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THE CONNECTED VISITOR ECONOMY BULLETIN

## THE RISE OF STOPOVER TOURISM

**S**topovers have a bad reputation. Travellers think of stopovers either as a long and tiring part of a trip or a rushed, stressful experience. However, stopovers do not need be tedious and boring; indeed, they can become an enjoyable part of the trip itself. Governments, tourism organisations, airlines, and hoteliers are now working collaboratively to attract stopover traffic in a variety of ways.



This article explores why Stopover Tourism is important to Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) and how Stopover Tourism is positively affecting visitor arrival numbers.

## WHAT IS STOPOVER TOURISM?



Airline stopover programmes are not new. [IcelandAir](#) was one of the pioneers of this type of programme. [IcelandAir](#) launched its stopover programme in 1948, the year the airline made its debut. At the time, the programme was a necessity as the airline did not have a license to operate directly from North America to Europe. The only way the carrier could fly was to offer a layover in Reykjavik. This led to the idea of allowing passengers to stay for a few days in Iceland at no cost. The initiative's goal was to bolster tourism for the country.

It was not until the 2000s that the programme started to take off in a big way, as more people became curious about the free stopover and what Iceland could offer as a destination. The success of the Icelandair programme led to more airlines and DMOs adopting the concept.

## WHY ARE STOPOVER PROGRAMMES IMPORTANT?

Stopover Programmes have many benefits, including:

- Bringing immediate incremental arrivals;
- Encouraging repeat visits;
- Bringing economic benefits to airlines and local industry stakeholders (operators, hotels, attractions);
- Attracting travellers that did not previously consider destination a priority; and
- Benefiting the traveller by allowing two destinations with one airfare.



Stopover Programmes leverage an airline route to attract specific markets on long-haul flights, promoting stopovers as a 'gateway' to a region.

## FINLAND STOPOVER CAMPAIGN

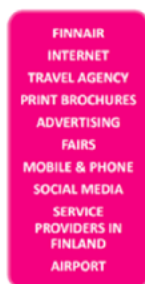
This year is expected to be a record year in cross-border tourism for Finland. Euromonitor reported that inbound tourism has experienced double-digit growth rates in 2017 from key Asian source markets, largely due to a travel-hungry middle class from China and increasing seat capacity on flights between Asia and Finland. The ongoing Stopover Finland project has been benchmarked to similar concepts in Singapore and to Keflavík Airport, the hub of IcelandAir.

In 2014, an estimated 23,000 Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean passengers stopped over in Finland on trips to other destinations in Europe. This represents about half the stopover travellers to Finland from the whole of Asia (Euromonitor, 2016). The aim of the Stopover Finland project is to increase the number of overnight stays by Asian tourists by 265,000 to 850,000 between 2013 and 2018, thus generating increased revenue of EUR80 million a year.



## Customer journey Stopover Finland end customer

### CHANNELS



### TOUCHPOINTS

HELI MENDE

Objectives of the Stopover Finland Project include:

- Increasing revenue for companies participating in the programme;
- Developing new jobs within the tourism and travel industry;
- Achieving 45 percent more registered overnights from Asia by 2018;
- Earning EUR80 million more from travel industry export earnings from Asia by 2018; and
- Establishing Finland as the best-known Nordic stopover destination by 2020.

Understanding the customer journey and how to reach customers at critical decision-making points was key to achieving the project objectives. Travelport played a significant role in targeting travel agencies and advertising channels to provide insight into the customer journey and allow providers to target customers at the planning and booking phase of their journeys.

## TRAVELPORT CASE STUDY: FINLAND STOPOVER CAMPAIGN

Travelport's brief was to

- Educate travel agents on Visit Finland's Stopover Program through online contests and microsite, targeting Hong Kong & Japanese market;
- Gain insights on how travel agents sell Finland;
- Recruit travel agents' database for Visit Finland future promotion and communication; and
- Promote Visit Finland Stopover Program, targeting Hong Kong and Japan consumer markets.

Travelport created an integrated campaign that targeted agents and consumers by first creating a microsite that featured several stopover itineraries and special offers. The goal of the microsite was to teach trade representatives how to sell these programmes. Programme designers created a competition on the microsite to drive agent engagement and gather market intelligence on destination knowledge and how agents sell Finland. The programme used several media platforms to drive agents to the microsite, including an eDM campaign, consumer digital banners, targeted trade banners at point-of-search and sale to shift market share and drive conversions. The main goal was to generate awareness of the stopover programme for agents and consumers when they search for flights to Europe. This drew consumers away from searches for competitive destinations and flight routes, and enticed travellers with special offers, attractive stopover itineraries, and competitive offers.



Partner Sponsored Message

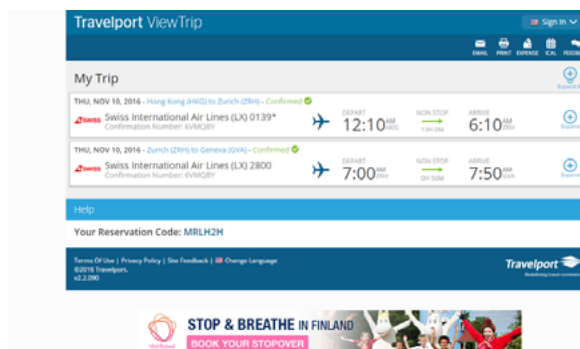
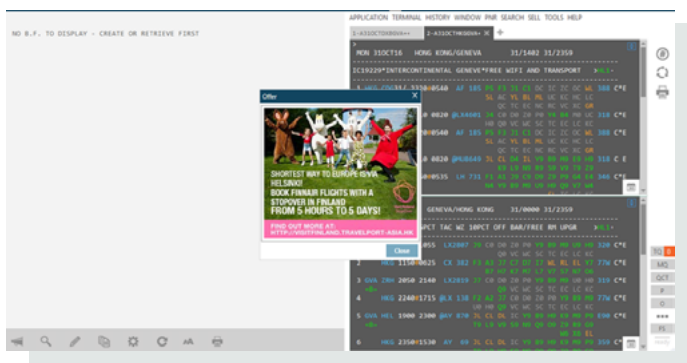


### StopOver in Finland

Finland's highlights and experiences from Northern Lights to Midnight Sun, relaxing moments in the fresh air in Finnish forests, lakes, archipelago and sauna as well as shopping Finnish design items and meeting the Moomins or Santa Claus are all available for StopOver travellers in Finland.

Stopover Finland introduces new easily reachable packages and services for individual travellers starting from 5 hours up to 5-days stopover.

Travelport's Visit Finland Stopover Campaign results were extremely positive. Over the three-month campaign period the Hong Kong market generated +63% uplift in air bookings and +448% uplift in hotel bookings. The Japanese market had a +38% uplift in air bookings and a +145% uplift in hotel bookings. Other positive results for the tourism board included the creation of a quality database for retargeting and market intelligence on agent selling behaviour.



## WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL STOPOVER CAMPAIGN?

Simply offering stopover options to passengers does not guarantee success. The design of the programme, ease of booking, and ability to target the right customer at key points of their booking are also key to campaign success.



Some stopover programmes include collaborations between airlines and tourism boards that offer discounted accommodation and activities. For example, Etihad Airways offers a two-for-one stopover package in Abu Dhabi (including the second night free and two-for-one activities) which is actively promoted by Abu Dhabi tourism in Asia Pacific and Europe to capture long-haul stopover traffic. This is a key component of the tourism board's marketing activity to increase room nights and length of stay.

Abu Dhabi Tourism leverages the popularity of nearby Dubai to promote 'combo-destination' stopovers. Educating trade and consumers on itineraries incorporating a side-trip to Abu Dhabi helps them capitalise on additional flight routes and competition.

E-visas or visa waivers are another important factor in driving stopover traffic as days of administration and paperwork for a short stopover can easily deter visitor arrivals. For example, Beijing Municipal Culture and Tourism Bureau has an effective visa waiver model. By working closely with government bodies, Beijing Municipal Culture and Tourism Bureau can waive visa regulations for targeted markets, increasing arrivals and number of nights tourists visit.





Campaign success is attributed to Beijing Municipal Culture and Tourism Bureau's 144-hour visa-free transit policy. From December 28, 2017, the visa-free transit policy has been implemented in Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei Provinces. The policy applies to citizens from 53 countries holding valid international travel documents and a passenger ticket for connecting international or regional travel. Qualified travellers must have confirmed seats and a departure time within 144 hours.

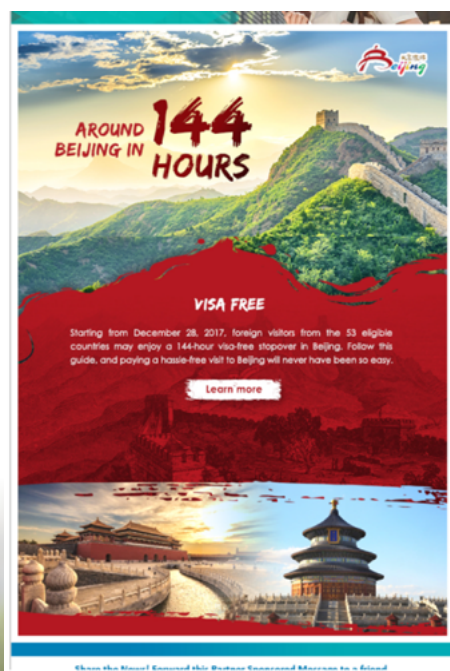
Beijing Municipal Culture and Tourism Bureau actively promotes its destination as a stopover for long- and short-haul travellers. For short-haul mature markets, the organisation leverages its culture and famous food scene to capture combo and stopover destination traffic. For long-haul markets, it promotes natural scenery, historic sites and cultural experiences. Beijing Municipal Culture and Tourism Bureau engaged Travelport to run marketing campaigns in North American, European and Asian markets, as illustrated by the case study below.



## TRAVELPORT CASE STUDY: BEIJING MUNICIPAL CULTURE AND TOURISM BUREAU STOPOVER CAMPAIGN

In 2018, Travelport coordinated a successful awareness campaign in conjunction with Beijing Municipal Culture and Tourism Bureau, aiming to increase incremental visitor arrivals and promote Beijing as a stopover destination in Asia. The campaign highlighted Beijing's 144-hour visa-free transit policy.

By targeting affluent foreign independent travelers (FITs), the campaign encouraged stopovers in Beijing. Travelport placed promotional materials in strategic locations, displaying competitive flight routes to Asia and providing information on competitive airlines. Through Travelport's digital banners, eDMS and consumer targeting on e-tickets, the campaign enabled a shift in market shares. As a result, eDM click rates increased by 40 percent.





# Welcome

## BENEFITS ALL ROUND

In summary, the stopover offering is becoming increasingly attractive to travellers as the tourism industry recognises the benefits of Stopover Tourism. A stopover is an opportunity for the traveller to experience more destinations while allowing DMOs, airlines, and tourism providers to increase visitor arrivals and visitor spending. It also gives the traveller a brief taste of a destination, which encourages repeat visits. With airline and DMO collaboration, a wide range of industry stakeholders can reap the economic benefits from Stopover Tourism (such as hotels, attraction and tour operators). Stakeholders should pay attention to the added value provided to the traveller (e.g. incentives to stopover such as discounted hotels or visa-waivers) and how to target the right consumer at the right time to reap the best results.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Travelport is committed to building leading technology that makes the experience of buying and managing travel continually better. Through their travel commerce platform they provide distribution, technology, payment and other solutions for the US\$7 trillion global travel and tourism industry.

Their platform facilitates travel commerce by connecting the world's leading travel providers with online and offline travel buyers in a proprietary (B2B) travel marketplace.

Travelport is a recognized, proven, industry leader with the products and solutions it offers today covering all aspects of the travel supply chain from airline merchandising, hotel content and distribution, mobile commerce to B2B payments.

They are listed on the New York Stock Exchange (TVPT) and headquartered in Langley, UK. With a team of over 4000 talented people focused on continuous improvement to increase probability and commercial success for customers in over 180 countries and territories.

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**Travelport** 

Please contact PATA Publication team at [publications@PATA.org](mailto:publications@PATA.org).

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