

MEDIA RELEASE

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Page 1 of 2

YEAR OF THE OX CHARTER FLIGHTS

In a fortunate synergy, Chinese New Year 2009 falls on Australia Day. It will be a great start to the year of the Ox for the tourism businesses in Tropical North Queensland. 14 charter flights are bringing almost 4000 Chinese holiday-makers to Cairns airport from mid January to early February. Thousands more will travel to Cairns via Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

Qantas, China Southern Airlines and China Airlines are participating in the holiday airlift from Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Taipei. Travel Agents are being rushed for seats, although there has been a 30% increase in availability over last year.

Behind the scenes Tourism Tropical North Queensland and Cairns Airport have been working with airlines and the travel industry in China to pull off this outstanding result with the assistance of funding from the Australian and Queensland Governments.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland Chief Executive Officer, Rob Giason said "Chinese visitors generally spend two or three nights in TNQ but the charters take advantage of New Luna Year public holidays in China to give visitors four and five night stays in Cairns and Port Douglas which is a huge bonus for our region in a time of economic stress."

Cairns Airport Executive General Manager, Kayleen Collins, said charter services from China at this traditional holiday time have been growing steadily over the past few years.

"Last year we welcomed 13 flights and around 3000 visitors. This year there are 14 flights with capacity to bring almost 4000 visitors to our region," Ms Collins said.

"We are particularly pleased to see four China Airlines flights coming from Taipei – the first into Cairns for that airline and also the first from that port in several years."

"We also welcome six Qantas flights from Hong Kong and it is great to see China Southern returning to Tropical North Queensland with four flights after they made their first landing here during 2008



Chinese New Year."

The first Chinese New Year charter, China Airlines Flight CI7919, arrives this Saturday from Taipei and the charters continue until Friday 6 February.

Lion Dancers will meet the visitors at the airport and the sea blue and rainforest green will be joined by red and gold the traditional colours signifying health, wealth, luck and happiness. The familiar will then yield to Aussie wildlife, day-touring to Mungalli Falls, the Curtain Fig Tree and Lake Barrine, cruises to the reef, rainforest tours, skydiving, hot air ballooning, white water rafting and horse riding.

Harry Sou from Café China says the Ox year is a conservative year, one of traditional values. This is not a year to be outrageous, it's a slow but steady year. The Ox year brings stability and growth where patience and diligence pays off. It is traditionally a year of Harvest when we reap what we've sown. We are really looking forward to celebrating Chinese New Year 2009 in Cairns with all the traditions and many visitors from China.

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