

# **PALACKÝ UNIVERSITY IN OLOMOUC**

Faculty of Arts Department of Asian Studies

## **BACHELOR'S THESIS**

**Analýza dopadu pandemie COVID-19 na příjezdový cestovní ruch do Číny se zaměřením  
na turisty z Čínské lidové republiky**

Analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on incoming Chinese tourism with a focus on  
tourists from the People's Republic of China

OLOMOUC 2024, Radek Matloch

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## **Declaration**

I solemnly declare that I have written my thesis independently and have listed all sources and literature used.

Olomouc, 6. 5. 2024

Signature .....

# 1. Annotation

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The main subject of the bachelor's thesis „Analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on incoming Chinese Tourism with a focus on tourists from the People's Republic of China “is to analyze the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on Chinese tourism to the Czech Republic, using publicly available data from 2019, 2020 and 2023 to compare changes in travel behavior and patterns. The theoretical framework lays out the basic characteristics of Chinese outbound tourism, Czech inbound tourism, and the general impact that the pandemic had on the global travel industry. The analysis then examines the changes in the number of arrivals of Chinese tourists, their length of stay, changes in location preferences, and seasonal changes in the number of arrivals.

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### 3. Introduction

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019, the world has witnessed unprecedented impacts on global mobility, severely affecting the international tourism sector. The Czech Republic, renowned for its rich history, cultural heritage, and picturesque cities, has historically been a favored destination for tourists worldwide. In 2018, the nation hosted approximately 618,000 Chinese tourists.

However, the pandemic led to a sharp decline in these numbers, with only 7,109 Chinese tourists recorded at the height of the pandemic in 2021. This thesis will explore the broader implications of these changes by addressing the question: How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect Chinese tourist arrivals, travel behaviors, and destination preferences in the Czech Republic from 2019 to 2023?

This thesis is divided into two main parts: theoretical framework and practical analysis. The theoretical section will provide a backdrop of Chinese outbound tourism, detailing its evolution and the factors influencing it, including socio-economic changes in China and the global tourism dynamics. This part will also examine how did COVID-19 pandemic influenced the global travel industry.

Following the theoretical background, the analysis will utilize quantitative data to analyze the trends in Chinese arrivals to the Czech Republic during the key periods: pre-pandemic (2019), during the pandemic (2020), and post-pandemic (2023). It looks at the volume of arrivals, length of stay, and shifts in destination preferences within the Czech regions. Moreover, this section also examines the seasonal travel patterns and assesses the strategic implications for the Czech tourism industry.

This analysis is based on publicly available data from the Czech National Tourist Office tourdata, supplemented by a review of relevant secondary sources. These sources include academic articles and official tourism statistics that provide a background for the travel behaviors of Chinese tourists and the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the travel industry.

## 4. Methodology

This thesis utilizes a quantitative research approach to analyze publicly available data on Chinese tourist arrivals in the Czech Republic from 2014 to 2023, focusing on 2019 as a pre-pandemic metric, 2020 as a pandemic year, and 2023 as the post-pandemic sample. This analysis incorporates a comparative analysis method, allowing for the evaluation of changes in tourist behaviors and preferences before, during, and after the pandemic.

Data for this analysis is collected from official sources including the Czech tourism data website, which is based on the data collected from the Statistics of Collective Accommodation Establishment by the Czech Statistical Office. The data includes annual statistics on the number of tourist arrivals, overnight stays, seasonal patterns, and the average length of stay.

The data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and changes in travel patterns. The analysis will focus on the volume of tourist arrivals per year and their regional distribution, Seasonal fluctuation in travel, and changes in the average length of stay.



## 4.1 Hypothesis

Based on the theoretical background and the preliminary review of the literature, the following hypothesis is proposed: The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a significant decline in Chinese tourist arrivals to the Czech Republic, prompting a shift in tourism patterns towards slow tourism, with an increased interest in wellness and nature-focused regions.

## 4.2 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis explores the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on Chinese tourism in the Czech Republic, utilizing quantitative research framework. It starts with a theoretical framework that provides a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing Chinese outbound tourism. These sections delve into socio-economic shifts and evolving global travel dynamics that have influenced travel patterns, particularly highlighting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This foundation sets the stage for the analysis.

The analysis utilizes quantitative methods to examine changes in tourist arrivals, average length of stay, and regional travel patterns. This section is divided into three main parts: The first part focuses on the quantitative data of Chinese visitors visiting the Czech Republic from 2019 to 2023, analyzing trends and the abrupt changes caused by the pandemic. The second part evaluates how the duration has changed, reflecting possible shifts towards slower, more engaged forms of tourism. The third part analyzes how different Czech regions have been impacted by the changes in tourism patterns.

## 4.2 Limitations of the Analysis

This study is subject to several limitations that may impact the interpretation and generalizability of the findings. Primarily, the analysis depends heavily on the available data from the Czech tourism authorities. While this data is official, the data for the year 2019 is taken from the accommodation distribution of the Chinese tourists focusing on the tourists staying in the mass accommodation facilities, although this is 97% of the overall Chinese tourists there might be a slight change in the numbers, however this deviation is minuscule and does not affect the overall analysis. Furthermore, this data may not fully capture the complexity of tourist behaviors, such as unregistered tourism activities or expenditures that go largely untracked by this source.

Additionally, the research employs a quantitative approach, which, while effective for identifying broad trends, lacks the depth that could be provided by qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups with Chinese tourists.

The analysis also does not account for external factors that could influence tourism trends. Geopolitical tensions, economic fluctuations in China or globally, and changes in travel policies unrelated to COVID-19, such as visa regulations.

## 5. Literature review

COVID-19 had a profound impact on global tourism, marking one of the most significant disruptions in history. According to Gössling, Scott, and Hall (2020), the pandemic has necessitated a critical re-evaluation of tourism models, emphasizing sustainability over previously unchecked growth. The United Nations World Tourism Organization has reported a 70-75% decline in international arrivals by 2020, highlighting extensive financial losses that exceed those of the 2009 global economic crisis (Škare, Soriano, & Porada-Rochoń, 2020). These studies provide a macro-level understanding of the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry and provide a contextual backdrop for more focused studies on specific regions and tourist demographics.

The development of Chinese outbound tourism reflects significant socio-economic changes and governmental initiatives such as Approved Destination Status (ADS). Li and Hudson (2013) discuss how generational changes have influenced the travel preferences of Chinese tourists, with a shift from group to independent travel. In addition, Arita et. al. (2011) analyzes the economic impact of ADS, which has facilitated outbound tourism by making international travel more accessible to Chinese citizens.

The pandemic has radically altered travel preferences, with a shift towards destinations perceived as safe and health-oriented. Studies by Huang et. al. (2021) provide insight into these changing preferences, noting an increased inclination towards domestic and nature-based destinations as international travel restrictions tightened. Wen et. al. (2020) suggest that these changes may influence long-term behavior, suggesting a continued interest in destinations that offer safety, quality, and meaningful experiences post-pandemic.

The Czech Republic, a popular destination for tourists, has faced unique challenges during the pandemic. The impact has been significant in the region such as Prague, traditionally popular with Chinese tourists. Karásková (2021) provides an analysis of Czech-Chinese relations and their impact on tourism dynamics, while Będzik and Gołąb (2020) discuss how the Czech Tourism sector has adapted to global tourism trends by developing diverse tourism experiences.

## 6. Theoretical Framework

### 6.1 Introduction

This section will provide a comprehensive background of the dynamics shaping Chinese outbound tourism, with a focus on its impact and evolution concerning the Czech Republic. Understanding the foundation of travel behaviors and preferences is crucial, particularly how these have been reshaped by socio-economic developments in China in correlation to global tourism trends.

The framework begins by tracing the historical development of Chinese outbound tourism from its humble beginnings to its emergence as a major force in the global travel market. This historical backdrop is essential for understanding the significant changes within Chinese society and the external policies that have influenced travel norms patterns. It sets the stage for a deeper understanding of the current landscape of Chinese tourism, emphasizing the transition from group to individual travel, the rise of the middle class, and evolving motivations for international travel.

Furthermore, this section examines the specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, investigating how the sudden global mobility restrictions and health concerns have altered tourist behaviors globally and within China.

## 6.2 Historical Development of Chinese Outbound Tourism

Chinese outbound tourism has seen a remarkable transformation over the past few decades, slowly evolving from being almost non-existent in the 1970s to becoming one of the most dominant forces in the global tourism industry at the beginning of the 2010s (Xu and Wang 2014, 1). This evolution is deeply connected with China's broader socioeconomic changes, policy reforms, globalization, and gradual opening.

The beginning of Chinese outbound tourism can be traced back to the late 1970s, a period marked by drastic changes in China's economic and social policies. “The Reform and Opening Up” also known as “China's Economic Reform” was initiated on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1978, by Deng Xiaoping during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee, which marked China's slow move away from the Mao Zedong’s centrally planned economy to one that embraced more market-oriented reforms and international trade. This policy not only transformed China's economy but also set the stage for a gradual liberalization of outbound travel. Initially, outbound travel was restricted to government officials, business trips, and select groups participating in cultural exchange, underlining the state's control of international movement. These early policies reflected a broader strategy to gradually integrate China into the global economy while maintaining a certain level of oversight over cross-border interactions (Li 2015, 302). As China's economy began to grow and its engagement with the rest of the world became more and more common, the government recognized the need to further liberalize outbound travel. New reforms were introduced throughout the 1980s and 1990s, gradually expanding the scope of who can travel abroad. These reforms included allowing academics, students, and later ordinary citizens to be able to visit foreign countries via official and government-approved travel groups (Arita et al. 2011, 985).

Another pivotal change came in 1997, with the growing desire of ordinary citizens to travel abroad, the government introduced the Approved Destination Status (ADS) system. ADS is a bilateral tourism agreement allowing Chinese tour groups to travel to specific countries. By negotiating these agreements with a small number of neighboring countries, China successfully opened its door to leisure travel while still keeping a degree of control over the sector (Arita et al. 2011, 984-985).

At present, individuals with a valid passport can leave the country and travel abroad without the need to be part of travel groups. Although group travel is on the decline, before the pandemic 55% of Chinese tourists still opted for group travel (Gilchrist 2023). However, this group tourism is restricted to the official travel groups. These travel agencies need to be authorized by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) to handle outbound travel for Chinese tour groups to ADS countries. Only these designated agencies can promote and organize group tours, handle visa applications, and deal with other related businesses (He 2010, 89). By 2019, the number of countries signed the ADS agreements rose to over 140. (Li 2015, 302; Arita et al. 2011, 984-985).

Similarly to other sectors such as agriculture and economics, the Chinese government benefited from the gradual liberalization of outbound travel in many ways. It at least partially satisfied the demand for international travel amongst the growing wealthy middle class, while at the same time, it gave room to policymakers to slowly observe the impact of this policy on the travel sector. This decision proved to be beneficial to China. As we can see in the research data from Arita et.al.2011, countries that have signed the ADS agreement have seen substantial growth in arriving Chinese tourists and thus reaping significant economic benefits. The allure of these economic benefits turned the ADS status into an important bargaining chip, leveraging the increased income from Chinese tourists, which China could use in its diplomatic negotiations with other countries. Another important issue often linked to the ADS system is illegal immigration. Although the ADS cannot completely solve this issue, however the rigid screenings a strict government regulations on the Chinese travel agencies make it nearly impossible to use these tourism trips as a means of immigration. As seen in the data provided by the European Tour Operators Association the rate of overstay from ADS visitors was just 0.13% (He 2010, 90).

In conclusion, Chinese outbound tourism exemplifies China's strategic integration into the global economy, reflecting its pragmatic yet ambitious approach to globalization. The ADS system in particular is an interesting example of China's approach to liberalization, balancing the national interest and control with global engagement and economic development.

## 6.3 Historical Context of Chinese Tourism in the Czech Republic

The history of Chinese tourism in the Czech Republic is characterized by gradual developments, policy shifts, and cultural exchanges. This overview aims to analyze the timeline and key events that have shaped this relationship, beginning with the dissolution of Czechoslovakia.

The history of Chinese tourism to the Czech Republic is closely linked with the broader diplomatic and economic relations between the two nations. The dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic's subsequent transition to a market economy opened doors to international relationships previously constrained by Cold War politics (Karásková 2021, 65-66). Following the political changes after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, new opportunities for Czech-Chinese relations emerged, with both countries exploring the possibility of new economic and cultural partnerships. Nevertheless, these early attempts were met with several obstacles, mainly ideological differences, many of which stem from the new Czech president Václav Havel. He was known for his emphasis on human rights and moral values, prioritizing human rights. Furthermore, he formally invited the Dalai Lama in February 1990 and other Chinese dissidents such as Liu Binyan and Shen Tong in March 1990, to the Czech Republic and openly criticized China's human rights violations. However, there has not been any major pushback from the Chinese government regarding this topic (Fürst and Pleschová 2010, 1366). After Václav Klaus became the new Czech president in 2003, he openly criticized Havel's "dissident messianism approach" (Klaus 2004). He adopted a more pragmatic approach towards China, prioritizing economic relationships over human rights concerns. (Fürst and Pleschová 2010, 1374)

The significant turning point came with the inclusion of the Czech Republic in China's Approved Destination Status (ADS) list in 2005 (Siriphon and Zhu 2018, 9). This moment marked the beginning of a new era in Chinese tourism to the Czech Republic, catalyzing a surge in tourist arrivals and fostering a more substantial engagement between the two countries. Similarly, as with other countries, the ADS agreement represents not only a gateway for Chinese tourist groups but also a significant improvement in diplomatic relations. It facilitated easier visa processing, and increased promotional efforts, which together contributed to a dramatic influx of Chinese tourists to the Czech Republic (Arita et al. 2011, 985).

After signing the ADS agreement, both nations welcomed cultural and economic exchanges and sought to capitalize on the benefits of increased tourism which stems from the increased tourist visits caused by this signing (Arita et al. 2011, 985). For the Czech Republic, this increase in Chinese visitors offered a welcome boost to the economy, particularly in the retail and hospitality sectors which are closely linked to the tourism industry. Prague, with its historical allure and cultural richness, began to feature more prominently in Chinese travel itineraries. Conversely, the Czech Republic has emerged as a gateway to Europe for Chinese tourists, offering them the opportunity to experience the continent's rich history and culture (Horálek, Cheng, and Hu, 2017,265-266,268). However, this period has not been without its challenges. As the influx of Chinese tourists increased, so too has the need for better cultural understanding and infrastructure development. Consequently, tourism offerings have been tailored to accommodate the specific needs and preferences of Chinese visitors (Horálek, Cheng, and Hu, 2017,265-266,268; Castro, Vlčková, and Hnát, 2017,494; Karásková, 2021, 65-66).

This increase in Chinese visitors has also spurred a thriving Chinese community in Prague which has in turn helped bring in more cultural diversity. This community, despite its relatively recent formation, has grown to become the second largest in the Central and Eastern European countries, only behind Budapest's. However, unlike the communities in the West Europe and the USA, Prague's Chinese residents don't have a concentrated communal area such as a Chinatown and are dispersed throughout the city. Although nowadays most of the Chinese don't live in these Chinatowns, they are still major cultural centers. (Horálek, Cheng, and Hu, 2017, 265)



## 6.4 Economic Growth and Social Transformation in China

China's remarkable economic growth over the recent decades has played a pivotal role in shaping the current state of its outbound tourism. Since the implementation of the Reforms and opening up in 1978 and the move from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one, China has seen unprecedented economic growth reaching GDP growth of 15% in 1984 ("China GDP Growth Rate 1961-2024" 2024; Wei, Meng, and Zhang 2016, 38). This transformation has been characterized by a significant increase in foreign investments and extensive urban development leading to a mass migration of citizens from rural areas into big cities. Consequently, a substantial portion of this new urban population has transitioned into the middle class, experiencing significant improvement in living standards and disposable income (Wei, Meng, and Zhang 2016, 38; Huang and Wei 2017, 25). This chapter aims to introduce the main socioeconomic factors influencing China's tourism sector.

As we can see in the study by Huang and Wei (2017, 29), roughly 70 percent of Chinese citizens still prefer to travel domestically. These are mostly older generations as they lack the language skills and cultural understanding, their health condition, and the ability to handle long flights are also concerns when considering traveling to a foreign country. Thus, most of them prefer to travel to domestic locations. The most likely demographic to choose a foreign destination is the young Chinese in their 20s and 30s living in big cities. Especially travelers from tier-two cities such as Hangzhou, Jinan, and Harbin have slowly become one of the major sources of outbound tourists (Huang and Wei 2017, 29). This demographic can be characterized by better education, higher incomes, and a growing interest in Western cultures (Zeng and Go 2013, 231-232). The rapid urbanization, being a major factor in helping to create this new middle class of Chinese citizens. Furthermore, not only do these major cities provide the necessary infrastructure for travel, but they are also a source of better education (Wei, Meng, and Zhang 2016, 38). Huang and Wei (2017, 27) also explored the connection of education to the intention to travel outside China, concluding that with each higher degree of education, the willingness to travel beyond China also increases. This can be partially attributed to greater foreign exposure in the academic field and in the urban environment fostering a curiosity toward foreign cultures. Furthermore, as one attains higher education, their expected average salary also increases thus making leisure activities such as travel less financially burdensome. As noted in most studies on the topic such as Huang and Wei (2017), Tse and Hobson (2008), and Wei, Meng, and Zhang (2016), the rise of disposable income is one of the most prominent drivers of Chinese outbound tourism. Another less talked about factor is the increase in paid leave. However, as seen in the data analyzed by Huang and Wei (2017, 29) only around 17% of respondents took more than 10 days of leave in 2012 thus leaving room for potential market growth.

## 6.5 Preferences and Motivation of Chinese Tourists

The phenomenon of Chinese outbound tourism represents a significant shift from the era when travel was a luxury to a selected few, primarily for business or diplomatic reasons, to a widely embraced leisure activity. This transformation coincides with China's economic liberalization and rapid urbanization, which has led to a growing number of Chinese citizens seeking to explore foreign destinations (Otafiire, Lin, and Blažević 2019, 51). This chapter will analyze the motivations and preferences that drive Chinese outbound tourism and how these have changed in response to socioeconomic shifts within China and external factors including global trends and the recent COVID-19 Pandemic.

### 6.5.1 Individual and Group Travel Dynamics

Chinese outbound tourism has historically been dominated by group tours, offering a sense of security, convenience, and cost-effectiveness, these tours were especially appealing to first-time international travelers (Xu and Wang 2014, 1). These organized tours are often characterized by tight schedules and big groups. However, these groups played a crucial role in introducing Chinese tourists to global destinations.

However, in recent years there has been a shift towards more personalized travel experiences, as seen in the survey from the China Tourism Academy in which 53% of respondents were first-time overseas travelers, roughly 55% of respondents traveled with a tour group in 2018, a sharp decrease from 72% surveyed just a year prior ("CTA Annual Report" n.d.), signaling an increase in individual foreign travel. This trend has been largely fueled by the widespread adaptation of digital media, which has simplified the planning and booking processes. Moreover, there has been an increasing demand for greater flexibility and autonomy in travel, especially among the younger generations (King and Gardiner 2013, 2).

Despite the growing popularity of individual travel, group tours continue to play a significant role in Chinese outbound tourism. Tour groups continue to evolve, catering to those who prefer convenience and security over the freedom that individual travel can offer. The market now sees a more diversified range of travel groups, including smaller, more specialized tours that cater to niche interests, such as culinary or eco-tourism, offering more personalized experiences within the structured group format (Jin and Sparks 2017, 206).

## 6.5.2 Pre-COVID19 Motivation and Preferences

Historically, the motivations driving Chinese tourists were not different from any other tourists. Exploring different cultures, landscapes, and histories, experiencing foreign cultural practices, etc. (Otafiire, Lin, and Blažević 2019, 68). Educational tourism also emerged as a key trend, with families viewing tourism as an opportunity for learning beyond the classroom. This approach aimed to expose children to new cultures and languages and provide them with better global awareness. For many Chinese tourists, educational tourism is about preparing for a global future. Parents invest in travel experiences to give their children a competitive advantage over their peers in language programs or summer schools. Furthermore, these trips also often involve visits to prestigious universities and exploration of potential foreign schooling opportunities (Xu and Wang 2014, 9).

However, the growing middle class with its increasing disposable income views tourism not only as a means of leisure but also as a symbol of social status. Thus, luxury travel emerged as another significant travel trend. Many of these travels are often for high-end shopping as many Chinese highly seek well-known brands known for their exclusivity, as they are seen as a representation of not only wealth but also refined taste. Furthermore, foreign countries also often have lower taxes on these luxury items. (Zhang and Tse 2018, 2). But these shopping trips are not confined to only the rich, average Chinese tourists spend roughly 40% of their budget on just shopping, whereas just around 8% and 12% on attraction tickets and accommodation respectively ("CTA Annual Report" n.d.).

Even before the pandemic, the trend of adventure and wellness travel began to grow more popular shifting to a more health-conscious lifestyle. This trend can be characterized by increasing interest in outdoor sports, wellness retreats, and nature-based experiences, which often aim to provide an escape from the fast-paced and often polluted urban environment. Wellness retreats especially have gained popularity for their holistic approach to health, combining traditional practices like yoga and meditation with natural therapies. Adventure tourism encompasses a variety of activities, including hiking, skiing, diving, etc. (Wen et al., 2020, 10).

### 6.5.3 Post-COVID-19 Shifts in Chinese Outbound Tourism Preferences

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruption to the global tourism industry, resulting in changes in travel preferences among Chinese travelers. At the beginning of the pandemic, before the lockdowns completely shut the travel industry, Chinese tourists were less willing to travel to countries with high infection rates or those that were geographically, administratively, or culturally distant from China thus other Asian or domestic destinations were more popular among the Chinese tourists. Surveys and interviews conducted during the peak of the pandemic in China revealed a significant shift towards nature-based, rural, and cultural destinations. Shorter trips to closer destinations have become more popular due to concerns over health and safety (Huang et al. 2021, 1).

Moreover, the trend of independent travel, luxury, wellness, and health tourism has immensely gained popularity amid the pandemic, suggesting a further shift towards more personalized, quality-oriented experiences, with potential implications for the recovery and future direction of the Chinese tourism industry. New forms of tourism, including slow and smart tourism may gain traction as travelers seek safer, more controlled, and enriching experiences in the post-pandemic era (Wen et al. 2020, 7).

In short, the impact of COVID-19 on Chinese outbound tourism preferences was a significant shift towards safer destinations. As global tourism slowly recovers, it will be crucial for destinations to understand these shifting preferences to attract Chinese tourists (Wen et al. 2020, 7).

## 6.6 Characteristics of Czech inbound tourism

The Czech Republic is a popular destination for international tourists, thanks to its rich historical and cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and its location in the heart of Europe. This chapter aims to explore the major characteristics of Czech inbound tourism.

The Czech Republic has experienced a significant diversification in the origins of its visitors in recent years. Historically, European tourists, especially those from the neighboring countries, have made up a large portion of the incoming tourists. However, there has been a notable increase in tourists from Asia and North America, for example, the number of tourists from South Korea has risen by 283% to 110,276 visitors, while the number of visitors from Taiwan increased by 1,091 % reaching 46,293 visitors in 2023(Expats.cz, 2023). This is partially due to improved global connectivity and targeted marketing efforts, highlighting the Czech Republic's unique attractions.

Reflecting the global trend, tourists visiting the Czech Republic are increasingly seeking personalized and authentic experiences. The interest in the Czech Republic's cultural heritage, from its historical cities to rural traditions is driving demand for experiences that offer a deeper cultural immersion. This also extends to accommodation and gastronomy, where travelers have shown a preference for traditional establishments (Jurigová 2016, 308). A good example is the increasing popularity of Czech cultural festivals and artisan crafts such as Christmas markets, folk festivals, and carnivals (Jarolímková 2018, 41).

### 6.6.1 Economic contribution and regional development

Tourism is a crucial driver of economic growth in the Czech Republic, significantly contributing to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) making around 2.9% of the total GDP in 2013 (Jurigová 2016, 306). The impact of the travel sector is manifold, including direct revenues from tourist spending, as well as indirect effects on related industries such as transport, food production, and retail. The influx of international visitors not only brings foreign capital into the economy but also encourages domestic investment in infrastructure and services, thus enhancing the country's overall development and global competitiveness (Göttlichová and Šula 2020, 3).

While Prague remains the primary destination for international tourists, there is a growing recognition of the importance of promoting regional tourism to prevent overtourism in the capital and ensure a better distribution of tourism's economic benefits. Regional development initiatives aim to showcase the diversity of the Czech Republic's tourist attractions, from the wine regions in Moravia to the spas in West Bohemia. These efforts are supported by national and regional policies aiming to enhance the tourism infrastructure, marketing lesser-known destinations, and developing tourism products that reflect the unique cultural and natural heritage of each region. This approach not only alleviates the pressure on popular sites but also contributes to the economic revitalization of other regions (Jarolínková 2018).

## 6.6.2 Trends and Future Directions

A significant trend shaping the future of Czech tourism is the growing emphasis on sustainability and eco-conscious travel. Visitors increasingly seek destinations that prioritize environmental conservation and offer eco-friendly accommodations and activities (Streimikiene 2023, 283-284,). This shift is not just a preference but a demand from travelers, who are becoming more aware of tourism's impact on the planet. The Czech Republic's response concisely focuses on implementing sustainable practices in urban and rural tourism development. Streimikiene's analysis of sustainable tourism in Visegrad countries highlights these efforts. Despite trailing behind Poland and Hungary in the sustainability ranking, the Czech Republic is actively enhancing its environmental impact mitigation and policies within the tourism sector (Streimikiene 2023, 283).

Addressing the challenges of sustainable mobility in environmentally sensitive areas, particularly in national parks and protected landscapes. Timoftej and Foltýnová (2020), examine the potential for sustainable mobility in large ecologically sensitive areas, emphasizing the need for comprehensive mobility plans. Implementing such strategies could greatly enhance the management of tourist flows, alleviate environmental pressures, and ensure a high-quality visitor experience. Implementing sustainable mobility solutions, such as eco-friendly transport options and visitor management systems aligns with global sustainability goals and caters to the evolving preference of eco-conscious travelers (Timoftej and Foltýnová 2020, 309).

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the significance of health and wellness, resulting in a greater demand for tourism experiences that cater to these aspects. The Czech Republic with its wide range of spa towns, wellness resorts, and nature attractions, such as Mariánské Lázně, Karlovy Vary, and many others as well as many UNESCO heritage sites, is well-positioned to capitalize on this trend. Further improving and promoting wellness tourism can attract these health-conscious travelers and help with the diversification of the tourism base (Göttlichová and Šula 2020, 3).



In conclusion, the future of inbound tourism in the Czech Republic is at the intersection of sustainability, health and wellness, and adaptability to global events. To increase its appeal as a tourist destination, it is crucial to embrace the trends and integrate them into strategic planning and development efforts. Looking ahead, prioritizing sustainability, personalized experiences, and promoting wellness tourism will not only attract a wider range of tourists but also ensure the long-term viability and success of the Czech tourism industry. Further developing the infrastructure and adding more direct flights might also prove beneficial in increasing the number of Chinese tourists.

## 6.7 Impact of COVID-19 on the Global Travel Industry

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought an unprecedented challenge to the travel and tourism industry and the global economy. In 2020, international tourism came to a near halt due to lockdowns and travel industry and travel restrictions. This resulted in a drastic decline in international arrivals and significant economic losses across all tourism-related sectors. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international arrivals decreased by 70-75% in 2020 (UNWTO 2021), resulting in a loss of approximately \$1.3 trillion in revenues, which is more than 11 times the loss experienced during the 2009 economic crisis (Kapp and Vega 2014, 14).

The impact of the pandemic varied across the different regions and industries. Countries that heavily rely on tourism face the biggest challenges. As they struggled to support their economies and cope with growing unemployment. The closure of borders and suspension of air travel disrupted not only leisure travel but also business travel, conferences, and other forms of group travel, significantly amplifying the economic toll. According to Gössling et. al. (2020), the pandemic has highlighted the need to reconsider the tourism model that has so far prioritized volume growth over sustainability (Gössling, Scott, and Hall 2020, 3).

There have been many recovery strategies implemented, mainly focusing on promoting domestic tourism, implementing health and safety protocols, and using digital technologies to increase travel safety and consumer confidence. Countries and businesses are exploring new models that prioritize health, sustainability, and local experiences to attract tourists after the pandemic. For example, the promotion of “travel bubbles” between countries with low infection rates and similar health measures (Gössling, Scott, and Hall 2020, 15).

The pandemic's long-term implications indicate a move towards more sustainable and responsible tourism practices. Advocacy for a green recovery is increasing, aligning with broader environmental goals and addressing pre-pandemic criticism of the tourism industry's impact on climate change and local communities. Integrating sustainability into tourism strategies is crucial for ensuring the industry's resilience against future global crises.

## 7.1 Introduction

The objective of the analysis is to compare the number of Chinese tourist arrivals, their overnight stays, seasonal patterns, and the average length of their visit across three pivotal years: 2019, marking the period just before the pandemic; 2020, the year when the travel industry and tourism were the most severely affected by the outbreak; and 2023, the year when the travel industry began to adapt to the post-pandemic landscape. This framework will allow for an assessment of the immediate impact of the pandemic and the subsequent recovery period.

The analysis will also draw from the theoretical perspectives discussed in the earlier part of the thesis, incorporating the understanding of socioeconomic drivers of Chinese outbound tourism, the evolution of travel preferences, and the Czech Republic's response to the changing global tourism trends.

## 7.2 Analysis of Tourist Arrivals

### 7.2.1 Number of Tourist Arrivals

This chapter examines the number of Chinese tourist arrivals from 2014 to 2023 in the Czech Republic, tracing the fluctuations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how it affected the number of Chinese tourists arriving in the country.

Table 1 illustrates the number of Arriving in the Czech Republic between 2014 and 2023. The data is taken from the Czech Tourism tourdata country reports.

*Table 1 Number of Tourist Arrivals*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Arrivals</b>
2014	211 014
2015	288 630
2016	355 847
2017	489 845
2018	617 935
2019	609 727
2020	38 55
2021	7 019
2022	34 123
2023	89 517

*Source: <https://tourdata.cz/english/interactive-country-report-2023-q/>*

### *7.2.1.1 Tourist Arrivals Before the Pandemic*

From 2014 to 2019, the Czech Republic experienced a consistent increase in the number of Chinese tourists arriving in the country, with 2019 marking the peak at 609,727 visitors. This period coincided with the Czech Republic's positioning as a highly sought-after European destination. The ADS policy framework, as outlined by Arita et al. (2011), played an important role in facilitating these travels, reflecting an era characterized by increasing global interconnectedness and international mobility of the rapidly expanding Chinese middle class. The motivations for these travels, as proposed by King and Gardiner (2013), ranged from cultural curiosity to educational pursuits, aligning with the Czech Republic's diverse tourism offerings.

### *7.2.1.2 The Immediate impacts of the pandemic*

The drastic decline to 38,855 arrivals in 2020, followed by another drop to 7,109 in 2021, is indicative of the immediate and extreme impact of global travel restrictions. This sudden decline in tourist flow not only signifies the direct effect of the pandemic but also highlights the global state of crisis. The years in question were characterized by an international effort to mitigate the spread of the virus, which had a detrimental impact on the livelihoods of those employed in the tourism sector. This is further discussed in the economic analysis by Škare et al. (2020).

### *7.2.1.3 The recovery after the pandemic*

2022 and 2023 marked a gradual recovery in the number of Chinese tourists visiting the Czech Republic, with arrivals increasing to 34,123 and 89,517 respectively. These figures represent a gradual recovery from the lows experienced during the pandemic, reflecting a rebound of the tourism sector. This resurgence is a part of a broader narrative of post-pandemic recovery, as the global community cautiously resumes international travel, navigating the changing preferences and ongoing concerns post-pandemic. The recovery is driven by a vast array of factors, including the easing of travel restrictions and a gradual resumption of international flights. However, the pandemic has had a large impact on the global economies, which may factor into the slow recovery as travel may be too financially burdensome. According to Wen. et.al. (2020), the pandemic has led to a shift in travel preferences towards more thoughtful tourism, emphasizing quality, safety, and meaningful experiences. This period represents a pivotal moment for the tourism industry, signaling both a potential return to previous levels and the beginning of new trends that could shape future travel behaviors.

#### *7.2.1.4 Strategic Implications for the Czech Republic*

The evolving dynamics of Chinese tourist arrivals in the Czech Republic have significant strategic implications for the local tourism industry. This transformation demands a shift to adapt to changing preferences and behaviors, including a trend towards slower, more individualized tourism experiences. As the industry seeks to regain its pre-pandemic levels of visitors, it must also adapt to meet new expectations and concerns.

The observed fluctuations and sluggish growth suggest a possible misalignment between traditional marketing strategies and the evolving preferences of today's tourist market, rendering these marketing efforts less impactful. The Czech tourism sector could adopt a better marketing strategy focusing on safety, wellness, and the country's unique cultural attractions. Effective communication about health and safety measures, combined with the promotion of less crowded tourist spots, may alleviate travel hesitation in the post-pandemic context.

There is a clear trend towards prioritizing quality and authenticity in travel experiences. The Czech Republic can capitalize on this by promoting its rich cultural heritage, historical landmarks, and scenic landscapes. Customized travel packages that focus on eco-tourism, wellness retreats, and cultural immersions could attract those seeking deeper, more engaging travel experiences.

## 7.1.2 Regional Changes in Chinese Tourist Arrivals

The landscape of Chinese tourism in the Czech Republic has undergone significant changes between 2019 and 2023. These changes were outlined by the immediate impact of the pandemic, the subsequent recovery efforts, and the evolving tourist preferences. This analysis explores these changes by region, highlighting the changes in contrast to the hypothesis of growing interest in wellness, nature tourism, and less crowded unconventional destinations.

The following data in Table 2 is taken from the Czech tourism official country reports, illustrating the number of Chinese tourists visiting each region in 2019, 2020, and 2023.

Table 2 Number of Tourist Arrivals Across the Regions

<b>Number of Tourist Arrivals</b>			
<b>Region</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2023</b>
Karlovy Vary	35 981	1 815	1 739
Plzeň	21 123	1 487	3 730
Ústí and Labem	1 422	138	495
South Bohemian	155 586	7 502	6 727
Central Bohemian	34 845	2 008	2 584
Prague	309 299	22 757	63 133
Liberec	1 658	103	512
Hradec Králové	2 815	191	623
Pardubice	594	46	427
Vysočina	1 768	67	536
South Moravia	35 173	2 222	5 030
Olomouc	3 057	114	1 089
Zlín	1 283	92	1 613
Moravia-Silesia	5 123	313	1 297

Source: <https://tourdata.cz/english/interactive-country-report-2023-q/> , <https://tourdata.cz/english/interactive-country-report/> , <https://tourdata.cz/country-reporty/cina-2019/>

In 2019, Prague dominated with just over 50% of all Chinese tourists visiting the city, demonstrating its appeal as a cultural and historical center. Another important factor that may have played an important role is that all the direct flights ended in Prague, thus making travel to other regions more complicated. However, the outbreak of COVID-19 at the end of 2019 led to a significant decline in these numbers, with Prague experiencing a decrease to 22,757 visitors compared to 309,299 the year prior, representing a 92% drop. This drop was similar in other regions such as the Karlovy Vary region, which is renowned for its spa towns. This area experienced a similar drop of 94%, indicating the impact of the travel restrictions brought by the pandemic and the vulnerability of the regions relying on the travel industry.

By 2023, the signs of recovery were uneven across the regions. Prague, for example, began to slowly recover the number of tourists, attracting 63,133 visitors which while signaling a significant increase from the year prior, still represented just 80% of the pre-pandemic numbers. This rebound suggests a resurgence of interest, largely attributed to the easing of the travel restrictions, lessening of health concerns, and effective marketing to Chinese tourists. Similarly, the Plzeň region displayed signs of recovery, increasing its number of Chinese tourists from 1,487 in 2020 to 3,730 in 2023. While still not reaching its numbers from before the pandemic, in the context of the slow recovery of the tourism industry, this 150% increase is still one of the largest percentages wise. This could be attributed to the region's appeal as a less crowded, safer alternative towards more authentic travel experiences. However, there might be other factors influencing the increase in tourist visitors such as better marketing events taking place in the region, thus these numbers need to be further monitored during the following years.

Conversely, some regions, such as South Bohemian and Karlovy Vary regions, experienced difficulties in recovering. Despite the region's natural beauty, historical sites, and UNESCO sites, the South Bohemian region saw the largest drop of 95%, with a total of 7,502 Chinese tourists visiting the region in 2020 compared to 155,580 in 2019 while not showing signs of recovery as the numbers further dropped to 6,727 in 2023. This unexpected downturn, contrary to the hypothesis that nature-focused destinations would thrive post-pandemic invites further exploration into several key factors.



South Bohemian region's decline could be partially attributed to its relatively remote location from the main tourist centers like Prague. The logistical challenges, compounded by the reduction of transportation options during the pandemic, may have deterred tourists who faced increased complexity in reaching the touristic destination in the region. Another issue may stem from the lack of visibility and marketing aimed at the Chinese tourist market compared to a more globally recognized destination like Prague. While Prague benefits from a strong international brand presence, the South Bohemian region's natural gems might not have been sufficiently promoted to attract a market segment traditionally drawn to more well-known urban and cultural landmarks. Effective marketing is crucial in highlighting the unique value of less traveled regions, particularly to an audience that may not be aware of the travel offerings beyond the typical destinations. However, the most likely reason for the declining tourist numbers is the economic downturn caused by the pandemic. This downturn has largely affected the whole travel industry, this region not being the exception. Potential tourists facing economic uncertainties might have prioritized already well-traveled and popular destinations instead of exploring the less popular destinations.

In conclusion, while the hypothesis expected, that the South Bohemian region should have seen a rise in Chinese tourists visiting the region due to their nature-based tourism, several underlying factors may have hindered the expected growth.

Karlovy Vary region faced similar issues, known for its spa and wellness tourism was heavily affected by the health restrictions, as the spas and wellness centers often require close personal contact and use shared facilities. Despite this, the Karlovy Vary region is well-positioned to attract more Chinese tourists with the changing global travel market.

In conclusion, Prague as the cultural and historical center still attracts the majority of Chinese tourists, while regions like Karlovy Vary and South Bohemian region contrary to the growing global interest in nature-based and wellness tourism were not able to recover the numbers of Chinese tourists seen before the pandemic.

### 7.1.3 The Seasonal Analysis of Tourist Arrivals

The cyclical nature of tourism reflects various factors: climate, cultural events, and national holidays, all of which influence travelers' choices of when and where to travel. This analysis of seasonal trends in Chinese tourist arrivals to the Czech Republic examines the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the seasonal distribution of Chinese tourists to the Czech Republic.

The following Table 3 illustrate the number of Chinese visitors across the year in 2019, 2020, and 2023. The data is taken from the Czech Tourism tourdata country reports.

*Table 3 Seasonal Analysis of Tourist Arrivals*

<b>Seasonal Analysis of Tourist Arrivals</b>			
<b>Month</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2023</b>
January	21 631	28 839	4 366
February	35 319	6 386	7 970
March	33 927	1 045	6 087
April	45 171	30	6 429
May	66 691	52	6 340
June	71 746	242	7 882
July	72 630	651	9 566
August	71 228	779	8 852
September	62 727	406	10 034
October	65 315	245	11 119
November	37 813	94	7 694
December	25 259	86	8 145

Source: <https://tourdata.cz/english/interactive-country-report-2023-q/> , <https://tourdata.cz/english/interactive-country-report/> , <https://tourdata.cz/country-reporty/cina-2019/>

### *7.1.3.1 Seasonal travel before the pandemic*

In 2019, Chinese tourist arrivals peaked during the summer months, with June, July, and August seeing the highest numbers, reaching 72,630 in July. This trend aligns with the global peak tourism season and suggests a preference for traveling during the warmer months, possibly to enjoy the Czech Republic's outdoor attractions and cultural festivals.

The adjacent months, particularly May and September, also saw a significant number of tourist arrivals, with May reaching 66,691 and September 62,727. These months offer milder weather and fewer crowds, which may appeal to travelers seeking a balance between favorable conditions and avoiding peak-season crowds.

The winter months, typically considered off-season due to colder weather, still saw considerable tourist activity, with November at 37,813 and December at 25,259, likely influenced by holiday markets and winter festivities that attract tourists.

### *7.1.3.2 Seasonal distribution during the pandemic*

The beginning of the pandemic at the end of 2019, led to an unprecedented disruption in travel. January still saw a high number of arrivals at 28,839, possibly due to travel occurring before the widespread recognition of the pandemic.

Subsequent months experienced a dramatic decline in tourist arrivals, with April dropping to a mere 30 and May 52. These numbers reflect the impact of global travel restrictions and the closure of international borders.

By the latter parts of the year, some recovery was observed, although numbers remained significantly lower than the typical years, with October only seeing 245 arrivals.

### *7.1.3.3 The post-pandemic seasonal patterns*

By 2023, seasonal patterns showed signs of returning, with tourist arrivals throughout the year. The summer months again emerged as the most popular, with July at 9,566 and August at 8,852, though these figures were still below pre-pandemic highs.

A notable surge occurred in October with 11,119 arrivals, possibly reflecting the Chinese Golden Week holidays and renewed confidence in international travel. Chinese Golden Week is a significant seven-day national holiday in China, starting on October 1st. This holiday, known as National Day Golden Week, commemorates the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. It's a time of nationwide celebration and a period for many Chinese to travel and participate in various festivities that honor the country's history and culture (Li, Nguyen, and Coca-Stefaniak 2021, 84).

The data from 2023 suggest that while traditional seasonal peaks are returning, the patterns are not simply reverting to pre-pandemic norms. There is a visible spread in the distribution of tourist arrivals across the year, which may reflect a more cautious return to travel, with tourists possibly preferring to avoid the busiest months in favor of less crowded times.

A comparative analysis of seasonal travel patterns among Chinese tourists from 2019 to 2023 reveals shifts that may be attributed to a combination of lingering impacts of the pandemic, and evolving travel preferences such as the growing popularity of individual travel over group tours, offering a greater degree of freedom in choosing the time when to travel.

These shifts carry a strategic implication for destination marketing, suggesting a need to promote off-peak travel more aggressively and develop year-round tourism products that can attract and accommodate Chinese tourists outside the traditional high season.

#### *7.1.3.4 Conclusion*

The seasonal analysis of Chinese tourist arrivals to the Czech Republic demonstrates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel behaviors, with emerging signs of recovery and adaptation by 2023. While traditional patterns are largely resurfacing, new trends are also apparent, indicating a shift in the seasonal preferences for Chinese tourists. For the Czech tourism industry, understanding and responding to these shifts is crucial for strategic planning and ensuring resilient, sustainable tourism that can thrive in the post-pandemic era.

## 7.2 Analysis of the Average Length of Stay

In recent years, the tourism industry has seen a shift towards what is known as “slow tourism”. This concept emphasizes extended stays, deeper cultural engagement, and a more relaxed travel pace (Zielińska-Szczepkowska 2020, 468-483). This trend has been particularly evident in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as travelers' preferences have shifted towards longer stays that allow for greater immersion and reduced frequency of travel. This chapter analyses the changes in the average length of stay of Chinese tourists in the Czech Republic and the Czech regions. It will explore the hypothesis that slow tourism has contributed to the general increase in the duration of visits.

The data is taken from the Czech tourism tourdata country reports representing the average length of stay in days. Table 4 represents the average length of stay of Chinese tourists between 2014 and 2023. Table 5, represents the average length of stay of Chinese visitors across the Czech regions in the years 2019, 2020, and 2023.

Table 4 Average Length of Stay in Days

Year	Length of Stay
2014	2.63
2015	2.66
2016	2.60
2017	2.52
2018	2.48
2019	2.50
2020	2.79
2021	3.47
2022	3.35
2023	2.97

Source: <https://tourdata.cz/english/interactive-country-report-2023-q/>, <https://tourdata.cz/english/interactive-country-report/>, <https://tourdata.cz/country-reports/cina-2019/>

Regional comparison of the Average Length of Stay in Days			
Region	2019	2020	2023
Karlovy Vary	2.1	2.3	2.7
Plzeň	2.1	2.2	2.4
Ústí and Labem	3.4	3.6	5.3
South Bohemian	2.1	2.1	2.3
Central Bohemian	2.5	4.9	2.5
Prague	2.8	2.9	3
Liberec	2.7	3.9	4
Hradec Králové	2.5	2.8	3.4
Pardubice	4.3	4	3.6
Vysočina	2.9	2.4	3.3
South Moravia	2.5	2.6	2.9
Olomouc	2.4	2.9	6.2
Zlín	2.7	3.3	2.7
Moravia-Silesia	2.5	2.8	3.5

Table 5 Average Length of Stay in Days Across the Regions

Source: <https://tourdata.cz/english/interactive-country-report-2023-q/>, <https://tourdata.cz/english/interactive-country-report/>, <https://tourdata.cz/country-reports/cina-2019/>



### *7.2.1 Overall trends*

Between 2014 and 2019, the average length of stay fluctuated slightly around 2.60 days on average, suggesting a stable preference for shorter trips typical of traditional travel patterns. In 2020, the length of stay increased to 2.79 days, as travel restrictions likely led to longer stays for the few Chinese travelers who were able to visit the country. A significant jump to an average of 3.47 days in 2021 and maintaining the high of 3.35 days in 2020 underscores the likely adoption of slow tourism principles. By 2023, the average length of stay stabilized at a moderate 2.97 days. Although lower than the peak pandemic years, it remains higher than the pre-pandemic levels, indicating the possibility of lasting slow tourism trends.

### *7.2.2 Regional analysis*

As the capital city and a major tourist center, Prague saw a steady increase in the length of stay from 2.8 in 2019 to 3.0 in 2023. This increase reflects the city's capacity to offer rich. A multi-faced cultural experience that aligns well with the slow tourism principles. One of the most striking increases was shown in the Ústí and Labem region, where the length of stay rose from 3.4 days in 2019 to 5.3 days by 2023. This could be indicative of the region's larger focus on the promotion of the region's historical heritage, which resonates well with tourists seeking more meaningful and prolonged engagement. Notable for its fluctuating stay durations, peaking at 4.9 days in 2020 before returning to 2.5 days in 2023, the South Bohemian region's relatively remote location from Prague likely influenced its temporary spike during the pandemic. This fluctuation underscores the need for the region to develop unique offerings to maintain longer stays post-pandemic. The Olomouc region demonstrated the most significant increase, with stays lengthening to 6.2 by 2023. The emphasis on integrating local cultural festivals, rich history, and vibrant food culture is likely to have contributed to this rise, drawing Chinese tourists interested in deep cultural immersion.

The trends towards longer stays are partly driven by a broader cultural shift towards valuing experience over material goods. For Chinese tourists, this shift is also influenced by increasing international exposure and a growing middle class that values unique and enriching experiences. Wei, Meng, and Zhan (2016) further explore this topic in their study. These longer stays also positively contribute to local economies, providing sustained revenue streams. Socially, they facilitate a deeper relationship between the locals and tourists, fostering a better understanding and appreciation of local cultures.

## 8. Conclusion

This thesis examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Chinese tourism to the Czech Republic, offering valuable insight into how a global health crisis can alter travel patterns and preferences. By analyzing data on tourist arrivals, seasonal trends, and length of stay focusing on the years 2019, 2020, and 2023, this study gives insight into the extensive and lasting changes brought about by the pandemic.

The findings confirmed a sharp decline in the number of Chinese tourists at the height of the pandemic in 2020, followed by a gradual recovery that has yet to reach the pre-pandemic levels. This pattern underscores the enduring impact on Chinese tourism.

Furthermore, the study revealed a shift in the seasonal distribution of Chinese tourists, with a newfound preference for traveling during traditionally less busy periods. This change may reflect ongoing health concerns however, other external factors may play a significant role in these changes.

The results support the hypothesis that the average length of stay for Chinese tourists has further increased since the pandemic. This trend is consistent with the global rise of “slow tourism”, where travelers seek deeper connections with local cultures and communities, preferring longer stays that allow for a more immersive experience.

Contrary to the hypothesis, regions known for wellness and nature tourism did not see expected growth in visits from Chinese tourists. Instead, these areas experienced a significant decline in tourist numbers, with a very slow recovery. These findings suggest that while there may be a general trend towards wellness and nature tourism globally, other factors such as accessibility, and promotional efforts may have influenced the slow recovery in these specific regions.

These findings suggest several implications for tourism strategy in the Czech Republic. While the increase in length of stay indicates a potential market for a deeper, more engaged tourism experience, the slow recovery of wellness and nature-oriented regions highlights the need for targeted strategies to rebuild and effectively promote these areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped international tourism including the Chinese visits to the Czech Republic, creating lasting changes in travel behaviors and destination preferences. As the Czech Republic adapts to this new reality, understanding these shifts is crucial for effective recovery and future growth. This study highlights the importance of aligning tourism strategies with emerging trends and addressing challenges faced by regions within the country. By focusing on tailored promotional strategies and enhancing tourist experiences, the Czech Republic can better cater evolving needs of international travelers, particularly those from China.

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