

## Beijing plays down worries on Olympic hotel bookings

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Beijing officials on Tuesday sought to downplay worries about low hotel reservations for next month's Olympics, insisting the numbers were in line with expectations and refusing to draw a link with new visa controls.

Xiong Yumei, deputy head of the Beijing Tourism Administration, told a news conference that more than half the rooms in four-star hotels in Beijing over the Olympic period were still available, though bookings were edging up slowly.

"This is what we expected," she said. "There are still quite a lot of people from other cities and provinces who have tickets but have not yet booked rooms. When August comes, the occupancy rate will be much higher than the present booking rate."

Over the same period last year, four-star hotels had booking rates of close to 70 percent, but there are now 20 more hotels competing for business than last year in Beijing, Xiong added.

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