CHINA-JAPAN MARKET GROWS WITH DOUBLING OF TOURISM, FOUR NEW AIRLINES AND GREATER CITY-PAIRS

News / Airlines

There is no mistaking the political tension from China in creating a special holiday, with full military parade, on 03-Sep-2015 to commemorate "The 70th anniversary of Chinese People's Anti-Japanese War". Relations between Japan and China have been sour, including in late 2012 when air trafficquickly dissipated. But despite what the special holiday's name may suggest, Japan and China's aeropolitical relations are at their strongest in recent times.

China has granted approval for more services from prized Tokyo Haneda that were agreed upon some years ago but not implemented due to frosty relations. But Haneda is a small part of the growth between China and Japan.

Chinese visitors to Japan have doubled in 2015, and four new Chinese airlines launched Japanese service in 2014 and 2015. 34 Chinese cities have service to Japan in 2015, up from 16 in 2010. Most growth has occurred from Shanghai, with LCC Spring Airlines adding as many seats as China Eastern. Spring now has a 7% share of the China-Japan market.

Travelling to Japan now acceptable – and very popular

Relations between Japan and China may still be weak, but they are better than in the past, such as around 2012 when there was Chinese nationalism to boycott Japan. China even had travel agencies, which account for larger group bookings, de-emphasised Japanese travel. Spring Airlines received a Chinese public backlash when it advertised heavily discounted Japanese flights during the peak of the traffic downturn; it was labeled unpatriotic.

The geopolitical fundamentals have not changed – there are still disputes, perhaps even

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heightened, over islands and wartime apologies. But Chinese consumers now do not think twice about visiting Japan and snapping up rice cookers and cosmetics, all thought to be of higher quality than Chinese versions.

Chinese visitors to Japan have more than doubled in the first six months of 2015

Before the busy 2015 lunar new year travelling season, one of China's state newspapers ran an editorial encouraging Chinese to limit their purchases in Japan and instead buy at home to support the local economy; it fell on deaf ears. Chinese visitors to Japan have more than doubled in the first six months of 2015 compared to 2014. 2014 was already a record year for Chinese arrivals into Japan.

Chinese airlines account for 67% of the market, up from 58% in 2010

Chinese airlines dominate the China-Japan market. As noted above, in 2014 there were more Japanese visitors to China than Chinese to Japan, but this is rapidly changing with Japan's tourism influx.

Only two Japanese airlines have served China in recent times. Chinese airlines are more numerous, with rapid growth in recent years.

In 2005, six Chinese airlines served Japan. By 2010 this increased to only seven. But in 2015, 13 Chinese airlines serve Japan. This includes four Chinese airlines that entered the Japanese market in 2014 or 2015.

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