



(For immediate release)

GROUP LEISURE TRAVEL (GLT) PROGRAM WITH U.S. COMMERCIAL SERVICE IN SHANGHAI BECOMES PERMANENT

(Monday, April 11, 2011; Tumon, Guam) In an effort to provide a more efficient visa application process for group travelers from China, Guam Visitors Bureau (GVB) has partnered with the U.S. Commercial Service in Shanghai to launch the Group Leisure Travel (GLT) program.

The U.S. Commercial Service formed GLT as a pilot program in November 2010 following concerns by GVB and Chinese travel agents about the shortage of U.S. visa interview slots in peak travel periods like Chinese New Year. The response was so positive the program has now become permanent in China's largest city.

It works in a step-by-step process starting with deadlines imposed on travel agents to submit customer information for groups of more than 20 people to the U.S. Commercial Service. Names are then pre-screened and forwarded to the Visa Section for interview scheduling, bypassing typically long and arduous wait times. If initial deadlines are not met, the U.S. Commercial Service gives the interview slots to another travel agent.

"Our partnership with the U.S. Commercial Service allowed us to support Shanghai travel agents in selling almost all charter air seats during the peak Chinese New Year travel time," said GVB Marketing Manager Pilar Laguaña. "All of the agents licensed to sell outbound travel to the U.S. in Shanghai are aware of this program thanks to workshops held by the U.S. Commercial Service. We look forward to its permanent placement in the group travel industry within that city."

If the Shanghai GLT program proves to be a viable option for group travelers in the coming months, GVB will advocate for other U.S. Consulates to implement it in their cities.

"Programs like this will help us encourage special package tours and possibly MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions) travel," said GVB Acting General Manager Joann Camacho. "It's one way we can help ease travel for visitors from China until a final decision is handed down regarding the inclusion of China in the Guam-CNMI visa waiver program."

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