



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



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China is the first travelling country in the world, sending over 135 million visitors abroad in 2016 and spending 240,000 million euros. This has turned the country into one of the greatest objectives for the tourist industry.

At the same time, China is the fourth most popular tourist destination in the world after Spain, France and the USA, with the government currently trying to increase the number of foreign visitors with visa exemption policies.

On 1st May the Chinese tropical island of Hainan, in the south of the country, was officially permitted to authorise tourist stays of up to one month in the territory without the need for a visa for citizens from 59 countries. This step will turn Hainan into the Chinese province to be most open to foreign tourism, together with the special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

Hainan, which a few decades ago based its economy mainly on fishing and agriculture, has of late become one of the main tourist destinations in the country. The island has also seen the fast development of its hotel industry.

Chinese President Xi Jinping announced plans to turn the island into a large free trade area to welcome the establishment of the headquarters of major foreign companies.

At the same time as the opening of this island is taking place, a few months ago a new law came into force to promote the registration of associations in China, which provided greater flexibility for Skål to commence operating legally in this country.

Based on these two developments, we took the strategic decision of visiting China, after attending the Asian Congress in Macau. Our visit was carefully coordinated in advance and we managed to hold meetings with the highest political and institutional personalities, as well as with major business entrepreneurs of the tourist industry.



Beijing, Shanghai and Hainan were our chosen destinations, with the meeting in Haikou (capital city of the isle of Hainan) being the most promising one due to the government's determined decision to support the presence of Skål there.

The recent agreement signed in Macau between Skål International and PATA (Pacific Asia Travel Association) reinforces our image in the country, as PATA is one of the tourist associations recently registered in China having members who are representatives of the government.

On our return, we found ourselves with the task of preparing all the documents requested and proceeding with all the formalities in order to register our organisation in the country. Once we can achieve this, we will be able to officially open the first club in China, to then reinforce the strategy in other cities such as Beijing, where there are members who also wish to formalise their Skål affiliation.