

UPWARD SLOPE

China's winter tourism industry to see soaring visitor numbers
and revenues in the lead-up to the 2022 Winter Olympics



By **PRIME SARMIENTO** in Hong Kong
prime@chinadailyapac.com

For the 30-something business consultant Jeff Oliveira, winter holidays mean hitting the slopes of the Altay Mountains in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

Unlike the French Alps or Aspen in Colorado, the northwestern Chinese province is hardly known among avid skiers. But Oliveira, who has grown up skiing in his Boston hometown and other places in North America, would rather spend the winter season in Xinjiang than in other popular ski destinations.

"People like myself want that novelty of skiing in a place that's off the radar of the international skiing community," he told *China Daily Asia Weekly*.

The novelty factor, however, is just part of Xinjiang's allure. Oliveira keeps returning to Xinjiang every year as he likes its "world-class terrain and snow". He is in fact organizing a group tour this December, bringing skiers from North America to explore remote areas in Xinjiang.

But Xinjiang is just one of several Chinese des-

tinations now attracting both local and foreign skiers. A Beijing-based think tank expects more tourist arrivals spurred by China's hosting of the 2022 Winter Olympics.

The China Tourism Academy (CTA) expects tourist numbers to rise to 340 million in the 2021-22 winter season, from about 170 million in 2016-17, according to a Xinhua News Agency report.

CTA also forecast winter tourism revenues to rise from around 270 billion yuan (\$39 billion) in 2016-17 to 670 billion yuan in 2021-22, an annualized growth rate of 20 percent.

By then, the winter tourism boom will be associated with a combined output of 2.88 trillion yuan in tourism and other sectors, Xinhua said.

Meanwhile, a report in January by Chinese tech giant Tencent and internet consultancy Analysys estimated that tourism related to winter sports activities will generate 40 billion yuan worth of revenues by 2020.

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