



## News Release

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### **VISIT CALIFORNIA LAUNCHES 1<sup>st</sup> CONSUMER MARKETING CAMPAIGN IN CHINA & APPOINTS MISS GAO YUANYUAN AS CALIFORNIA TOURISM AMBASSADOR**

*Campaign activation & celebrity ambassador introduction are centerpiece of Visit  
California's tourism promotion during the Governor's Mission*

**(SACRAMENTO, CA – April 12, 2013)** – Visit California activated California's first direct-to-consumer destination marketing campaign as part of the Governor's Trade and Investment Mission to China April 8-16, 2013. Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. and Visit California president and CEO Caroline Beteta also announced the appointment of the Golden State's first tourism ambassador from Mainland China, model-actress Miss Gao Yuanyuan, during a press conference in Shanghai.

"California remains the go-to place for Chinese visitors who cross the Pacific to visit our country," said Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. "These visitors are honored guests who carry on a long tradition of friendship between China and the Golden State."

"We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to capitalize on the rapid growth in outbound tourism from China," said Visit California president and CEO, Caroline Beteta. "Tourism is a powerful economic engine in California and China will become our number one overseas market in 2013, with over \$2 billion in annual spending projected."

The new campaign is the first Visit California brand campaign to target the Chinese consumer directly and complements Visit California's travel trade and public relations activities, which have been ongoing since 2008, when the official state tourism board opened offices in Beijing and Shanghai. Visit

California increased the annual China marketing budget by \$1 million this year and contracted with China-based WE Marketing Group to add brand advertising to the marketing mix.

“Visit California will invest a total of \$1.6 million this year to continue attracting Chinese visitors to the Golden State, ensuring we continue to be the top destination for Chinese visitors to the U.S.,” said Beteta. “In addition to reaching the consumer and generating awareness with this social media campaign, we are honored to add Miss Gao Yuanyuan to our roster of international celebrity tourism ambassadors. She embodies the California brand and spirit and will share her authentic passion for California with the Chinese public, inspiring their California dreams.”

Gao Yuanyuan’s appointment was central to the launch of Visit California’s new campaign, which kicked-off with advertisements promoting Visit California’s Sina Weibo site on 12 LED billboard screens throughout Shanghai the week of April 8-27. Fans of Visit California’s Weibo page have the opportunity to participate in a special quiz that will qualify them to win a VIP Grand Prize trip to California. Gao Yuanyuan’s star power will amplify the promotion, as she engages her over 20 million Weibo fans, encouraging them to participate in the quiz to be entered to win the California trip. Governor Brown officially launched the competition with the push of a button during Visit California’s press conference in Shanghai.

The press conference was one of a series of events Visit California hosted for travel trade and media during the Governor’s Mission. The mission—with a delegation of nearly 150 strong representing a range of business sectors—included the official opening of the California-China Office of Trade and Investment. In addition to advancing the Governor’s state policy objectives, the trade mission focused on building and strengthening the economies between California and China, of which tourism is a vital force. For every dollar spent by Visit California to attract Chinese visitors, \$335 in visitor spending is injected into the California economy.

Currently, California is the top U.S. destination for Chinese visitors with 47.5% market share. China is California’s fastest growing inbound tourism market, showing double-digit growth year over year. In 2011, China was California’s fourth largest overseas market with more than half a million visitors – only the U.K., Australia and Japan ranked higher (1-3, respectively). China will become California’s

definitive number one overseas market by arrival volume in 2013.

Chinese visitors spent a record \$1.5 billion in California in 2011, which is the equivalent of \$277 per day during the average 10.6-night stay, or approximately \$2,900 per visitor. The number of Chinese visitors to California is expected to increase 113% between 2011 and 2015 – for a total of 1.1 million annual arrivals in 2015.

## **ABOUT VISIT CALIFORNIA**

Visit California is a non-profit organization with a mission to develop and maintain marketing programs – in partnership with the state’s travel industry – that keep California top-of-mind as a premier travel destination. According to Visit California, travel and tourism expenditures total over \$102 billion annually in California (20 percent of which is international), support jobs for 893,000 Californians and generate \$6.3 billion in state and local tax revenues. For more information about California visit [gocalifornia.cn](http://gocalifornia.cn).