



## **GBCVB Expands its China-Friendly Initiatives**

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The Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau's (GBCVB) China-friendly marketing initiatives are paying off big time for Boston's visitor industry. Five years ago, the GBCVB formed a China-Friendly Marketing Committee consisting of Bureau hotel, restaurant, retail and tour/attraction members to devise marketing strategies and plan events – from sales missions to workshops and seminars – that position Boston to meet the needs of Chinese visitors. "Our goal was to present Boston as China-friendly, from cultural sensitivities to appropriate business practices," said Bureau CEO Pat Moscaritolo, "and our game-plan evolved as new factors came into play, such as new trends in Chinese consumer behavior and the emergence of powerful platforms like WeChat."

WeChat, in particular, has been transformative, and the ability of businesses and destinations to reach Chinese visitors over this prolific platform is now paramount. In December, 2017 the GBCVB hosted a workshop for 165 member companies devoted almost entirely to WeChat and WeChat Pay and how Boston visitor industry partners could gain exposure on WeChat. In January, 2018 the Bureau launched its own WeChat account and unveiled a Chinese marketing services initiative that will allow its member companies to enter the WeChat space. "Not all our members have the resources or personnel to get on WeChat and stay current on it, so we've created a marketing services platform for them to leverage our resources, and gain exposure on our WeChat account, and we've hired dedicated Chinese marketing staff to execute this plan," said Moscaritolo.

The Bureau's next steps are to work with its members to expand WeChat Pay options across Boston. Mobile payment is dominant in China and businesses equipped to accept these payments are well-positioned to transact with Chinese visitors. Two of the Bureau's China-Friendly Committee members – Boston Duck Tours and the Mandarin Oriental, Boston – have adopted WeChat Pay with great results. The GBCVB is encouraging all of its members to become familiar with mobile payment platforms in China. A record-setting 251,000 Chinese visited Boston and Cambridge in 2017.

The GBCVB will be promoting Boston at trade shows with Chinese receptive operators throughout 2018, and with its partners will conduct a second sales mission to China in 2019. "The key is preparedness," said Moscaritolo. "If the Boston tourism industry is prepared to meet the needs of Chinese visitors, the city will receive rave reviews from Chinese visitors. Those visitors potentially become a sales force for us as they tell friends, families and colleagues about their extraordinary Boston experiences and why they should visit Boston."

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