

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.

Reported killing of more than 100 people by soldiers in DR Congo could constitute excessive use of force – UN rights arm

14 February 2017 – At least 101 people are reported to have been killed by soldiers in clashes between military forces and members of the Kamuina Nsapu militia in central Democratic Republic of the Congo over the last five days, the United Nations human rights wing has said.

Some 39 individuals among those killed in the violence between 9-13 February were women, caught in the shooting, when Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) soldiers opened fire indiscriminately with machine guns when they saw militia fighters, Liz Throssell, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), told the media at the bi-weekly news briefing at the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG), citing information received from several sources.

The militia members were reportedly armed mainly with machetes and spears.

“We are deeply concerned at the reported high number of deaths, which if confirmed would suggest excessive and disproportionate use of force by the soldiers,” said Ms. Throssell, noting that the UN Joint Human Rights Office is seeking to verify the exact number of victims.

Calling on the FARDC soldiers to abide by standards under national law and international human rights law in their responses and urged the military commanders to reinforce this message with their troops, she added:

“In particular to exercise restraint and to use force only when necessary and proportionate to the threat, to minimize damage and injury and to respect and preserve human lives.”

According to OHCHR, this latest violence was said to have occurred in and around the town of Tshimbulu in DR Congo’s Kasai Central Province.

follows atrocities committed by both sides it has documented since August last year, when a customary chief (after whom the Kamuina Nsapu militia is named) was killed by the armed forces.

Calling on the authorities for a full and independent investigation into the latest violence, the UN human rights office offered its support to investigations into others allegations of serious human rights violations and abuses committed in the context of the ongoing conflict in Kasai Central Province by the FARDC and the militia.

Given the ongoing violence, we also reiterate our call for increased efforts to find durable solutions to conflicts with customary chiefs in Kasai Central Province," said Ms. Throssell.

Nine countries join UN-supported network to halve maternal, newborn deaths in clinics

14 February 2017 – A health network is being created, with support of United Nations agencies, in nine countries – Bangladesh, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda – whose Governments have pledged to halve maternal and newborn deaths in health facilities by 2022.

The new Network for Improving Quality of Care for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, will help countries to improve the quality of care mothers and babies receive in their health facilities and respect the patients' rights, according to a press release.

"Every mother and infant deserves to receive the highest quality of care when they access health facilities in their communities," said Dr. Anthony Costello, director of the Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health at the UN World Health Organization (WHO).

With support from the WHO, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and partners, the Quality of Care Network will use a web-based system to build a community of health practitioners, which will develop a strategy to improve quality of care, brainstorm ideas and collect information and experiences.

The Network will also use the UN agency's eight new *Standards for improving quality of maternal and newborn care in health facilities* to improve the provision and quality of health care. These include, for example, having competent and motivated health professionals, maintaining access to clean water and equipment, and ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of patients.

Births in health facilities have increased in the past decade, said Dr. Costello. Attention is now shifting from access to care to improving the quality of care so that countries can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals targets to end preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths by 2030.

Each year, some 303,000 women around the world die during pregnancy and childbirth, and some 2.7 million babies die during the first month.