

Xi's visit will hopefully bring more visitors to Peru: Peruvian official

By Wang Hailin and Chen Xiaowei from the People's Daily

Peru hopes that Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit will help bring more Chinese tourists to the country, Peruvian Vice Minister of Foreign Trade and Tourism Rogers Valencia Espinoza told the People's Daily, adding that they are bullish on his tour.

"Peru and China, as ancient civilizations sharing a tradition of friendship, appreciate each other's splendid culture even though we are far apart geographically", he said.

The two countries were linked by the ancient maritime Silk Road as early as the 16th century, with Chinese ships loaded with silk arriving in Peru after traveling through Manila in the Philippines, the Pacific Ocean and Mexico.

Back in the 19th century, numerous Chinese laborers worked at sugarcane plantations in Peru, and were also the first batch of railroad workers in the Latin American country, said Valencia, praising this as an indelible mark in the historic exchanges between the two countries.

According to the official, Peru numbered among the first Latin American destinations for the earliest Chinese immigrants to the region. Today, 10 percent of the country's 30-million people are of Chinese descent, and they are proud of their identity. He stressed that outstanding Chinese citizens can be spotted in all walks of life in Peru.

The Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism recently inked a deal with China Eastern Airlines to open a cargo route from Peru's capital of Lima to Shanghai in China. The route will carry out its first test flight during President Xi's stay in Peru.

"The route will serve as a new bridge connecting the two countries. We are also expecting the opening of passenger flights soon, so that more Chinese visitors will travel to Peru", Valencia pointed out.

Data from Peruvian Export Promotion Council and Peru Tourism Bureau revealed that a total of 20,000 Chinese tourists visited Peru in 2015, 16 percent year-on-year increase. China has become the country's third largest source of tourists from Asia.

According to Valencia, the number of Chinese tourists to Peru is still restricted by distance. Therefore the country announced a visa waiver policy at the end of September that allows Chinese citizens to stay in Peru visa-free for up to 180 days for travel and business purposes.

The official called for reinforced bilateral cooperation in agriculture, fishery and mineral resources in addition to the tourism industry, explaining that his country's rich resources complement well with China's advanced technologies and abundant capital.

He also lauded the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and BRICS New Development Bank initiated by China, saying that they have given a boost to infrastructure construction in developing countries and China's neighbors.

Valencia said he believes that Peru-China ties are sure to become closer as cultural exchanges increase in frequency.