Destination Queenstown & Lake Wānaka Tourism

Kia Ora South

Shanghai & Guangzhou & Shenzhen

June 2026

Destination Queenstown and Lake Wanaka Tourism
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1. Overview

In June 2026, Destination Queenstown & Lake Wānaka Tourism participated in the CIAL 10th Kia Ora South events across Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. The programme combined travel trade training, networking and media engagement to strengthen industry relationships and increase awareness of New Zealand, Queenstown and Wānaka.

The programme brought together 5 RTOs, 14 South Island tour operators and CEOs, with 320 registrations recorded from 149 travel agencies. Networking activities engaged key travel trade partners, airline partners, MFAT representatives, invited travel agents and travel media. Across the three cities, the organising team reported a total unique reach of 435 people from 264 companies.

The media programme generated coverage across tourism trade publications, mainstream news, regional media and KOL channels, extending the impact of the events beyond the people attending in person.

2. Market Background

According to Stats NZ, New Zealand welcomed 261,772 visitors from China in 2025, up 5.4% on 2024. The Chinese New Year period was particularly strong, with arrivals increasing by 60%. Growth continued in 2026, with Chinese arrivals rising from 53,700 in February 2025 to 61,100 in February 2026. In April, arrivals from China were up 52% year on year, while the holiday segment grew by 72%.

Christchurch Airport data also indicates strong growth from the China market. From November 2025 to March 2026, Christchurch Airport welcomed 287,000 international visitors, an increase of 22% compared with the same period last year.

Over the past year, the China market grew by 24% year-on-year, and over the past six months it grew by 43%.

3. Event Objectives & Benefits

Objectives:

- Promote Queenstown and Wānaka as premium four-season destinations
- Encourage longer stays,and deeper local experiences
- Increase destination and product knowledge among travel sellers
- Engage existing travel trade partners and build new business relationships
- Connect with airline partners, travel agent representatives and media
- Generate media visibility across Eastern and Southern China
- Gather partner feedback to support future trade and marketing activity

Benefits:

- Direct engagement with travel agency owners, General Managers, Product Managers and frontline sellers

- Improved destination knowledge and confidence among partners selling Queenstown & Wānaka
- Stronger relationships with partners across Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen
- Broader destination awareness through national, regional and social media coverage
- A valuable platform to support future product development and business opportunities

4. Attendance/Attendees

Shanghai
- Training: 82 travel agents registered from 46 travel agency companies
- Networking dinner: 60 key partners from Shanghai and Jiangsu/Zhejiang attended, in addition to airline partners and NZ Inc./MFAT representatives and their guests

Guangzhou
- Training: 92 travel agents registered from 43 travel agency companies
- Networking event: 110 travel agents attended, including 40 key travel agency partners comprising business owners, General Managers and Product Managers

Shenzhen
- Training: 146 travel agents registered from 60 travel agency companies
- Networking lunch: 15 participants attended, comprising 10 travel agency representatives and representatives from 5 travel media companies

Overall Programme
- 320 training registrations from 149 travel agency companies
- 185 networking attendances across the three cities
- 435 unique participants from 264 companies, as reported by the organising team

5. Key Media Highlights

- Shanghai coverage included National Tourism, Voyage, Travelling Scope, Travel Times, WITrip and three KOL channels
- Guangzhou secured coverage across Tencent News, Sina, Yangcheng Evening News, Southern Metropolis Daily, China Tourism News and Guangzhou Daily, with additional listings in New Express, NetEase and Southern Metropolis Weekly
- Shenzhen coverage included Shenzhen Economic Daily, Shenzhen Evening News and Shenzhen Daily

6. Airline Connectivity

Air connectivity between China and the South Island continues to strengthen, supporting the recovery and growth of the China visitor market. China Southern Airlines resumed its direct Guangzhou–Christchurch service on 1 November 2025, initially operating five flights per week before increasing to daily services from 18 December 2025 to 3 March 2026. The expanded summer schedule represented a 26% increase in

capacity and provided more than 60,000 seats across business, premium economy and economy cabins.

In addition to China Southern's direct Guangzhou–Christchurch service, Cathay Pacific continues to strengthen Christchurch's connection with North Asia through its seasonal Christchurch–Hong Kong service. The airline brought forward the start of its 2025/26 summer service to 3 November 2025, operating three flights per week and increasing to four weekly services during the December-to-February peak. For the upcoming 2026/27 summer season, Cathay Pacific will further increase the route to five flights per week during peak months, adding around 7,000 extra seats and improving South Island connectivity with Hong Kong, Asia, Europe and beyond.

China Eastern also supports wider China–New Zealand connectivity through its major Shanghai and Beijing hubs and broader international network, although its Christchurch access is currently best referenced as indirect connectivity rather than a direct Christchurch–China service.

6. Event Outcomes

- Strong travel trade engagement, with 320 training registrations across 149 travel agency companies
- Access to senior decision-makers, including business owners, General Managers and Product Managers
- Stronger partner relationships across Eastern and Southern China
- Focused engagement with airline partners, NZ Inc./MFAT representatives and travel media
- Extended programme visibility through tourism trade, mainstream, regional and KOL media coverage

7. Summary

Kia Ora South provided a valuable platform to showcase the South Island's ongoing commitment to the China market.

The strong participation from travel agencies, senior travel trade leaders, airline partners, NZ Inc./MFAT representatives and media demonstrated the importance of maintaining an active in-market presence. Media coverage across trade, mainstream, regional and social channels further extended awareness of New Zealand, Queenstown and Wānaka in China.

The programme helped strengthen relationships, improve destination knowledge and support future product development and business opportunities across Eastern and Southern China.

8. Events Photo









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