

# China visitor numbers still flying high

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DESPITE warning of a Chinese economic slowdown, tourism leaders maintain hope visitor numbers will remain strong over Chinese New Year.

The news comes as China Eastern Airlines returns to Cairns from Friday operating 36 flights over the next 12 weeks.

The airline will fly direct from Shanghai three times a week until March 2.

The carrier last operated 10 flights from Shanghai between December 2017 and February this year to coincide with Chinese New Year.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland chief executive Pip Close said growth from China was maintained with 204,000 visitors to Tropical North Queensland last financial year, about half of Chinese visitors to Queensland.

“The China Eastern charter flights direct from Shanghai to Cairns will deliver additional

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**TTNQ CHIEF EXECUTIVE PIP CLOSE**

seats from China to our destination, giving the destination the opportunity to substantially increase visitor numbers and dispersal throughout the region,” she said.

“Tourism Australia’s Consumer Demand Project for the Chinese market found Australia performs most strongly with respect to natural beauty, aquatic, coastal and wildlife experiences.

“The Great Barrier Reef was noted by 45 per cent of respondents as an appealing Australian attraction and the Chinese have been choosing our destination to experience world-class nature, in particular the Great Barrier Reef.

“Our focus continues to be the high value independent traveller who wants to holiday in Australia but charter flights from Shanghai also allows group business from a region in China that does not have regular services.

“While it is still too early to comment on Chinese New Year and we are aware of a Chinese economic slowdown, it is hoped our numbers will still remain strong.”

Earlier this month, China Southern Airlines marked a year since it began direct services between Cairns and Guangzhou.

This direct service has opened up an additional 33,000 seats to the region, while providing Far North Queensland residents with more international connections than ever before.

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