

Nevada makes concerted effort to lure Chinese travelers

By Kathryn Reed

China is huge – and not just in size and population.

Since 2004, Nevada has been capitalizing on the desire of Chinese nationals to travel to the United States. And this month, Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., was in China to discuss trade and human rights issues. Robert Young was just appointed Nevada's trade representative in northern China. His job is to work with the Nevada Commission on Economic Development to entice Chinese companies to build operations in Nevada and invest cash in the Silver State.



Nevada would like to lure these Chinese tourists from Tiananmen Square outside the Forbidden City to the Silver State. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The U.S. Commercial Service, a trade promotion arm of the International Trade Administration within the U.S. Department

of Commerce, says in 2007, China was the 16th largest international market for the United States, with 397,405 Chinese visitors to the U.S. That number is expected to reach 579,000 this year. Chinese people spent a record \$2.56 billion in the States four years ago, with average expenditures of more than \$6,000 per person.

“Close to 90 percent of the Chinese nationals who visit the United States at some point visit Nevada,” Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Besides being second in charge of the Silver State, Krolicki heads the Nevada Commission on Tourism.

“Chinese tourists tend to stay longer, enjoy more hospitality, and produce more sales tax than any other visitor from the globe,” Krolicki said.

Nevada was the first state to open a tourism office on the mainland of China – which was in Beijing in 2004. The Shanghai office opened last summer.

With 1.4 billion people, China is a market Nevada wants to lure to the state. Gaming is one of the big draws, with most of the visitors having Las Vegas as their primary destination. The U.N. World Travel Organization says China is the fastest growing travel market in the world.

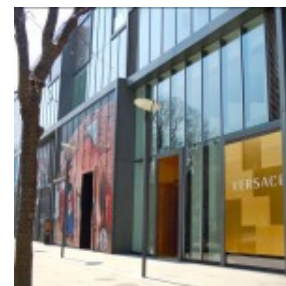
“We have a very vigorous campaign to get tourists to rural Nevada,” Krolicki said.

NCOT brings groups in to see the state. Suggested tours include trips to Lake Tahoe, Reno, Elko – to ski, experience the wilderness, and tap into to the Old West cowboy mystique.

When in Vegas, it’s not just the tables the Chinese people visit.

“The Caesars, MGMs and Wynn’s of the world produce more sales tax than gaming. The Chinese are attending shows, eating at

some of the finest restaurants, purchase goods at some of the finest shopping facilities in the world,” Krolicki said.



Beijing and other cities are full to high-end stores.

It's not that the Chinese can't get these things at home. Macau, in the southern part of the country, is well known for its gaming enterprises – of which Steve Wynn has tapped into. High-end stores abound throughout the country. Food is excellent – and much less expensive than restaurants in the U.S.

Still, like any traveler, they want to explore the rest of the world. One problem that remains is getting a visa to come to the United States. One woman living in Beijing told *Lake Tahoe News* when she looked into getting a visa it was going to take months just to get an appointment to begin the process.

Krolicki said when the NCOT offices book travel for people to come to Nevada a deal on the books between the governments allows the processing of paperwork to be sped up.

But he also admitted the young, single woman isn't who Nevada is marketing to.

“The number of millionaires that have the ability to travel who are Chinese nationals is extraordinary. That is the market that is comprising this outbound tourism profile,” Krolicki

said.



Renewable energy may be a goal, but like Las Vegas, China likes its water shows like this one in Xi'an.

The lieutenant governor was also involved with about a half dozen other states in creating a memorandum of understanding for China to invest in the United States – especially when it comes to renewable energy like wind turbines.

“All of these little pieces add up to some very satisfying successes. The relationship works both ways,” Krolicki said.

Reid’s office, according to the *Las Vegas Sun*, said his group would do “site visits of American investments and clean energy projects in Chengdu, Beijing and Xi’an.” These are the same three cities *Lake Tahoe News* visited this spring. With the abundance of pollution from coal in Xi’an, clean energy was not obviously visible under the gray skies. Locals said the air is worse in winter.