

Chinese island eyes oasis from web censorship for foreigners

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Hainan, known as China's Hawaii thanks to its resorts and tropical beaches, hopes to attract more tourist dollars

China's Hainan island has proposed allowing foreign visitors access to censored websites such as YouTube and Facebook, a double standard

that has raised cries of indignation from the country's internet users.

The province, known as China's Hawaii thanks to its resorts and tropical beaches, is set to become the country's largest free trade zone and hopes to attract increased investment in hi-tech industries, as well as more [tourist](#) dollars.

Part of that effort includes making the island more hospitable to foreign tourists through such steps as instituting visa-free travel and making it easier to use foreign credit cards.

But authorities also want to take a more dramatic step: creating "foreign tourist gathering spots" where visitors can "normally use popular foreign social media sites Facebook, Twitter and YouTube," according to a copy of the proposal posted earlier this month on the provincial government's official [website](#).

The sites, along with Google, Instagram and other popular services, are banned in mainland China as well as Hainan.

The country heavily censors its [internet](#) to prevent the spread of information deemed unflattering to the government or damaging to public morals.

The suggestion that foreign guests be given privileges that are denied to Chinese people themselves set off a firestorm of criticism on China's own social media websites.

Users of the popular microblog Weibo posted thousands of comments, most of which were quickly taken down.

"This is completely despicable, shameless and obscene reverse discrimination," one commenter raged.

"Resist discriminatory treatment!" shouted another, a remark that popped up in many of the responses to the post.

Chinese [internet users](#) wanting to view the proposal will struggle to find it, after the Hainan government quickly removed the document from its website.

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