

The Emergence of 'Free Independent Travellers' in Asia - July 2014

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“There can be no doubt that Asian travelers have become more mobile and adventurous over the last decade and are now exploring places that were once the preserve of the backpackers and action-seeking Europeans.”
– ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy, 2012-2015

This report looks at the following areas:

- What key factors are driving FIT growth in Asia?
- Which Asian countries are leading the surge in outbound FITs?
- Which destinations are Asian FITs visiting?
- To what degree is intra-Asia travel central to the future of FITs in Asia?

Free independent travel (usually abbreviated to FIT, and also known as ‘foreign individual travel’ or ‘fully independent travel’) is a current buzz phrase in the tourism sectors of emerging markets worldwide, and particularly in the high-potential growth markets of Asia. The origins of the term FIT emanate from the 1960s and 1970s hippy and backpacker trailblazers, when hedonistic, free-wheeling travellers grabbed a backpack and set off on unplanned, unscheduled journeys of adventure and contemplation, uncertain of where their next destination might be.

This concept of ‘free-thinking travel’ gradually suffused the mainstream outbound tourism markets of North America and Europe during the 1980s. Affluent white-collar holidaymakers began to eschew the traditional ‘package tour’ mode of overseas tourism – whereby a travel agent and/or a tour operator prearranged the key elements of a holiday such as flights, transfers, hotels, activities, tours and excursions – in favour of self-planned, self-organised and unescorted travel.

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This report is part of a series of reports, produced to provide you with a more holistic view of this market

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