – and social media – inspire Chinese outbound travelers

Friends, family, and other acquaintances are important sources of inspiration for Chinese outbound travelers (39%), second only to social media (50%). Moreover, 94% of travelers share their own travel experiences online, providing valuable reference information to others. Destinations should consider how to best leverage this UGC to attract future visitors.

6) For Chinese travelers, “sustainability” is more about communities than carbon

In China, the concept of sustainability is tied more closely to the economic and cultural wellbeing of local communities, rather than reducing one's carbon footprint. Understanding this different approach to the topic of sustainability is essential to engaging in meaningful dialogue about sustainable travel with Chinese consumers and the Chinese travel industry.

2025 Travel



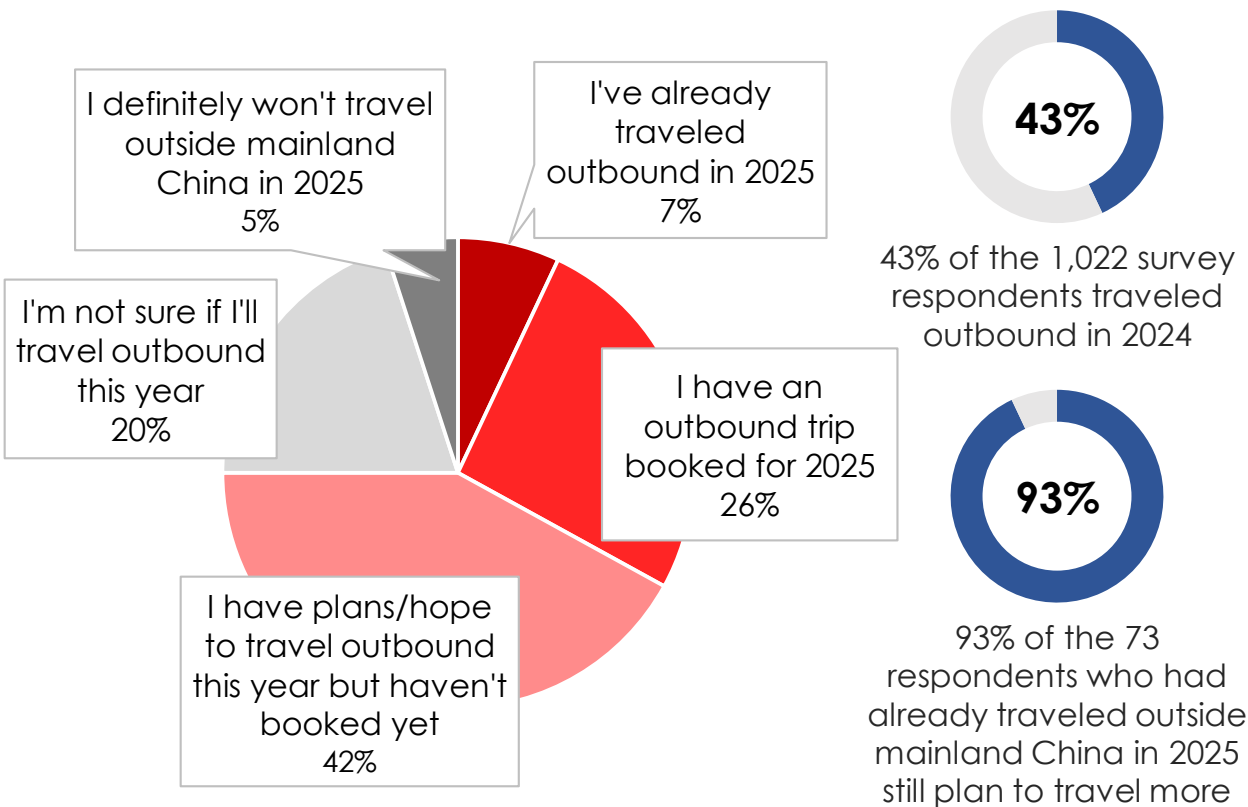
Since Dragon Trail started to track Chinese consumers' attitudes towards outbound travel, we have seen continually increased intentions among Chinese tourists to explore beyond mainland China. As of the first three months of 2025, three quarters of respondents had already taken an outbound trip or planned to take one this year. They also shared a diverse choice of destinations for outbound travel in 2025.

Looking into the remainder of the year, the Golden Week holidays in May and October, and summer vacation should all see peaks in Chinese outbound travel, with relaxation, culture and gourmet experiences the top travel purposes.

Chinese consumers' interest in outbound travel has risen compared to last year

As of mid-March, 75% of survey respondents are interested in traveling outbound this year, the highest percentage since we began asking Chinese travelers about their outbound travel plans in December 2022. 7% of respondents had already taken trips outside of mainland China this year, higher than the 5% in our March 2024 sentiment survey. Additionally, 93% of these respondents who had traveled outbound this year still intended to travel more. Significantly more respondents are planning outbound travel for the rest of the year compared to one year ago. 26% of respondents said they had outbound trips already booked, and another 42% said they hoped to travel outbound but hadn't booked yet, increasing from 18% and 40% respectively in March 2024. Since spring 2024, the proportion of respondents saying they definitely would not travel outbound has dropped from 10% to only 5%, showing improving intention of Chinese consumers to explore beyond mainland China.
























What are your 2025 outbound travel plans? N=1022



Short-haul destinations in Asia continue to lead in 2025 travel, while Australia, Austria, Russia and the Maldives show increased popularity

The top five outbound destinations last visited by respondents who had traveled outside of mainland China remained relatively consistent since last year, with Macau and Hong Kong at the top of the list, followed by Japan, South Korea and Thailand, which are all located in Asia. This is the first time since August 2023 that Australia, Austria and Russia were ranked among the top visited destinations, though each was selected by only a few respondents. The Maldives moved into the top 10 destinations for future booked or planned travel this year, up from 11th place in March 2024 and 12th in August 2024.

Outbound travel destinations outside mainland China in 2025

(N=73)		% Visited ¹	% repeat visit	(N=764)		% booked /plan to ²	% repeat visit
#1	 Macau	17.8%	76.9%	#1	 Japan	15.7%	26.7%
#2	 Hong Kong	15.1%	72.7%	#2	 South Korea	12.2%	23.7%
#3	 Japan	13.7%	80.0%	#3	 Hong Kong	10.3%	41.8%
#4	 South Korea	9.6%	57.1%	#4	 Macau	8.4%	39.1%
#5	 Thailand	8.2%	100.0%	#5	 Singapore	5.4%	14.6%
#6	 Australia	6.8%	40.0%	= #6	 Australia	4.1%	19.4%
#7	 New Zealand	4.1%	100.0%	= #6	 Thailand	4.1%	35.5%
= #8	 Ireland	2.7%	0.0%	#8	 France	3.8%	3.4%
= #8	 Austria	2.7%	0.0%	#9	 Maldives	3.1%	8.3%
= #8	 Denmark	2.7%	0.0%	= #10	 Iceland	2.9%	9.1%
= #8	 Russia	2.7%	50.0%	= #10	 Malaysia	2.9%	22.7%
= #8	 Singapore	2.7%	0.0%				

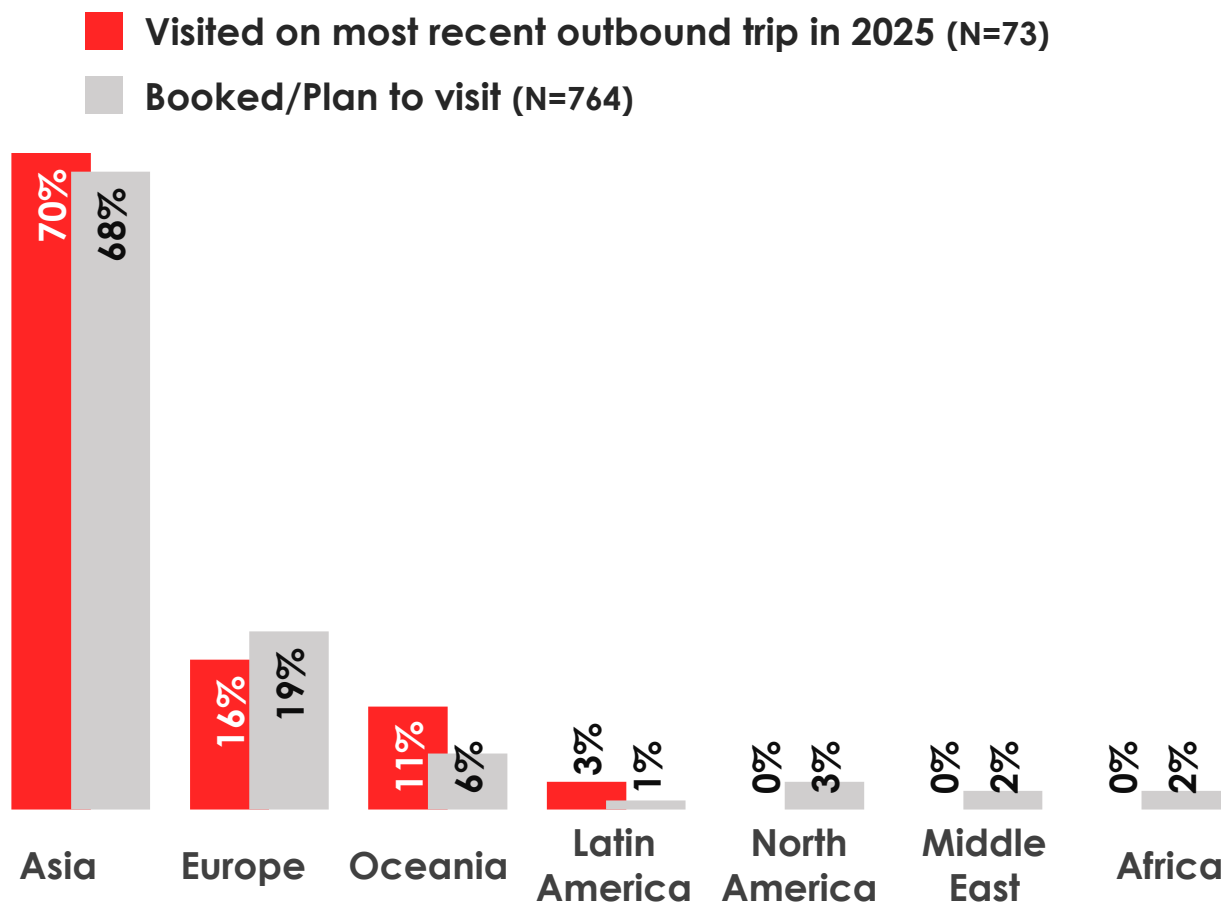
¹ Destination visited on respondent's most recent outbound trip in 2025

² Destination booked or planned to visit on respondent's next outbound trip in the next 12 months

Asia and Oceania attract higher proportions of Chinese travelers compared to a year ago

As in past surveys, the majority of respondents' most recent outbound trips (70%) and future planned trips this year (68%) are to Asian destinations, and these percentages are even higher than 67% and 60%, respectively, one year ago. While Europe continues to be the most popular long-haul destination, only 16% of respondents visited this region on their most recent outbound trip in 2025, and 19% selected it for future trips planned for the rest of the year, down from 19% and 27% in our March 2024 survey, respectively. Oceania also saw growing popularity since last year. In addition to traditionally popular Oceanian destinations of Australia and New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Guam are also on Chinese travelers' wish-lists for future travel in 2025.

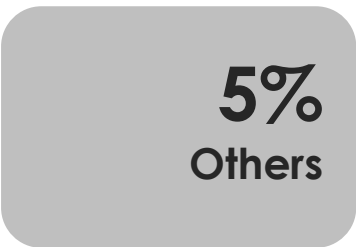
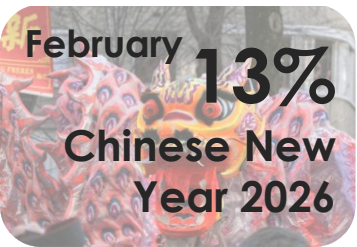
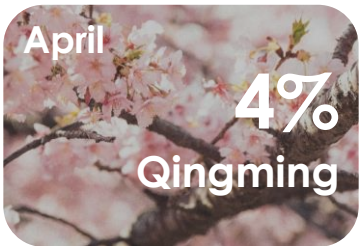
Travel regions outside of mainland China in 2025



Golden Week holidays and summer vacation drive Chinese outbound travel

We asked survey respondents who planned to travel outbound during the next 12 months, when they intended to take these trips. Over half (54%) of the respondents selected summer vacation, with another 45% planning to take outbound trips during October's National Day and Mid-Autumn Festival Golden Week holiday (1-8 October 2025). The May Labor Day Golden Week (1-5 May 2025) is another peak season for outbound travel, chosen by 24%. 5% of survey respondents indicated that they would avoid holiday seasons to travel outbound.

When do you plan to travel outbound in the next 12 months? (N=764)

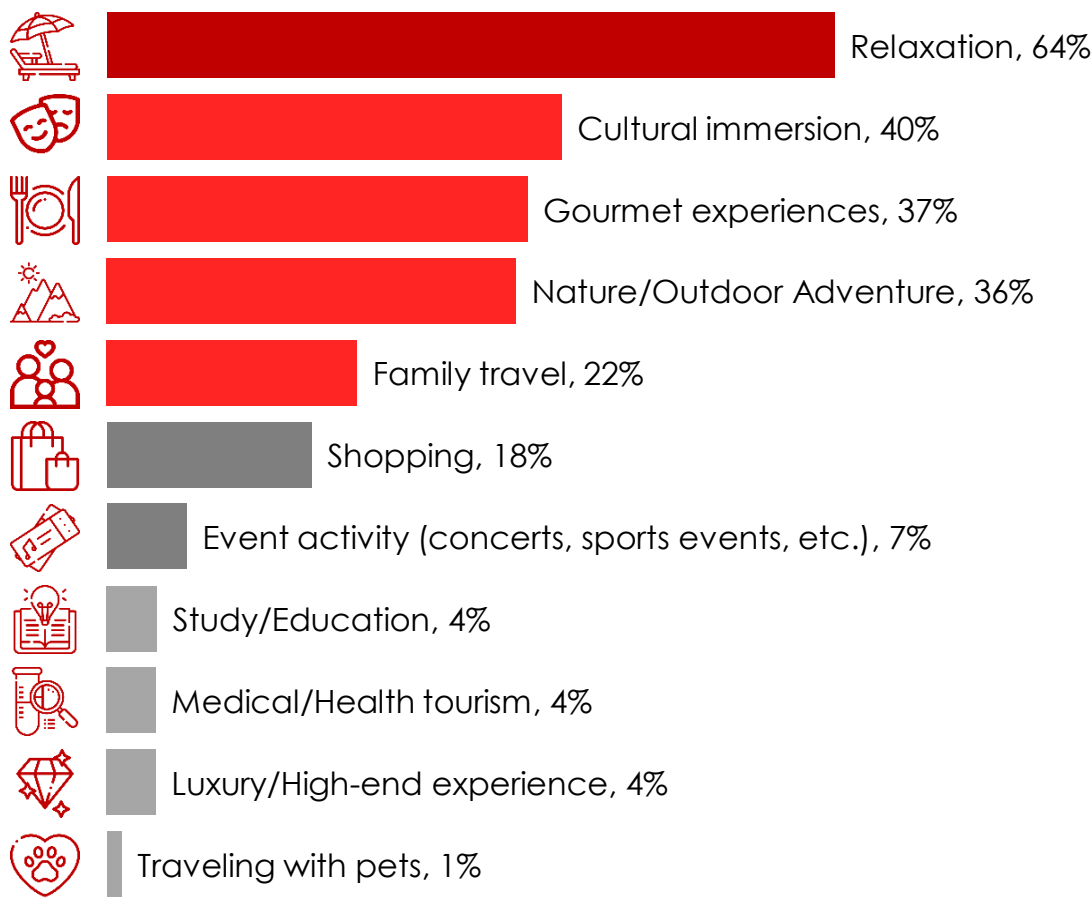


Photos from Unsplash

Relaxation, culture, and gourmet experiences are the top motivations for outbound travel in 2025

Relaxation remains the top purpose for traveling outbound in 2025, selected by nearly two-thirds (64%) of survey respondents. 40% said the main reason they traveled or planned to travel outbound this year is to have in-depth experiences of local culture, such as history, customs, and arts. Gourmet experiences and nature/outdoor adventure followed closely, chosen by 37% and 36%, respectively. Family travel was a priority for outbound travel for 22% of respondents.

What are your main purposes for traveling outbound in 2025? (N=769)



Icon from Freepik for Flaticon

Destinations



Photo by David Emrich for Unsplash

Chinese travelers show a sustained growth in their interest in nearly all global destinations, and perceptions of safety have also improved for almost every country included in our survey. We continue to see increased openness and interest in outbound travel as the fears and obstacles of the pandemic years fade away.

However, we also see how persistent safety concerns about Southeast Asian destinations are negatively impacting interest in the region. Our survey also examines which factors make Chinese travelers feel safer and more assured about a destination.

Northeast Asia has surpassed Europe as the region Chinese travelers most want to visit

We asked survey respondents to rank world regions on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “extremely interested” in visiting and 1 “not interested at all”. For the first time since 2023, when we introduced this question in our surveys, Northeast Asia surpassed Europe to be the most coveted travel destination. Southeast Asia is the only region with a score lower than it was one year ago. Since spring 2024, Africa has seen the biggest gains (+14.6%), and Latin America, Oceania, and North America all have scores that are more than 10% higher.

How interested are you in traveling to these areas of the world? (N=1022)

↑↓ vs. March 2024



Northeast Asia



Europe



Southeast Asia



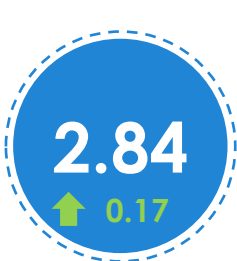
South Asia



Oceania



North America



Antarctica



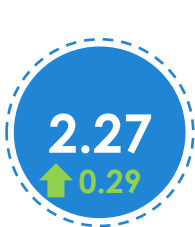
Middle East



Central Asia



Latin America



Africa

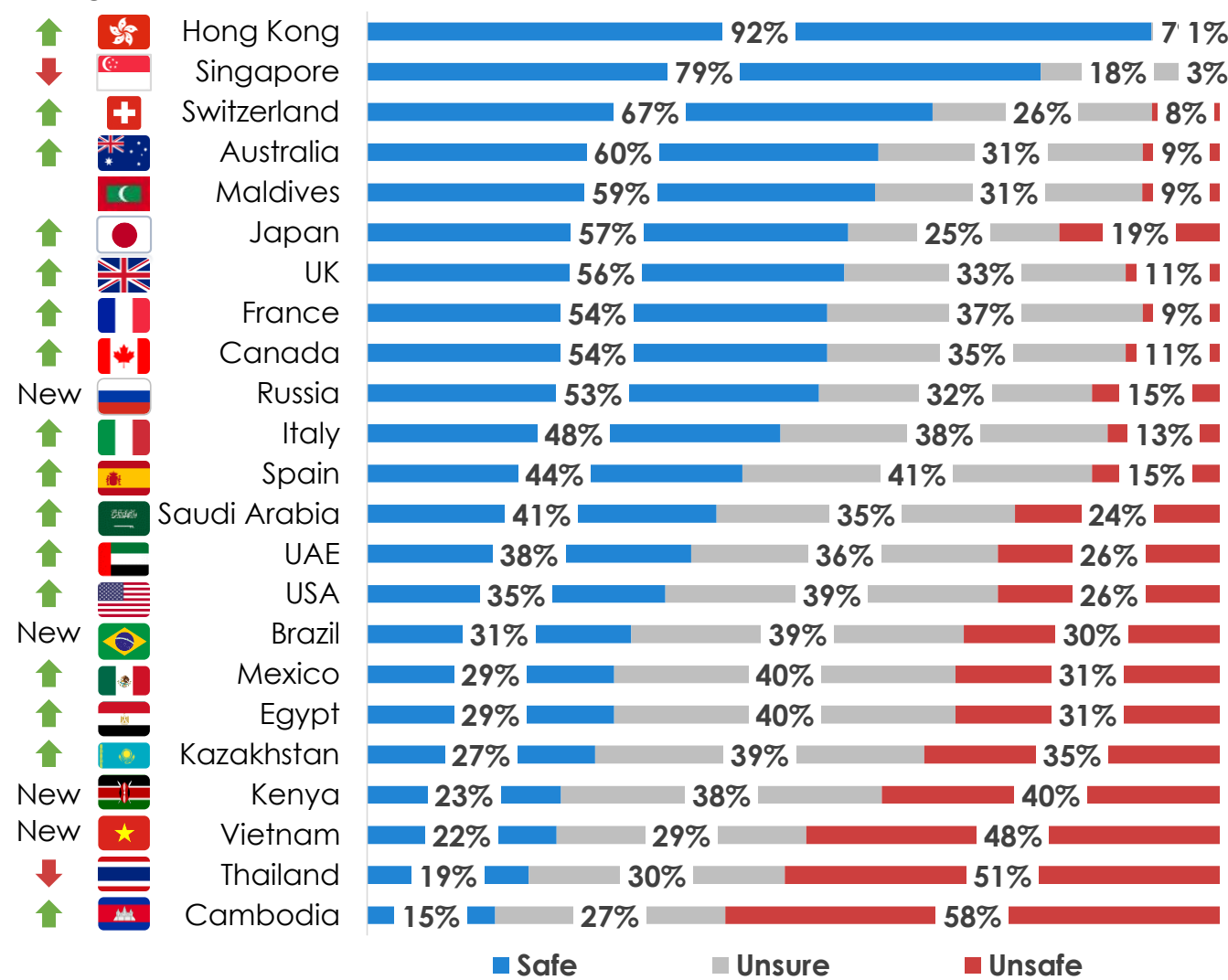
*Average score between 1-5, with 5 being extremely interested

Safety concerns persist for Southeast Asia, but most destinations' rankings keep improving

Chinese travelers' perceptions of travel safety around the world continue to improve, with nearly every destination on our list seen as safer than in August 2024. Singapore's rating declined slightly, but is still higher than at this time last year. Notably, this is the first time in four years of surveys where Chinese travelers see the US as more "safe" than "unsafe", though an increasing number said they were "unsure." At the bottom of the rankings, Southeast Asian countries are suffering from the impacts of organized crime in the region, with Thailand's safety rating continuing to decline – more than half of travelers now see Thailand as "unsafe", up from 38% last spring.

How safe is it to travel to the following destinations?

vs. August 2024



Chinese travelers look to governments for safety advice and initiatives to improve safety

Given that safety is of high priority to Chinese travelers, what makes them feel safer when they travel outbound? The responses reveal the importance of official advice and initiatives from both Chinese and destination governments. 54% said that travel safety assessments by Chinese authorities would make them feel safe, and 51% wanted to see initiatives to improve safety by local authorities in the destination. Positive information on social media (26%) and traditional media (25%) both impacted around one-quarter of travelers, while 28% felt safer in destinations with good medical and public health services.

What makes you feel safe about an outbound travel destination? (N=1022)

Travel safety assessments issued by Chinese authorities, 54%

Initiatives to improve safety by destination authorities, 51%

The destination has good medical and public health services, 28%

Other travelers sharing on social media that the destination is safe, 26%

Positive media reports on the safety of the destination, 25%

The destination has low risk of natural disaster, 22%

Purchase travel insurance, 20%

Hearing from friends or family that the destination is safe, 15%

Traveling in a group with other travelers, 9%

Traveling with a local guide, 8%

Hearing from travel agents that the destination is safe, 8%

Travel Journey

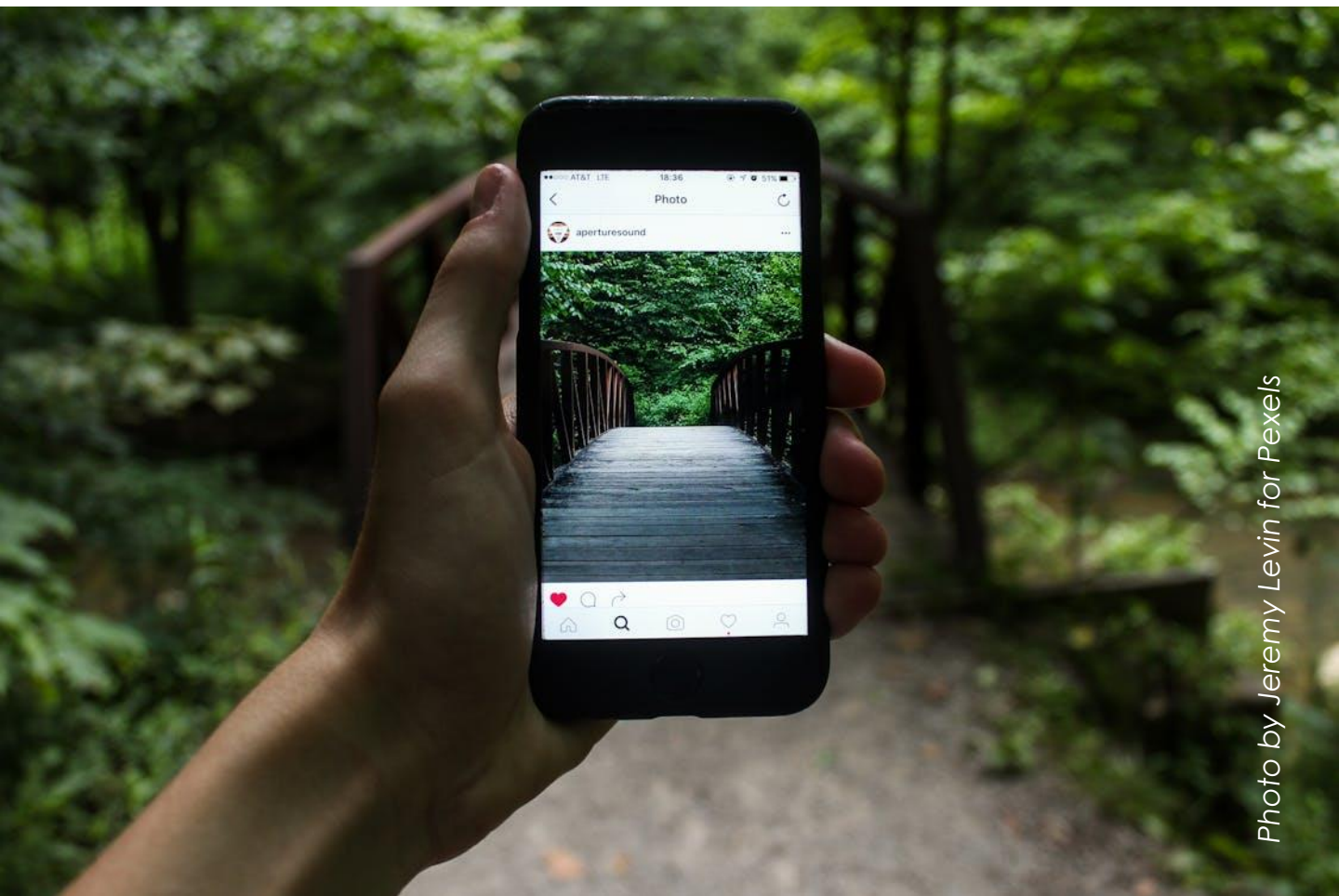


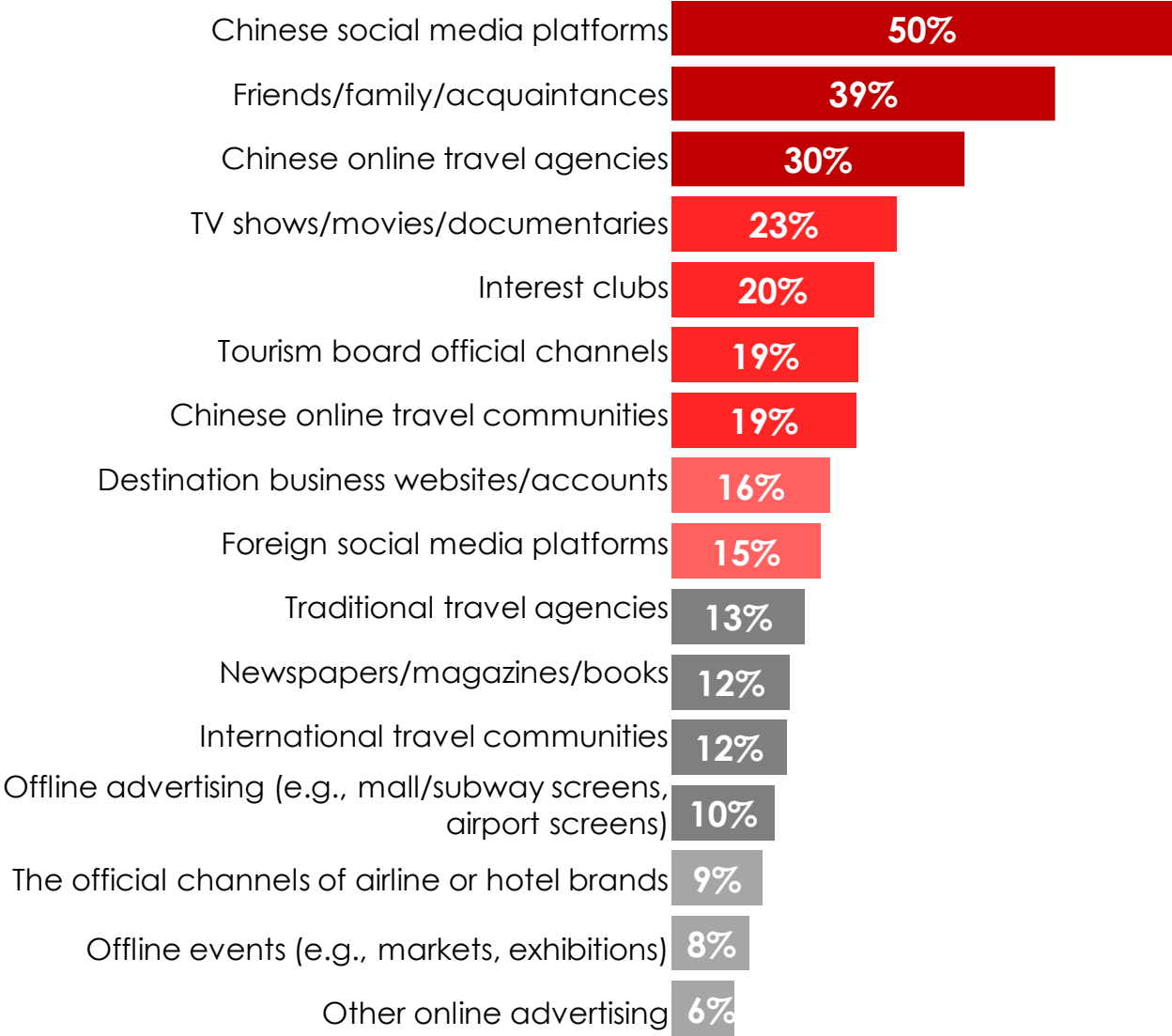
Photo by Jeremy Levin for Pexels

What roles do different outbound travel channels play at different stages of the traveler's journey? We surveyed experienced Chinese outbound travelers to identify their preferred platforms and information sources during the inspiration, search, booking, and sharing stages of travel, revealing distinct preferences for each part of the journey.

Half of Chinese outbound travelers get inspiration from Chinese social media platforms

Chinese social media apps such as Xiaohongshu and Douyin are the most important source of destination inspiration, chosen by 50% of survey respondents. 39% of Chinese outbound travelers get inspiration about outbound destinations from friends, family, and other acquaintances. 30% of survey respondents were inspired by content discovered through online travel agencies.

Journey of Chinese outbound travelers: Channels for destination inspiration (N=681)

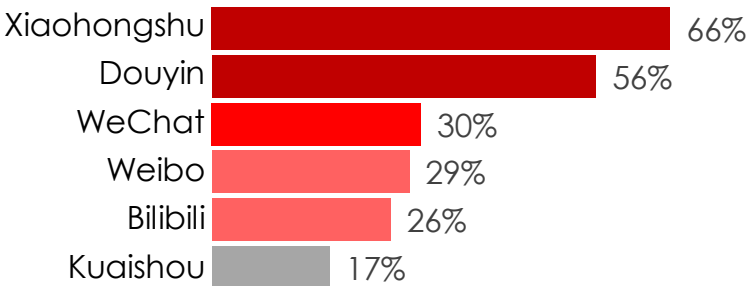


Ctrip is the most widely used outbound destination information channel, while Xiaohongshu is preferred by young travelers

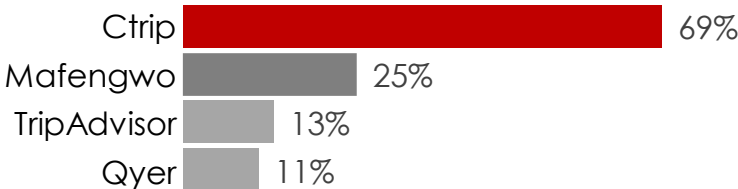
Ctrip is the most widely used channel for outbound destination information among Chinese outbound travelers (69%), especially among the 45–65 age group, with 76% of them choosing it (see Appendix B for data). Xiaohongshu (aka RedNote) is the most preferred destination information channel among young travelers, with 76% of those in the 18–24 age group and 71% in the 25–34 age group choosing it.

Journey of Chinese outbound travelers: Channels used for destination information (N=681)

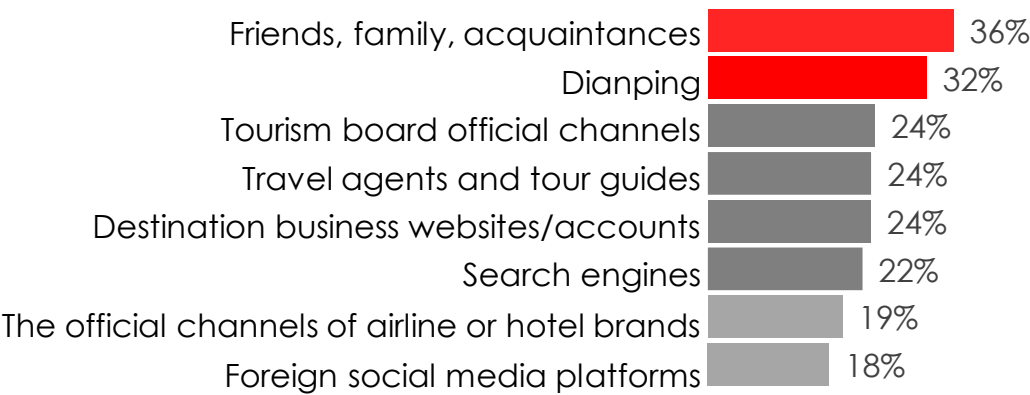
Chinese social media platforms



Online travel agencies/communities



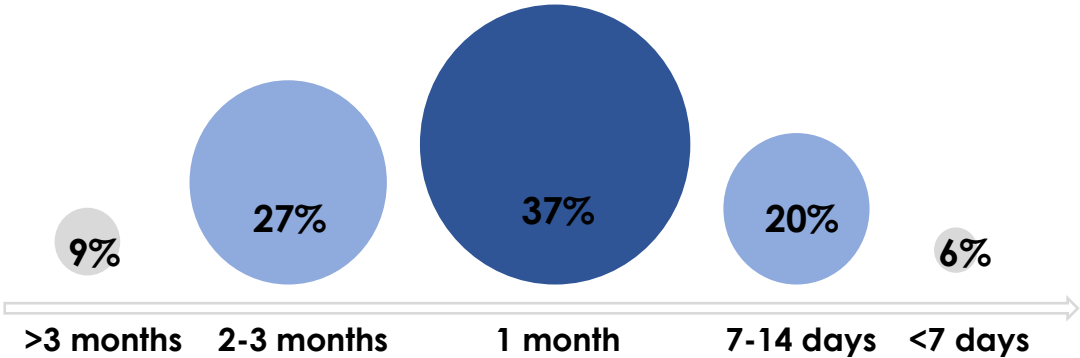
Others



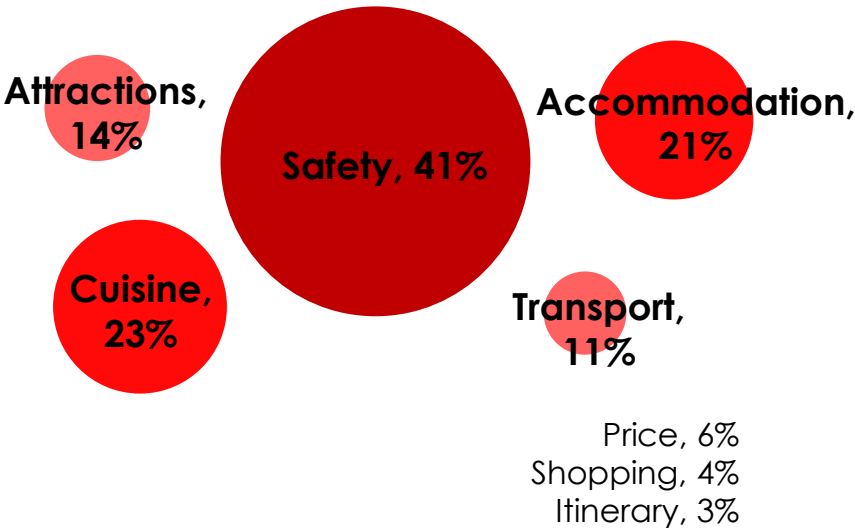
Safety is the key concern for Chinese outbound travelers when planning their trip

64% of Chinese outbound travelers start planning their trip 1–3 months in advance. When planning a trip, safety is the key factor that Chinese outbound travelers care about most (41%). Local cuisine (23%), location and choice of accommodation (21%), and experiences and attractions (14%) are also important concerns when planning a trip.

How far in advance do you generally start searching for destination-related travel information? (N=681)



Concerns for Chinese outbound tourists when planning their trips



Ctrip stands out as the most preferred booking channel across all product types

Chinese online travel agencies (OTAs) are the most preferred channel for survey respondents to book outbound travel, with Ctrip strongly in the lead – 71% purchase full travel packages and 66% book flights and hotels through this OTA. 35% of survey respondents use social media platforms to book comprehensive travel packages, while the use of social media platforms for booking individual travel products is lower, at 21% for flights and hotels, and 22% for other individual travel products like car rentals and attraction tickets.

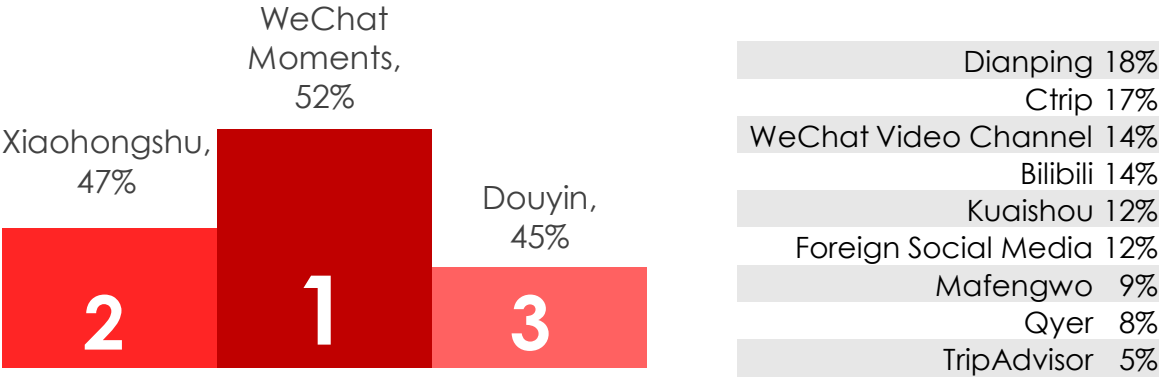
Journey of Chinese outbound travelers: Booking channels (N=681)

	Travel package	Air & hotel	Other individual travel product
Chinese OTAs			
Ctrip	71%	66%	55%
Qunar	45%	39%	33%
Meituan	39%	33%	37%
Fliggy	35%	31%	28%
Tongcheng	32%	33%	24%
Tuniu	17%	13%	11%
Social Media Platforms	35%	21%	22%
Foreign OTAs			
Booking.com	-	27%	-
Airbnb	-	22%	-
Agoda	-	16%	-
Klook	-	-	12%
Expedia	-	9%	9%
Online Travel Communities			
Mafengwo	31%	27%	25%
Qyer	14%	10%	12%
Official channels of airlines & hotels	-	24%	-
Official channels of attractions and car rental services, etc.	-	-	22%
Online traditional travel agencies	15%	13%	13%
Offline traditional travel agencies	13%	13%	13%

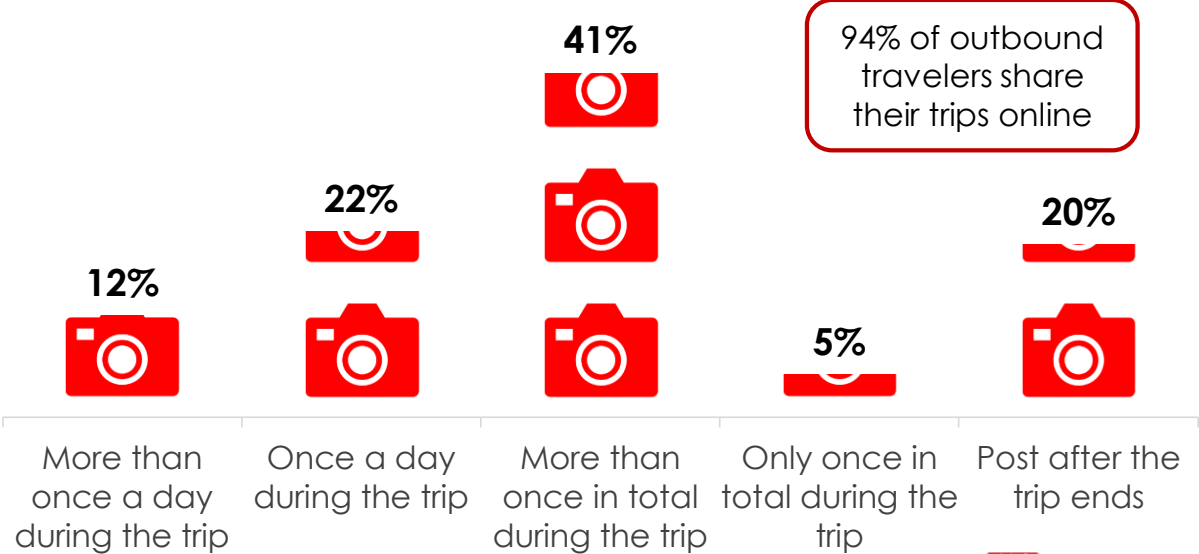
Chinese outbound travelers generally share online more than once during the trip

94% of surveyed Chinese outbound travelers have the habit of sharing their travel experiences online. Most share more than one post during their trip, with 34% of survey respondents sharing their experiences every day while traveling. 52% of Chinese outbound travelers enjoy sharing their travel experiences on WeChat Moments, followed by Xiaohongshu/RedNote (47%), and Douyin (45%). The travel experiences and guides they share on social media then provide practical reference information for other travelers.

Journey of Chinese outbound travelers: Sharing platforms (N=635)



Frequency of sharing outbound travel experiences (N=599)



Sustainable Travel



Photo by David Courbit for Unsplash

Sustainability is an important and timely topic for the travel industry, but it's one that faces many challenges. One key area highlighted by our survey is communication: Chinese travelers may have a different understanding of sustainability compared to that held more commonly in the west. They're interested in traveling sustainably and most are even willing to pay more, but they're also unsure where or how to find sustainable travel products.

For Chinese travelers, “sustainability” is more about communities than carbon footprints

What do we mean when we talk about “sustainable travel”? In China, the concept of sustainability is tied more closely to the economic and cultural wellbeing of local communities, rather than to the local or global natural environment. In fact, only 38% of survey respondents said they associated sustainable travel with cutting carbon emissions. Instead, 72% said that sustainability was about respecting local lifestyles, traditions, and cultures when traveling, and 61% thought about the positive impact of tourism on sustaining local economies. Understanding this different approach to the topic of sustainability is essential to engaging in meaningful dialogue about sustainable travel with Chinese consumers and the Chinese travel industry.

How do you understand sustainable travel? (N=1022)

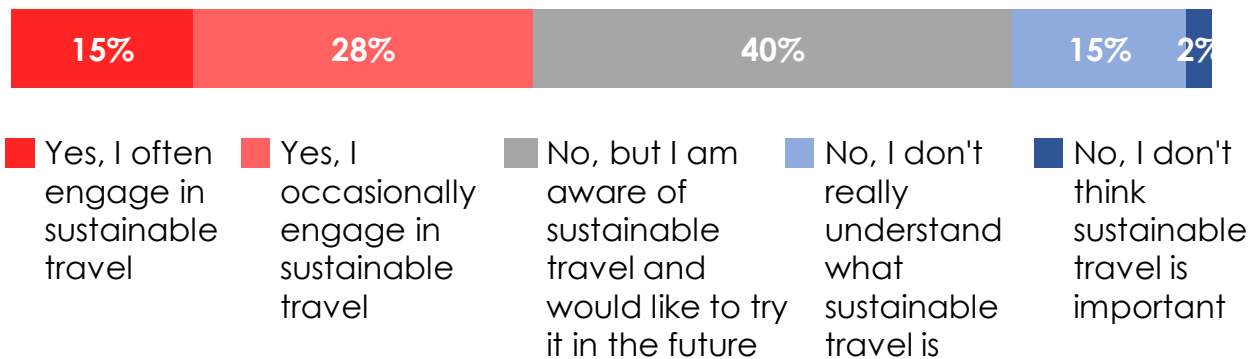


Never heard of or do not understand the concept of sustainable travel, 4%

Reducing waste and respecting destinations are key for respondents who travel sustainably

43% of survey respondents said they had engaged in sustainable travel. What does this mean for them? Reducing waste and avoiding disposable items like toiletries and water bottles are popular choices, as well as taking public transport over taxis. Travelers also brought up respect for local communities.

Have you engaged in sustainable travel during your past trips? (N=1022)



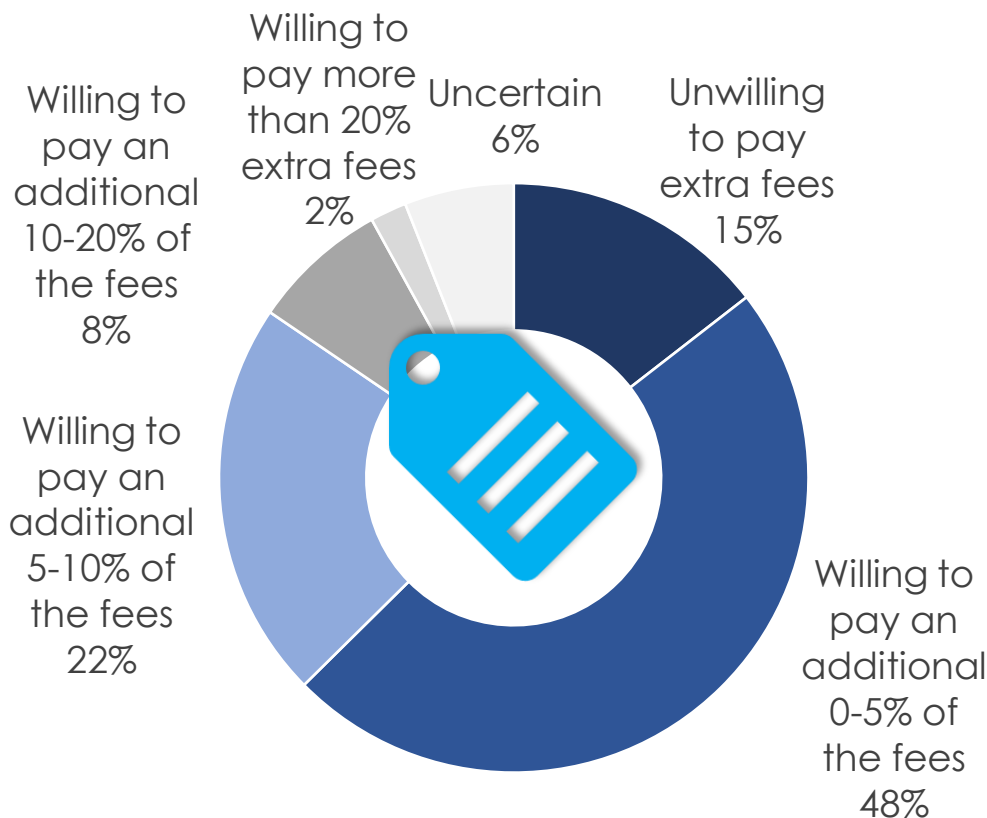
Sustainable travel behavior (N=444)



The majority of Chinese travelers are willing to pay more for sustainable travel products

79% of our survey respondents said they were willing to pay more for sustainable travel products or services. However, that doesn't mean they're willing to pay a *lot* more – around half would be willing to pay up to 5% extra. Just 10% are willing to pay more than 10% extra for travel products or services that are sustainable.

How much extra are you willing to pay for sustainable travel products or services? (N=1022)



Product development, promotion, and communication are all key to increasing sustainable travel choices

Although 42% of survey respondents said they thought the higher costs of sustainable travel products were a barrier to purchase, product availability and access were seen as bigger impediments. Half said that sustainable travel products were lacking clear labels, and 44% each said they didn't know how to find sustainable travel products, and that the choices of these products were too limited. A majority said they hoped travel agencies could offer more attractive sustainable travel products and services (62%) and a richer selection of products and services (59%).

Challenges and barriers to sustainable travel (N=1022)

How travel agencies can help with sustainable travel (N=1022)

50% thought sustainable travel products or services do not have clear labels

44% don't know how to find sustainable travel products or services

44% thought the choices for sustainable travel are limited

42% thought the costs of sustainable travel are high

62% want more attractive sustainable travel products or services

62% want discounts or rewards when choosing sustainable travel options

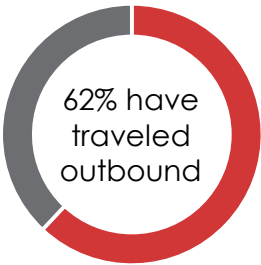
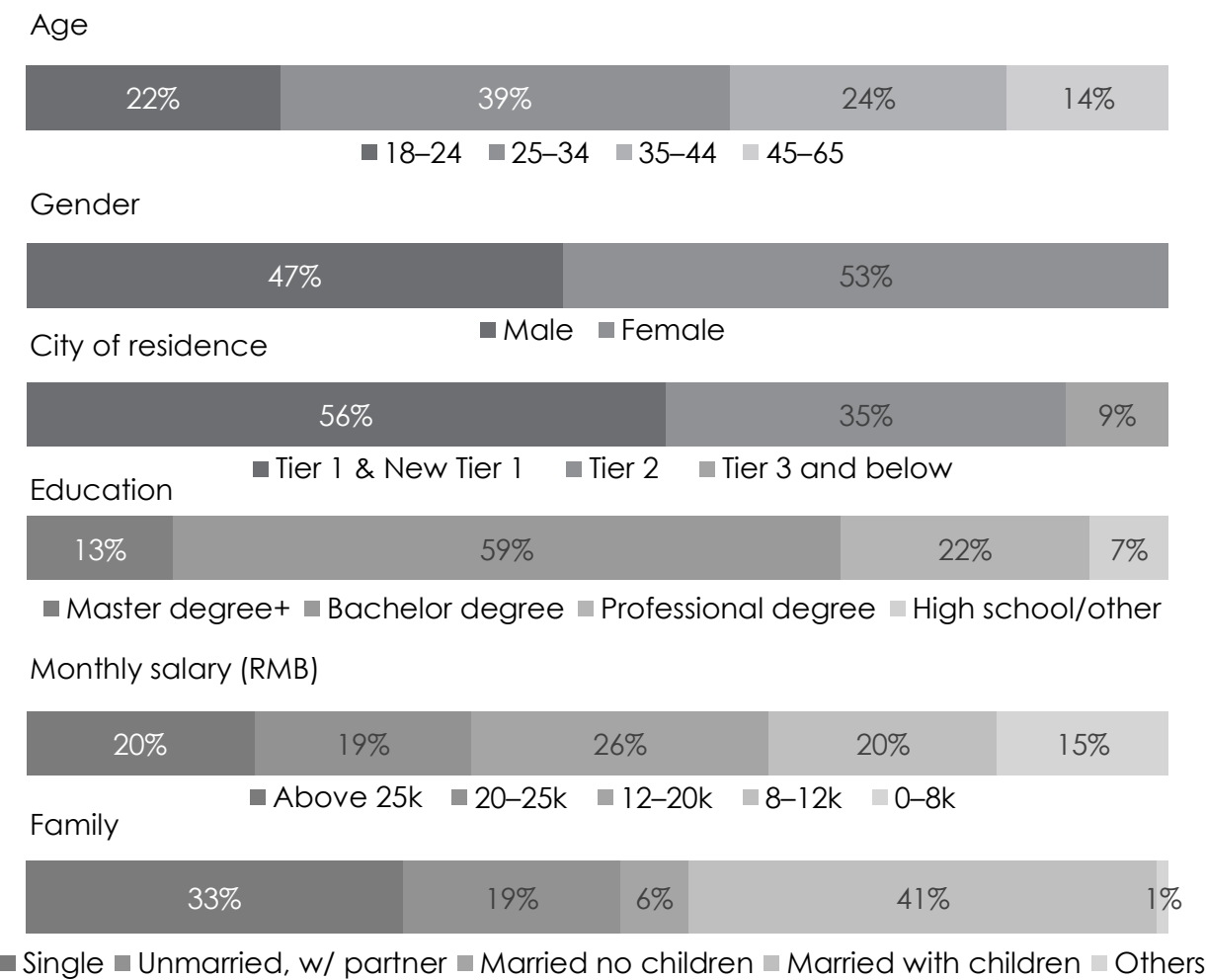
59% want a richer selection of sustainable travel options

43% want sustainable certification labels to be introduced

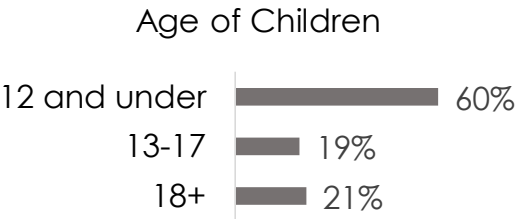
Methodology

From 12–18 March 2025, Dragon Trail Research conducted a 46-question survey on the overall sentiment of mainland Chinese travelers, using Tencent's survey panel. Our data cleaning process identified and removed invalid responses, resulting in a total of 1,022 valid responses.

Respondent age, gender, and city of residence were controlled with quotas to reflect market distribution status.

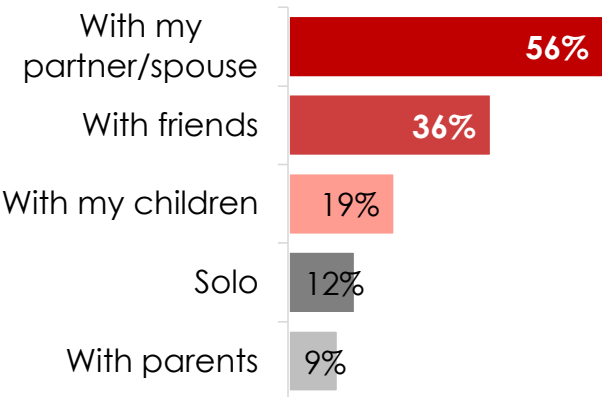


All survey respondents had interest in outbound travel. 62% had previously traveled outbound.

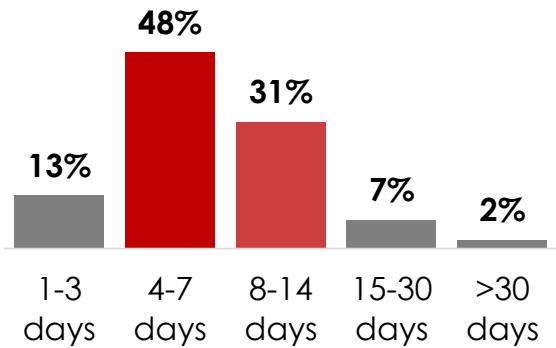


Appendix A

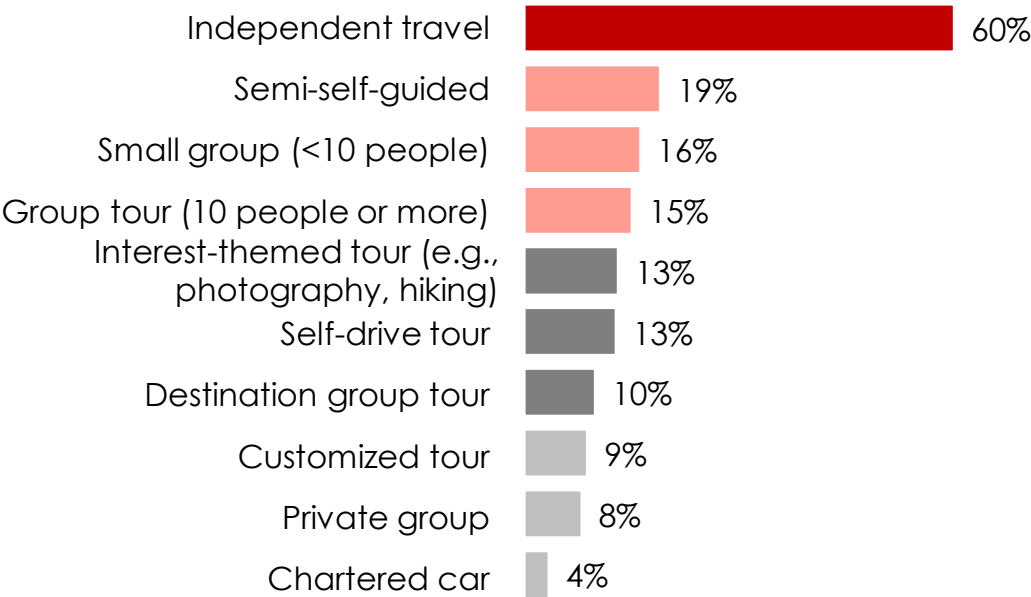
Whom did/will you travel with for your outbound trip in 2025?
N=769



What is/was the duration of your outbound trip in 2025?
N=769

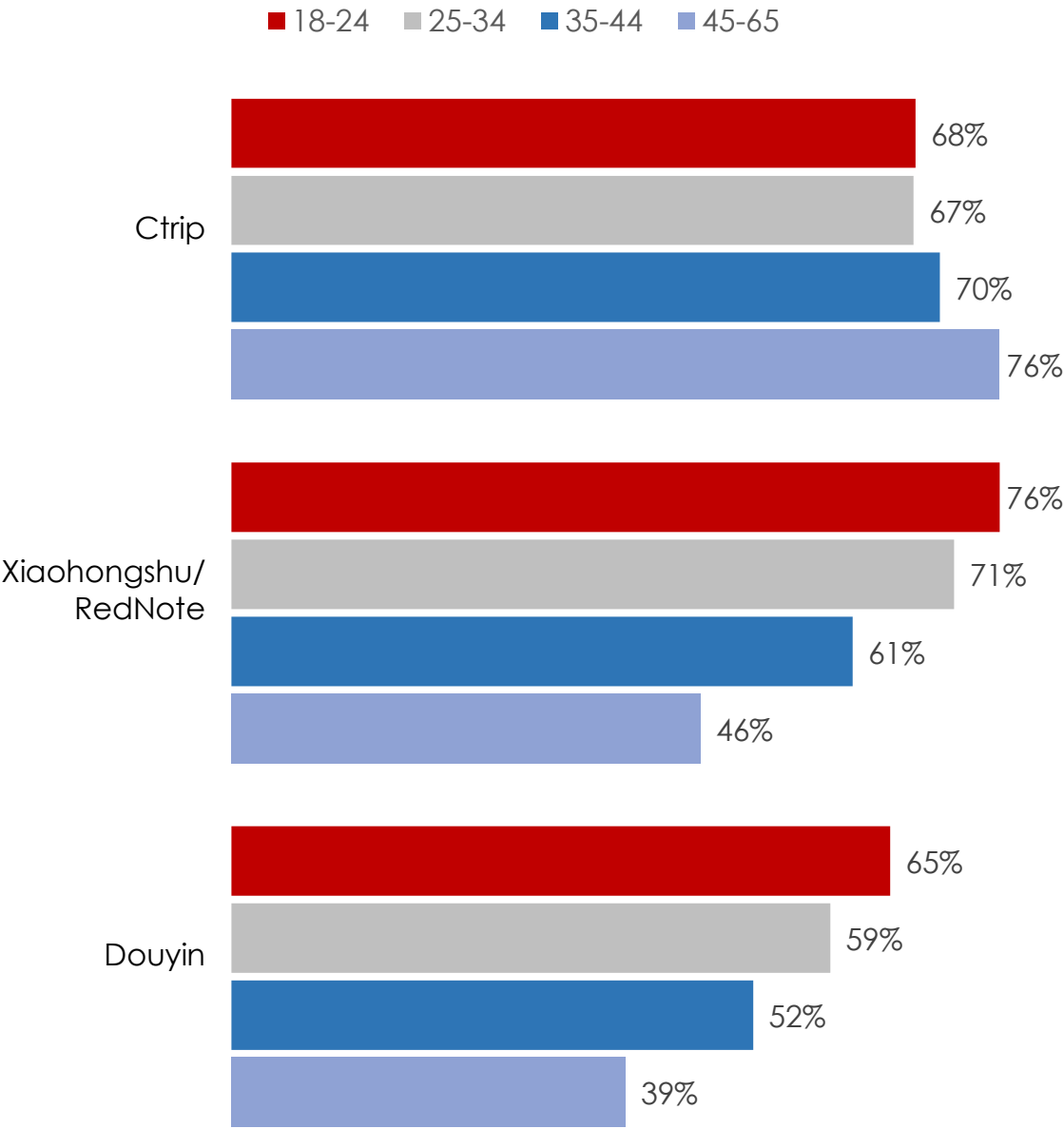


Which travel types do you prefer for your outbound trip(s) in 2025?
N=769



Appendix B

Top 3 destination information channels for Chinese outbound travelers in different age groups





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Dragon Trail Research empowers decision-making for the travel industry. Founded in 2019, Dragon Trail Research delivers quantitative and qualitative research fueled by statistics to help our clients uncover market trends, evaluate tactics, and engage their target audience.

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- Awareness & Satisfaction Studies
- Competitor Analysis
- Travel Trade Surveys
- Customized Research

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