

Chinese spend US\$1,800 on outbound trip to celebrate Valentine's Day

An increasing number of Chinese couples are celebrating this year's Valentine's Day by traveling abroad, which will cost them 12,154 yuan (about US\$1,766) on average, reports say.

According to a report published recently by Ctrip, one of China's largest tour booking websites, many couples choose to travel between Feb. 10 and 14, with domestic travel and short trips to foreign countries as a preference. About 55% of the couples surveyed have booked outbound tours, which will cost them 12,154 yuan. The total cost for both domestic and outbound trips is expected to reach 6,028 yuan on average.

Couples in first-tier cities, namely, Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou, take the most outbound trips, according to flight booking data released by Qunar, another tour booking website. Couples in Shanghai choose to fly to Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Tokyo to spend the Valentine's Day. Couples in Beijing and the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou prefer nearby destinations, with the former heading to South Korea and Japan, and the latter flying to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

As this year's Valentine's Day falls on a weekday, many couples who don't have time to travel choose to go to hotels. Young Chinese couples who are born in the 1990s in second-tier cities have contributed to 35 to 45 percent more hotel bookings than last year, according to the Qunar data. Their favorite love hotels are priced between 220 yuan to 360 yuan per night, higher than on average days.

Apart from traveling around and staying at hotels, giving presents remains a popular way of celebrating the Valentine's Day. According to a survey by Zhenai.com, a Chinese matchmaking website, 77.4% of respondents believed couples should celebrate the day and give presents to their loved ones. More than 50% of couples will give presents priced over 1,000 yuan. Men prefer watches, clothes and electronic products, while women like jewelry, roses, and digital "red envelopes," digital cash gifts that are popular on China's social-networking app WeChat.

The UK leaving the EU is no divorce and we certainly do not have to pay

alimony

One of the more absurd analogies that pass for debate in the EU is that the EU and the UK need a divorce settlement. For a body which loves Treaties and lawyers it is bizarre. The Treaty makes no provision to require a departing state to pay an extra one off payment, nor does it seek or have any power over former states to carry on paying contributions. There is no need for lengthy negotiations on this obvious point. The answer to the request for a large one off financial contribution is No.

To make this a more interesting and longer article, I will however extend the divorce metaphor that so many like. Were this a divorce, it is between two high earning partners. The domineering husband, the EU, earns six times as much as his UK wife. He lives in a large suburban family home in Berlin, with a smart modern flat in Brussels. His wife has a country cottage in Wiltshire where she has retreated to as whenever they meet she just gets shouted at and told what to do. He has a large Mercedes. She drives a modern Mini.

Fortunately there are no children from the marriage. She is generously offering a clean break settlement to the husband to speed things up and to get on with her life, free of his endless demands for cash and obedience. It's none of her business that he has run up huge bills with his Greek affairs, as she did not agree to any of those and made clear her wish to keep out of it all at the time.

As the husband wishes to undertake the divorce in a foreign court and she intends to live under UK law it is difficult to see how the husband thinks he can carry on with his demands once his foreign jurisdiction no longer applies.

Shandong loans 50B yuan in battling poverty

East China's Shandong Province provided over 50 billion yuan (7.3 billion U.S. dollars) of loans for poverty reduction in 2016, benefiting 300,000 impoverished people, authorities said Tuesday.

Banks were organized to offer over 30 specific credit products after the province carried out a field survey on 1.8 million poverty-stricken households and 21,000 businesses aimed at poverty alleviation, according to a statement issued by the Jinan branch of the People's Bank of China.

Among the loans, over 1 billion yuan was poured into poverty-alleviation industrial sectors, such as tourism, e-commerce and the photovoltaic

industry.

Companies in poor areas were also encouraged to issue medium-term notes, corporate bonds and short-term bonds, securing total financing of 52.3 billion yuan.

An information system was also developed last year to evaluate the effect of these financial measures on poverty reduction.

Beijing issues yellow alert for smog

Beijing issued a yellow alert for heavy air pollution Tuesday as a new round of smog hit the city, authorities said.

The alert indicates an air quality index of over 200, or over 150 micrograms of PM 2.5 per cubic meter of air for two consecutive days, was issued at 10 a.m., according to a statement by the city's air pollution emergency response office.

Air quality will improve around noon Thursday, according to the statement.

Outdoor construction will be limited, while more road cleaning will be conducted.

Beijing has a four-tier color alert system for pollution, with red the highest, followed by orange, yellow and blue.

Smog is also predicted in large parts of northern China on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Southwest China province reports two H7N9 cases

Southwest China's Sichuan Province reported two human H7N9 avian flu cases Tuesday, bringing the total number of infections in the province this year to six.

One of the patients is a 60-year-old man surnamed Huang, in Pengxi county, while the other is a 48-year-old woman surnamed Zhou, in Zhongjiang county. They are both in critical condition, according to the provincial health and family planning commission.

No symptoms were found among those in close contact with them. Local authorities have taken disease control measures.

Sichuan reported its first H7N9 case in early February.

H7N9 is a bird flu strain first reported to have infected humans in China in March 2013. Infections are most likely to strike in winter and spring.