

New visitor app by the City of Helsinki and Tencent takes travel experience to the next level

Designed especially for Chinese visitors, the WeChat MyHelsinki mini program is the first city app in the world to combine tailored personal recommendations, mobility planning and purchase options for travellers. The new service has been jointly developed by Chinese internet service giant Tencent, the City of Helsinki and Mobility as a Service pioneer Whim.



Photo: Harri Tarvainen

In the near future, Chinese tourists travelling to Helsinki will be able to use the WeChat mobile app to review local recommendations about the best restaurants and sights in town, plan how they will get from their hotel to the restaurant of their choice, and pay for both transportation and their restaurant bill using the same app. The digital tourism service has been developed to respond especially to the needs of independent Chinese travellers.

“By collaborating with Tencent and Whim, we have been able to develop an innovative user-based service that is the first of its kind in the world. The app will help us ensure that visitors not only have easy access to information, but also gain easy access to the best experiences our city has to offer. It’s like having a personal tour guide but in a digital format, the experience is the same – in Helsinki you can be sure that everything will go smoothly and that you will enjoy your stay,” says **Tia Hallanoro**, Director of Brand Communications & Digital Development at Helsinki Marketing.

Mini programs are web-based apps on WeChat that enable purchases within the service. The app does not have to be downloaded separately, as it is included within WeChat, an all-in-one application with over billion users. Of more than a billion internet users in China, 97.5 percent use a mobile device for browsing, and 35 percent of the 26.5 hours a week spent online are spent on WeChat. Therefore, the new mini program offers the opportunity to serve Chinese consumers using their preferred digital services throughout their visit. Destination websites are of little importance when Chinese visitors search for information using their favourite mobile apps.

“The number of Chinese visitors travelling overseas is growing rapidly and travel patterns are in real transition. Among those travellers in-depth traveling has become a trend. With Helsinki miniprogram, a comprehensive and reliable one-stop service, Tencent wants to serve them as well as possible,” states **Zhan Shu**, General Manager of the Tencent Governmental Affairs and Tourism Center.

Already this July, Chinese visitors will be able to find out more about the Finnish capital through local recommendations included in the mini program. The service is based on the content and user interface of the City of Helsinki’s [MyHelsinki.fi](https://www.helsinki.fi/en/visiting-helsinki) website. As of August, Chinese visitors will be able to use the mini program to plan how they get about in Helsinki and pay for purchases using WeChat Pay. Whim’s smart mobility service will enable Chinese visitors to purchase all the travel tickets and tourism services they need – from sightseeing tours to sauna visits and guided nature excursions – using a single app.

“From the perspective of independent travellers, simply getting about in an unfamiliar city is always one of the key factors that can hamper enjoying the full experience. When all available modes of transport and the most reliable service providers can be reviewed and paid for in

your native language using a single app, there is no more need for separate tickets, apps and payment methods,” says **Kaj Pyyhtiä**, Co-Founder and Chief Customer Experience Officer at Whim.

Whim will enable Chinese visitors to access all the leading local services for different modes of transport, including HSL public transport, Taxi Helsinki, Lähitaksi, Sixt, Hertz and Toyota Rent.

Comprehensive service offerings enabled by the City of Helsinki’s open data

Almost a hundred percent of Chinese tourists travelling abroad use WeChat. The MyHelsinki mini program will provide Chinese visitors better access to local service providers. The mini program aims to offer Chinese visitors a genuine local experience and more than just the most obvious tourist attractions.

Helsinki is a global pioneer in providing access to public data and utilising it. The mini program that has been developed together with Tencent utilises Helsinki’s open data about places, events and public transport and uses this data in its recommendations. Open data enables more in-depth recommendations and tailored services to be offered to Chinese visitors.

“Helsinki aims to be a global trendsetter in the digital revolution, and we believe strongly in the possibilities presented by the application programming interface or API economy. We have developed the city’s open data API to make it even easier in the future for it to be utilised. The importance of genuine local recommendations in city marketing will continue to grow in the future. Our API represents a unique opportunity to share Helsinki’s destination information and recommendations through as many channels as possible for use by airlines and travel agencies, for example,” Tia Hallanoro adds.

For Whim, working together with Helsinki Marketing and a pioneering internet service giant like Tencent is an exciting new opportunity. Whim has already launched independently at several foreign destinations, and the aim is to operate in dozens of cities within the next few years.

“Through our collaboration with Tencent and the City of Helsinki, we will be demonstrating our model for smart mobility and tourism to the rest of the world,” Kaj Pyyhtiä states.

Contact information:

Helsinki Marketing

Tia Hallanoro
Director, Brand Communications & Digital Development
tia.hallanoro@hel.fi
+358 40 826 3130

Whim / MaaS Global

Kaj Pyyhtiä
Chief Customer Experience Officer
kaj.pyyhtia@maas.global
+358 50 541 3797

Tencent

Hao Wang
Director, Culture and Travel Center
Jossewang@tencent.com
+86 186 01 110 375

Whim is a service of MaaS Global, a young and fast growing company based in Helsinki, Finland. As the world’s first MaaS (Mobility as a Service) operator, MaaS Global will revolutionise the way we move. Every journey is covered within one application – whether it’s taxi, public transport, a car service or a bike share.

Helsinki Marketing is a company owned by the City of Helsinki. It is responsible for operative city marketing and business partnerships for Helsinki. Helsinki Marketing interacts with local residents, visitors, decision-makers and experts.