



NEIL ABERCROMBIE
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NEWS RELEASE

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FIRST REGULARLY-SCHEDULED DIRECT FLIGHT FROM CHINA WELCOMED AT HONOLULU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

HONOLULU—The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA), the state's tourism agency, welcomed the first regularly-scheduled direct flight from China to Hawai'i today. The inaugural China Eastern Airlines flight departed Shanghai on Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. local time and arrived in Honolulu at 9:50 a.m. HST. Arriving on an Airbus 340-300, passengers were greeted with flower lei, Hawaiian music and hula at a welcome reception at the Honolulu International Airport. China Eastern Airlines' new route will arrive in Honolulu on Tuesdays and Fridays at 9:50 a.m. HST and depart for Shanghai at 11:50 a.m. HST the same day.

“Since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2007, the HTA has been aggressively working to secure direct air service from China,” said Mike McCartney, president and CEO of the HTA. “Today's landmark flight is wonderful news for Hawai'i's tourism economy, and we remain committed to supporting this new route and developing airlift to meet demand.”

The HTA projects that more than 91,000 visitors from China will arrive in 2011, an increase of 37 percent, due in part to the new regularly-scheduled service and three charter flights China Eastern Airlines flew earlier this year between Jan. 30-Feb.10. The route is estimated to provide up to \$60 million in annual visitor expenditures, with the average Chinese visitor spending the most at \$368 per person per day, and stimulate new job growth in our islands.

Based out of Shanghai, China Eastern Airlines has been operating since 1988 and has grown to become one of the largest airlines in China, connecting 110 cities in China and abroad. Packages offered include stays from three to seven nights through tour companies Ctrip and U-tour. While in Hawai'i, the Chinese visitors itineraries may include visits to the Polynesian Cultural Center, Pearl Harbor, a circle island tour and optional neighbor island packages.

“Hawaiian holidays have been a dream for many Chinese, and Ctrip is committed to promoting Hawai'i through various vacation packages,” said Dongji Guo, vice president of Ctrip. “We truly appreciate the support we have received from the Hawai'i government, the HTA and our industry partners here.”

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Tieying Fu, deputy general manager of China Eastern Airlines Sales and Marketing Committee added, “The non-stop direct service to Hawai‘i launched with Ctrip provides a great convenience to Chinese visitors. We are fully confident in Ctrip’s marketing power and operational professionalism and anticipate more Chinese to take the opportunity to experience the beautiful islands of Hawai‘i.”

Also arriving today were 18 members of the Chinese media from The Beijing News, The Shanghai Times, China Youth Daily and other regional publications to cover the inaugural flight. They will be spending three nights on O‘ahu and Hawai‘i Island on a “familiarization trip.”

“We have been working with the government and our marketing partners in Asia to encourage the easing of barriers in obtaining leisure visas in a timely manner to encourage more travel to our islands,” added McCartney.

The Hawai‘i Tourism Authority (HTA) is the official agency for tourism in the state of Hawai‘i and is charged with setting tourism policy and direction; developing and implementing the state’s tourism strategic and marketing plan; managing programs and activities to sustain a healthy visitor industry; and coordinating tourism-related research, planning, promotional and outreach activities. The HTA serves as a bridge linking government, the visitor industry, visitors and residents, and aims to improve our quality of life through tourism. For more information, visit www.hawaiiitourismauthority.org.

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