Sovereign Hill sets its sights on the rapidly emerging Chinese tourism market with the announcement of a new sales office in China

Ballarat, January 2012 – Sovereign Hill, Australia’s favourite outdoor museum, has announced that it will be opening a sales office in central Shanghai, China. In an Australian first, the tourist attraction has confirmed that it will be hiring up to four sales staff to service the key cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing. The key role of the office will be to promote the Sovereign Hill brand to travel agents and wholesalers in the increasingly popular inbound Chinese tourism market – which experts predict will continue its rapid growth over the coming years.

Located in central Victoria, an easy 90-minute drive from Melbourne, Sovereign Hill has long been a popular travel destination amongst Chinese tourists looking to learn about the Chinese miners who chased their fortunes to Ballarat during the great Australian gold rushes of the 1850s. Sovereign Hill’s outdoor museum features a Chinese Camp, complete with canvas tents, rough huts and a consecrated temple used on ceremonial occasions by the local Chinese community. Here, visitors gain an insight into the experiences of the Chinese miners, shopkeepers, scribes and herbalists who lived and worked on the mid-19th century Australian goldfields.

Since the early 1990s, Sovereign Hill has been an industry leader in developing the Chinese inbound tourism market, employing Chinese-speaking guides and providing guide maps and underground mine exhibits in Mandarin and Cantonese. Sovereign Hill’s Gold Museum also provides Chinese-speaking staff to assist visitors with their purchases – gold nuggets and gold jewellery being especially popular. In 2006, the company was the first Victoria tourism attraction to appoint an in-market sales agent.

The latest initiative is in addition to the recent introduction of a new tour for Chinese visitors. Long experience in catering for Chinese tourists has given Sovereign Hill a strong understanding of the varied needs and interests of this market. Overall, Sovereign Hill has welcomed approximately one million Chinese visitors, with current visitation levels of 70,000 annually. The New Gold Mountain Experience has been developed in response to recent observations that Chinese visitors are now seeking more personal and interactive travel experiences. The new tour provides flexible, personal and high quality self-guided
tours of Sovereign Hill with a wide selection of ‘hands-on’ activities. With the foundations of storytelling, imagination and individual adventure in mind, and experienced Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking guides, visitors and their families can enjoy Sovereign Hill at their own pace and explore the attractions of greatest personal interest.

Gold panning and Sovereign Hill’s own boiled sweets are firm favourites!

Sovereign Hill CEO, Mr Jeremy Johnson, said, “We are proud to be the first Australian tourism attraction to open an office in China. We see this as a crucial step to ensure that Sovereign Hill is at the forefront of people’s minds when they visit from China.”

“In addition to the new sales office, our New Gold Mountain Experience allows Chinese tourists to get the most out of their Sovereign Hill visit by creating their own unique and memorable adventures with their families.”

“As a living museum, Sovereign Hill is famed for bringing Australia’s goldrush history to life, and tourists will now be able to experience this era on a new and exciting level,” said Mr. Johnson.

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Sovereign Hill
BACKGROUND NOTES

Sovereign Hill has been delighting visitors since it was officially opened to the public on Sunday 29 November, 1970.

In the 1960s, the Ballarat community recognised the need to preserve the unique heritage of the city through a network of museums that would collect, research and interpret the significance of the goldrush era. From this vision, Sovereign Hill was born.

Sovereign Hill is an internationally renowned, award-winning outdoor museum operated by The Sovereign Hill Museums Association, a not-for-profit, community-based organisation. This means that operating profits are invested back into the museum so that new experiences can constantly be developed.

Sovereign Hill has an equivalent full-time staff of 200 and more than 200 volunteers who provide costumed interpretation of the Outdoor Museum and a range of heritage-related functions behind the scenes.

Sovereign Hill contributes an estimated $50 million annually to the local economy and was judged Victoria’s Major Tourist Attraction at the 2003, 2004 and 2005 Victorian Tourism Awards and Australia’s Major Tourist Attraction at the 2006 Australian Tourism Awards.