

OPINION ARTICLE

The development of health tourism in China 2026

Trends for 2026-2030

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Keywords: Health Tourism; Cross-border healthcare; China

China seems to be undergoing a transformation and transitional time from a source market to a destination in the medical and health tourism industry. After the outburst of #Chinatravel on social media and the increase of inbound tourists into China in the past few years, currently, the new trend on fire can be China Health Travel.

From different dimensions varying from the national level to a patients' perspectives, what makes China a great Medical and health tourism destination?

China's "opening-up" policy to the world has laid the groundwork. Drastic changes are now reshaping our world and our times in ways never before seen. The landscape of international economic cooperation and competition is changing profoundly, and global economic governance systems and rules are undergoing major adjustments, bringing us to a critical crossroad in global development.

Due to a natural layering of consumption in the industry, a part of upscale Chinese patients may choose to go abroad for outbound medical and health tourism. It is estimated that approximately 800,000 Chinese people travel abroad each year for medical treatment, which labels China as one of the major source markets in the world for medical tourism. Besides the openness of welcoming foreign investment and allowing almost 1 million Chinese people every each to go abroad for medical treatment, another essential sign may come from the visa-free policy and accelerated visa application procedure. By the end of 2025, based on the data issued from the National Immigration Administration of China, China has extended its visa-free entry or transit policy to 134 countries until end of 2026 and a 240-hour transit visa-free policy for 55 countries, a unilateral visa-free policy for 50 countries, and has reached bilateral visa exemption agreements with 29 countries.

The article explains the current trends of Health Tourism in China.?????,

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Introduction

Today, China seems undergoing a transformation and transitional time from a source market to a destination in the medical and health tourism industry. After the outburst of #Chinatrans on social media and the increase of inbound tourists into China in the

First, China's "opening-up" policy to the world has laid the groundwork. Drastic changes are now reshaping our world and our times in ways never before seen. The landscape of international economic cooperation and competition is changing profoundly, and global economic governance systems and rules are undergoing major adjustments, bringing us to a critical crossroads in global development.

Against this backdrop, President Xi Jinping has on multiple occasions affirmed that "China's resolve to open up at a high standard will not change, and China's door will open still wider to the world." This declaration reflects China's confidence and determination to pursue greater opening up at a high standard.

1) In the healthcare industry, there are two examples in China, old and new, to demonstrate China's openness to foreign investment: United Family Healthcare UFH, founded in 1997 by an American Roberta Lipson starting from high-end maternity clinic, is now a successful private and premium

past few years, currently, the new trend on fire can be China Health Travel.

This article would, from different dimensions varying from the national level to a patient's, elaborate what makes China a great Medical and health tourism destination.

healthcare brand and operation in 7 cities across China, attracting over 600 full-time doctors, over 1,000 part-time experts, and over 1,000 nurses working with at its hospitals and clinics; And, Perennial private hospitals in over 10 cities across China, a corporate from Singapore, launched the first program in Tianjin in 2024 and formally in business to the public in 2025. Their growth in China is phenomenal. And with the increasing amount of the senior in the Chinese society, healthcare demands and the opportunities in the market are huge.

2) Due to a natural layering of consumption in the industry, a part of upscale Chinese patients may choose to go abroad for outbound medical and health tourism. It is estimated that approximately 800,000 Chinese people travel abroad each year to for medical treatment, which labels China as one of the major source markets in the world for medical tourism. The number here, again, reflects the openness of China even today. 3) Besides the openness of welcoming foreign investment and allowing

national healthcare system to certificate different hospitals, unlike what international patients might be more familiar with: JCI or Temos. Sometimes some international patients would prefer a medical facility with the certificate they are familiar with to feel assured and be taken good care of, but it is equally important to understand the medical capabilities indicated in the Chinese healthcare system.

The grade, ownership and type of hospitals in China, Grade of hospitals: According to the Hospital Grading Management Standard, Chinese hospitals are divided into 3 grades, i.e., tertiary, secondary and grade-I hospitals, based on a series of indicators (hospital scale, research capabilities, medical facilities, etc.). Among these grades, the tertiary hospital is the premier. Ownership of hospitals: Public hospitals are hospitals funded by the country and taken into the government's financial budget. Being the mainstay of Chinese medical service system, public hospitals are directly managed by local health authorities, emphasizing public welfare. Private hospitals refer to health institutions funded by societies and dominated by for-profit institutions. The establishment of private hospitals must be approved by local health authorities. Type of hospitals: includes general and specialized hospitals.

China's healthcare institutions are mainly classified into three categories: primary healthcare institutions, such as community

healthcare service centers and village clinics, which are responsible for basic medical diagnosis and treatments. Specialist public health institutions are responsible for public health matters including family planning and infectious disease control, and hospitals are mainly responsible for outpatient and inpatient treatment of more complex diseases.

Since 2000, the number of hospitals in China has more than doubled, while the medical standards and equipment in the country's best hospitals can be comparable to many elite hospitals in the developed world.

Unlike many other countries, most hospitals in China, including the most advanced and specialist hospitals, can accept patients directly without general practitioners' referrals. Talented medical professionals also prefer to work in tier-three hospitals as they offer better research platforms and higher salaries.

In 2023, hospitals in China received more than 9.5 billion patient visits, almost two billion more than a decade ago. Inpatient treatments are in very high demand in many specialist hospitals, with bed occupancy rates often exceeding 100 percent.

4) The **Location**. Diversified locations offer easy and quick access to the medical facilities for international patients right from the airports where they may land in China to client-friendly surroundings.

a) In large first-tier cities like Beijing, Shanghai, or Guangzhou, people can even land in the **airport** and find a fully functional hospital to take international patients in walking distance. And more hospitals of such kind next to the airport in construction now in Shanghai and Guangzhou, will be probably open to business in 2026 or 2027.

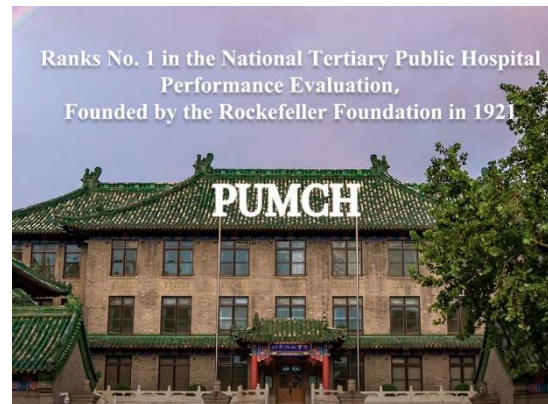
b) Exploring the **outskirts** of the city, where we enjoy less busy traffic but more space, we will spot many newly-built hospital campuses under the same brand with the original main operation in the downtown area:

- Peking University International Hospital is in Changping District in north Beijing;
- Beijing Friendship Hospital, Capital Medical University, has one campus in Shunyi District, close to Beijing Capital International Airport PEK, and the other in Tongzhou District in east Beijing;
- Peking University Third Hospital, in Beijing alone, has developed five branches: the original main campus in the heart of Haidian District, the Central Committee Party Branch close to the Summer Palace in northwest Haidian District, the Second Outpatient Department on the verge of Haidian District to the northeast, the airport branch in east Chaoyang District linking PEK in

Shunyi District, and the North campus as they call it in the west Haidian District.

c) If we go to the downtown area in Beijing or Shanghai, we get to the core of healthcare resources with a long history and modern standard perfect for international patients, at a serious cost for serious conditions.

For example, the No. 1 Chinese hospital PUMCH is located in one of the busiest business zones: Wangfujing and Dongdan, a 5-minute walk to the Forbidden City, the center of Beijing since the Qing Dynasty.



The original location of No. 1 Chinese Hospital PUMCH

d) One can step in a dentist, NAD+, or IV Drips clinic after having an indulgence lunch at a nice restaurant within the same shopping mall, next to a main transportation hub like a conjunction subway station spreading to the rest of the city.

Private		
Specialist consultant		£ 250.00
Endoscopy, bloods, ECG		£2,300.00
Anesthesiologist + sedation/recovery		£ 500.00
Biopsy and lab tests		£ 300.00
Specialist consultant		£ 250.00
H. pylori test and medication		£ 100.00
Britain		£5,700.00
China		
Specialist consultant	¥50.00	£ 5.30
Endoscopy, bloods, ECG	¥1,117.42	£ 118.20
Anesthesiologist + sedation/recovery	¥708.79	£ 74.99
Biopsy and lab tests	¥743.00	£ 78.61
Specialist consultant	¥60.00	£ 6.35
H. pylori test and medication	¥143.20	£ 15.15
	¥2,812.41	£ 289.60
Visa	£ 194.00	£ 190.00
Flights	£ 488.00	£ 488.00
Accommodation (2x weeks)	£ 0.00	£ 150.00
Food/drinks		£ 150.00
		£ 1,168.00
		£ 1,168.00
Total:		£1,466.60

The comparison of costs in London, the UK and in Beijing, China

Third, China widely applies the **value-based healthcare** principle, meaning affordable medical costs with no waiting list but good quality. No waiting accelerates the entire process and international patients can be treated in a high-efficient manner at the hospital with less days to stay within but a better result to recovery after the surgery of treatment, which in turn, saves money on the whole thing.

In the UK, a vivid case of the British lady Amie went viral on TikTok and other social media platform like the RedBook or RedNote in China, whose sharing of her first-person experiences and the expenses in Beijing caused lots of discussions on the quality of medical treatment and its affordable costs in China, even at a large public hospital in a first-tier city like Beijing.

In the video, the patient Amie tallied her expenses in Beijing for everything medical and it all cost her £ 298.60, whereas she would have to spend at least £ 3,700.00 at a private clinic in London, a 12 times of spending difference. In Beijing, she waited for nothing but the lab results for one week. The contrast between her expenses at a private clinic in London v.s. what she actually spent in Beijing for her stomach:

Fourth, China boosts **highly skilled professionals** who are well-educated, well-trained, and well-organized in the healthcare system. It is natural for an international patient to speak English, Japanese, Russia, or French with local healthcare team at a hospital. Not everywhere, but if they go to the right place with the right services, they would feel comfortable and peaceful in mind because everything is so fluent. The MDT consultation for complicated cases and the high-level care will promise a better treatment and faster self-recovery after surgery, and those in all, contribute to a less burden on the spending in China.

Fifth, China understands the significance of **innovation and the latest technologies**, especially in the healthcare industry here. In 2025, by Nature Index, the Chinese research institution outputs were topping the world.

In Chinese hospitals, international patients will find themselves to walk into a nice facility infrastructure, with the cutting-edge medical equipment and devices. At the international

department, it feels like you are in a luxury hotel lobby.

- In the past few years, there have been evolving progress in the healthcare industry in China, including hard-core technologies ranging from Brain-computer Interfaces, mind-control typing and other interactions with household robots and/or other electrical appliances in the house, Minimally Invasive Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting MICABG surgery of cardiology without cutting the chest open, the advanced cancer treatments of Proton, Heavy Ion, and Boron Neutron Capture Therapy BNCT, etc. Those treatments are not that expensive as they are in other countries. In China, they have reasonable prices and broad spread other than big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, with ideal results for international patients. At the same time, the adoption of AI in the healthcare industry in China is nothing new, but a smart and useful tool to assist the professionals for imaging, diagnosis and treatment. Da Vinci Robot-assisted Surgical System can also be seen in many departments like the general thoracic surgery department, urology, gynecology, and others.

- China's biotech and life sciences are now outperforming America in the world, which makes the medications cheaper, with or without insurance.
- Number of cases treated in China is substantial. For example, at Peking University Third Hospital, the number of minimally invasive coronary artery bypass graft surgeries performed in the Department of Cardiac Surgery has ranked FIRST in the country for five consecutive years, with over 1,000 operations each year, announced by Chinese Minimally Invasive Cardiovascular Surgery Committee, CMICS, on the CMC Week 2024 in Hangzhou, China.

Sixth, China is **leading in service** to make things so convenient and make people feel like living in the future. Within the hospital, you can see the auto distribution system at the pharma department through the clear windows, which is usually on the ground floor, not far from the entrance; The payment system to handle your hospital bills on site without any delay so that you finish every payment on the machine by scanning a QR code and you check every number to make sure nothing is wrong or hidden before you pay. Everything is transparent to you; The navigating robots almost to an adult's waist high, wandering around in the hospital, asking if anyone is in need of help so that it would show you or lead

you to the place you are looking for. Outside the hospital, the high-tech application is basically everywhere throughout the entire medical tourism experience in China: Automatic or fast clearance at the airport after landing;

- auto-translation apps on your smartphone, or devices like glasses, a hand-held machine, or a watch;
- Food delivery service;
- Bullet trains connecting most cities;
- Face-recognition payment to enter the subway, etc.



Face-recognition device at the Wangfujing subway station

Advancing in this and that, China also needs to strengthen the communication with international patients to make things smooth for them based on bilateral timely and high-

efficient talks and calls via all possible platforms, such as a user-friendly English website, responsive email, active social media accounts, to provide helpful information to the patients.

Before coming to China for medical and health tourism activities, international patients may notice that they should choose qualified professional agency or medical facilitator at each step: information search, decision-making, travel planning, expense settlement, diagnosis and treatment, nursing and rehabilitation, pharmaceutical management, follow-up consultations remotely online or live, and so on. Today, technologies bring about progress and also chaos and misinformation at the same time. Today, half of the internet traffic is now automated. For example, please do NOT fall for AI slop, but ask for help from the professional. If you are considering China to get better, you can send your inquiries to the Author Amy Wang via wang2226@163.com for free until you need to pay to the hospital.

Thanks to her broad network connecting over 1,200 medical facilities in China, public and private hospitals, clinics, wellness centers, luxury health resorts, etc., Amy has been devoted in the medical and health tourism industry over a decade with in-depth insight, promotion, and commitment in the business home and abroad.



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