

Airbnb stops booking stays in China: source

May 24 2022



Airbnb has proven much more popular with people in China looking to book stays outside the country than it has been for arranging lodging in homes there.

Home rental service Airbnb is shutting down its business in China as a pandemic lockdown shows no sign of ending there, a source close to the company told AFP Monday.

Airbnb will no longer book stays or visitor "experiences" in China, focusing instead on helping people there with travel plans outside the country, the source said.

The San Francisco based company declined to comment.

Airbnb launched its business in China six years ago, and has booked stays at homes there for some 25 million guests. Bookings at residences in China have accounted for only one percent of Airbnb bookings in recent years, the company has reported.

Airbnb faced strong competition in China, and Covid-19 made its operations there more complicated and expensive.

China has persisted with its zero-Covid policy, imposing hard lockdowns and movement restrictions on several cities, even as much of the rest of the world has transitioned to living with the coronavirus.

The curbs, including stay-at-home orders in the economic hub of Shanghai and creeping restrictions across Beijing, have inflicted a heavy economic toll.

Airbnb expects outbound tourism from China that had been booming prior to the pandemic to rebound as Covid-19 restrictions ease and borders reopen.

Bookings on Airbnb hit a new high in this year's first quarter, the firm said in a recent earnings report, signalling that travel demand stifled by the Covid-19 pandemic is being unleashed.

Despite the Omicron surge and a persistent level of infections, Airbnb bookings for lodging and travel "experiences" topped 102 million in the first three months of this year, setting a new quarterly record, the

company said in an earnings release.

"Guests are [booking](#) more than ever before," Airbnb told shareholders in a letter.

"Looking ahead, we see strong sustained pent-up demand."

The company said that trends of people booking stays away from [urban areas](#) and staying relatively close to home continue, but that guests are returning to cities and making cross-border trips.

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