

# Chinese visitors eager to buy Calif. products

By Karen E. Klein, Bloomberg

California's tourism businesses are cashing in on growth across the Pacific: China became the state's No. 1 overseas visitor market last year, overtaking the U.K. In 2012 an estimated 677,000 Chinese tourists spent almost \$2 billion in California, a 31 percent increase over 2011.

The numbers are on track to grow by double digits again this year, according to hospitality industry group Visit California.

Almost half of all Chinese visitors to the U.S. go to California, the group says. While large hotels, brand-name retailers, and theme parks such as Disneyland and Universal Studios attract the cross-Pacific visitors, an increasing number of small, largely immigrant-owned businesses are also vying to sell tours, meals, and merchandise to Chinese tourists.

Take Therese Liu, a Taiwanese native who arrived in the U.S. as a student in 1993. After working in marketing and as a hospital interpreter, she started a shopping tour business in 2010 that uses the tag line "Dim Sum and Then Some."

Liu is often called on to speak to retailers eager to capture the new tourists, who spend on average \$6,000 each while in the state. She tells them to stock iconic American-made brands, particularly watches, gold jewelry, health supplements, and red wine – along with suitcases to carry the purchases home.

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