

Chinese New Year outbound travel bounces back, but still below 2019 peak

Chinese outbound travel during the 2025 Lunar New Year holiday is forecast to reach 2.2-2.6 million travelers, marking a 30% increase from 2024 but remaining well below the pre-pandemic peak of 6.3 million, according to research from China Trading Desk.

"Chinese are being more selective about their travel this year. They're looking for value and experiences rather than seeking out location-specific purchases. We're not going to see the heyday of Chinese visiting luxury stores and spending big on handbags due to price differentials," says Subramania Bhatt, CEO of the digital marketing research firm.

The data shows travelers favoring closer destinations, with Japan, Thailand and South Korea emerging as top choices for the eight-day holiday starting January 28. Nearly 75% of bookings are being made last-minute as travelers hunt for better deals.

Infographic: Chinese travel bookings over Chinese New Year, source: China Trading Desk

	13th Vs 6th	20th Vs 13th	2025 Vs 2024	2025 Vs 2019
Japan	13.1%	1.1%	86.0%	-10.4%
Thailand	0.3%	-15.6%	19.9%	-37.5%
South Korea	9.7%	3.9%	29.9%	5.8%
Malaysia	-0.8%	-0.7%	79.2%	6.2%
Singapore	0.4%	-3.2%	37.1%	14.2%
Vietnam	-0.6%	-7.7%	34.6%	69.2%
Australia	5.2%	4.8%	24.9%	-13.5%
UAE	6.6%	4.7%	-3.5%	-26.5%
Indonesia	-1.3%	-2.6%	25.1%	-68.1%
Great Britain	2.1%	0.1%	27.3%	17.2%
USA	1.9%	-0.6%	-12.9%	-68.5%

First two columns are 2025 CNY travel with week on week change in bookings and the next two columns compare previous year CNY travel

Travel period -

2025 - Jan 25 -Feb 03

2024 - Feb 9 - Feb 18

2019 - Feb 1 - Feb 10

Recent regional events have impacted booking patterns, with Thailand seeing the sharpest decline following news of the Wang Xing kidnapping case. This has created a ripple effect across Southeast Asia, as many travelers typically combine multiple countries in single itineraries.

Long-haul destinations are gaining traction, with European markets showing significant growth. Iceland leads with a 108% increase, followed by Spain (74%), the UK (56%), Italy (50%) and France (49%).

Digital platforms are increasingly influential in travel planning, with Xiaohongshu and Douyin

emerging as key resources, particularly among Gen Z travelers who rely heavily on peer recommendations and user-generated content.

Domestic tourism is also surging, with expectations of reaching 9 billion trips. Family travel comprises 49% of bookings, marking a 75% increase in families with children compared to last year. Hong Kong has seen a 73% rise in bookings, aided by 10-20% drops in flight and hotel prices versus 2024.

Cultural heritage experiences and winter tourism are driving domestic trends, with parent-child trips expected to account for over 80% of travel. Some cultural destinations have seen bookings quadruple, while winter destinations like Harbin remain popular with a 32% increase in bookings.