

## Travel and Tourism

*Hong Kong is a vibrant city that never ceases to surprise visitors with new attractions. The commissioning of the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal in June puts Hong Kong firmly at the centre of cruise tourism in Asia. A new themed area opened in Hong Kong Disneyland in May and plans were confirmed during the year for further developments there and at Ocean Park.*

Hong Kong registered a record high of 54.3 million visitor arrivals in 2013, an increase of 11.7 per cent over 2012. Mainland visitors reached 40.75 million and continued to be the largest source of visitors to Hong Kong, 16.7 per cent up over 2012. There was also a notable rise in visitors from a number of other source markets, including Russia (plus 20 per cent) Vietnam (plus 14.4 per cent), Macao (plus 8.5 per cent) and Thailand (plus 6.6 per cent).

### Major Tourism Developments

While work on boosting family and business travels continued, special efforts were made to promote MICE ('Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions'), cruise tourism, mega events and 'green tourism'.

#### MICE

Hong Kong is a premier MICE destination, offering world-class convention and exhibition facilities and a wide range of tourist attractions. The 'Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong' (MEHK), a dedicated office established under the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), promotes MICE tourism for Hong Kong.

There were 1.63 million overnight MICE visitors to Hong Kong in 2013, a rise of 1.8 per cent over 2012. Hong Kong was once again selected as the 'Best Business City in the World' by a leading MICE journal. Hong Kong hosts some of the world's largest trade fairs, such as the Hong Kong Electronics Fair, the Hong Kong Jewellery and Gem Fair, the Hong Kong Gifts and Premium Fair, and the Hong Kong Watch and Clock Fair.

Major conventions and exhibitions held in Hong Kong during the year included Watches & Wonders Asia Haute Horlogerie 2013, SIGGRAPH Asia 2013, World Congress of Nephrology 2013, Art Basel, 6th Asia Pacific Heart Rhythm Society & CardioRhythm, 45th Congress of International

Society of Paediatric Oncology, 59th World Statistics Congress of the International Statistical Institute and Wikimania 2013. Major events to be staged in Hong Kong in the coming years include International Trademark Association Annual Meeting 2014, China New Energy Vehicle, International Congress of Cognitive Psychotherapy 2014, 2nd Asia Pacific Glaucoma Congress 2014, World Glaucoma Congress 2015, World Congress of Anaesthesiologists 2016, 38th Asia Pacific Dental Congress 2016 and CFA Institute Annual Conference 2017.

### **Cruise Tourism**

The first berth of the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal started to receive cruise liners in June, with the second berth due for completion in 2014. The terminal received nine ship calls in 2013 and the number is expected to increase to 26 in 2014.

The China National Tourism Administration announced in August the implementation details of the measure promulgated by the Central People's Government in June 2012 that Mainland tour groups taking cruises from Hong Kong to Taiwan can also visit Japan or Korea on the same cruise, enabling cruise operators to offer more attractive itineraries.

### **Mega Events**

In recognition of the fact that large-scale events enrich visitors' travel experience and add colour and vibrancy to the city, the government established the Mega Events Fund (MEF) in 2009 to encourage the staging of such events in Hong Kong. In April 2012, the Legislative Council's Finance Committee approved \$150 million to fund the MEF for a further five years to attract more mega events to Hong Kong. Since its establishment, the MEF has provided funds to 23 events.

In 2013, the HKTB organised a number of mega events to attract visitors to the city, including the International Chinese New Year Parade; the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Carnival; the Hong Kong Mid-Autumn Festival; the Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival; the Hong Kong WinterFest; and the New Year Countdown Celebrations.

### **Green Tourism**

In November, the HKTB organised the 'Great Outdoors Hong Kong' programme for the fifth year, which took visitors on a number of Hong Kong's hiking trails and cycling routes. Guided hiking and cycling tours are provided and participants are given a guidebook to these trails, the Hong Kong Global Geopark of China, and the outlying islands.

### **Tourism Infrastructure, Facilities and Products**

Hong Kong offers a wide range of attractions to visitors. There is something for everyone – the sightseer, the food lover, the shopper, the family, the businessman, the leisure traveller, the young and the old. The most popular spot for sightseers is the Peak, which provides a panoramic view of Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and Victoria Harbour. Other popular attractions include the theme parks, temples, heritage sites, natural landscape, and the numerous shops that have earned Hong Kong the reputation as a 'shoppers' paradise'.

### ***Ocean Park***

With the completion of its Master Redevelopment Plan in mid-2012, Ocean Park has become a world-class marine themed park featuring more than 80 attractions. In January, the re-tender exercise of the Ocean Hotel was launched, and in May, the Legislative Council Finance Committee approved a \$2.29 billion government loan to Ocean Park to facilitate the construction of an all-weather indoor cum outdoor water park at Tai Shue Wan.

### ***A Symphony of Lights***

Another attraction that captivates visitors is the nightly spectacle 'A Symphony of Lights', which the Guinness World Records describes as the world's 'largest permanent light and sound show'. It features interactive lights beamed with music from 45 buildings on both sides of the harbour, revealing a spectacular view of Victoria Harbour at night.

### ***Hong Kong Disneyland***

Hong Kong Disneyland has received over 46 million visitors since it opened in September 2005, and has won over 270 awards as one of the most popular and best themed resorts in Asia. A new themed area, Mystic Point, opened in May 2013. To further enhance its appeal, Hong Kong Disneyland will launch a new night-time parade in 2014. A new themed area featuring Marvel Comics' character 'Iron Man', the first of its kind in the world, will also be open in late 2016.

### ***Wetland Park***

The Hong Kong Wetland Park, a world-class eco-tourism facility, is home to a wide assortment of wildlife, including birds, dragonflies, amphibians, mammals, reptiles, butterflies and fish. The park comprises 60 hectares of re-created wetland, exhibition galleries, a visitor centre, a theatre and other facilities, all of which underline the importance of wetland to biodiversity, civilisation and conservation.

### ***Ngong Ping 360***

The Ngong Ping 360 cable car takes visitors on a scenic 25-minute ride above sea and land between Tung Chung and the top of Lantau Island, where a Buddhist-themed village is located. It also links up other famous tourist attractions such as the Tian Tan Buddha, commonly known as the 'Big Buddha', the Po Lin Monastery, the Ngong Ping Piazza and the Wisdom Path.

### ***Hong Kong Tourism Board***

The HKTB is a statutory government-subsided organisation, responsible for marketing and promoting Hong Kong around the world as a preferred travel destination. It comprises 20 members from various tourism-related sectors and community leaders. In addition to its Hong Kong head office, it has 16 offices and eight representatives in 18 source markets.

### ***Information Network***

The HKTB has five visitor centres in Hong Kong: on the Peak, in Tsim Sha Tsui, at the Hong Kong International Airport, at the Lo Wu boundary crossing and (during ship calls) at the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal.

A 'Hong Kong Pals Programme', launched in 2009 for local residents to share their recommendations with visitors, continues to be popular.

The HKTB website [www.discoverhongkong.com](http://www.discoverhongkong.com) offers travel information in 22 versions and 15 languages. In 2013, the HKTB continued to enhance the website to facilitate visitors' pre-trip planning and to integrate better with social media platforms. The HKTB also promotes Hong Kong's many attractions and events through mobile applications and online campaigns via social networking sites.

### **Marketing**

The HKTB spearheads the promotion of Hong Kong in major tourist source markets and strives to offer the best experiences for visitors. The HKTB adopts 'Hong Kong · Asia's World City' as a destination brand to highlight Hong Kong's dynamism, cosmopolitan lifestyle and cultural diversity. Visitors can experience a vibrant living culture with a variety of attractions and a blend of East and West.

### **Service Quality**

#### ***Honest and Good Quality Tourist Services***

The government works closely with the tourism industry and related organisations to promote honest and good quality services for tourists. The Hong Kong Police Force and the Customs and Excise Department carry out inspections and enforcement action to protect consumers' rights. The Trade Descriptions (Unfair Trade Practices) (Amendment) Ordinance 2012, which came into effect on 19 July, prohibits unfair trade practices. The Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) inspects tour operations and registered shops regularly. It also operates a 'Refund Protection Scheme for Registered Shops' which allows Mainland tour group visitors unhappy with their purchases to return the goods and seek a refund within 180 days of purchase, provided the goods are in proper condition.

The government worked with the TIC to introduce 10 measures in 2011 to tighten the arrangements for receiving Mainland tour groups in Hong Kong. The measures include key points that must be incorporated in the contract between Mainland travel agents organising group tours and the Hong Kong travel agents receiving the groups, promulgated jointly with the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA). A note was also disseminated through the CNTA to raise Mainland tourists' awareness of their consumer rights in Hong Kong. To increase protection for Mainland inbound tour group visitors, the TIC issued a directive in April 2013 requiring Mainland inbound tour groups with shopping itineraries at registered shops to register with the TIC at least two days before their arrival in Hong Kong. Mainland inbound tour groups without shopping itineraries at registered shops must register with the TIC before their arrival in Hong Kong. Both kinds of Mainland inbound tour groups must be registered with proof of accommodation.

The HKTB's 'Quality & Honest Hong Kong Tours' from the Mainland are guaranteed free of compulsory self-paid activities, guided shopping and any surcharges. These tours were offered in 29 Mainland cities at the end of 2013.

The HKTB's Quality Tourism Services (QTS) Scheme promotes good quality services at shops, restaurants and visitor accommodation facilities and is widely supported. By the end of 2013 some 1,330 local establishments with about 8,300 outlets had earned QTS accreditation.

### **Hospitality initiatives**

Hospitality is essential to sustaining tourism. The government runs a 'Hong Kong Young Ambassador Scheme' to train young people to be polite and helpful to visitors and to develop a strong hospitality culture in schools and in the community. More than 2,600 young people have joined the programme so far, rendering more than 220,000 hours of ambassadorial service.

### **Easier Entry for Visitors**

Hong Kong is one of the world's most immigration-friendly cities. Travellers from some 170 countries and territories enjoy visa-free access to the city for stays of between seven and 180 days.

The Mainland's Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) permits citizens of 49 designated Mainland cities to visit Hong Kong on their own instead of in tour groups. More than 27 million Mainlanders visited Hong Kong under the scheme in 2013, representing about 67 per cent of all Mainland arrivals. In 2013, 12.15 million Shenzhen residents visited Hong Kong using the one-year multiple-entry IVS endorsement for Shenzhen permanent residents.

### **Protection of Travellers**

Travel agents must obtain a licence from the government and be members of the TIC to carry out travel business. The TIC investigates complaints against travel agents and takes disciplinary action against agents who do not observe its rules. There were 1,701 licensed travel agents at the end of 2013.

The Travel Industry Compensation Fund (TICF) provides ex gratia payments of up to 90 per cent of the loss of tour fares to outbound travellers in the event of a travel agent default. A total of \$2,844,000 was paid to 1,955 travellers affected by three default cases in 2013 and three default cases in 2011 and 2012. The TICF also provides emergency financial assistance to outbound travellers injured or killed in accidents in the course of an activity arranged by a travel agent. An ex gratia payment amounting to \$17,000 was made in 2013 for an accident in 2012.

Travel agents have to assign accredited tourist guides to receive inbound visitors. There were 6,799 accredited tourist guides in Hong Kong at the end of 2013.

### **New Regulatory Framework for the Tourism Sector**

Following a review of the tourism sector's regulatory framework in 2011, the government decided to set up an independent statutory body, the Travel Industry Authority (TIA), to regulate travel agents, tourist guides and tour escorts. The government is drafting legislation for the new regulatory regime and will continue discussions with the travel trade to refine some of the detailed arrangements and address the trade's concerns. It is expected that the bill could

be introduced into the Legislative Council in the 2014-15 legislative session and the TIA could be established in late 2015 at the earliest.

## **Tourism Co-operation**

### ***Mainland***

The government maintains close liaison with the Mainland tourism authorities, and meetings are held regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest, such as the regulation of the tourism trade, joint promotions and the development of the tourism industry.

### ***Macao***

Hong Kong and Macao have maintained close co-operation in developing and promoting 'multi-destination' itineraries which include both places as well as other neighbouring cities.

### ***Co-operation with other countries and international tourism organisations***

Hong Kong is a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Tourism Working Group (APEC TWG), Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and an Associate member of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

In 2013, Hong Kong signed with South Australia a memorandum of understanding to promote further mutual co-operation in tourism, and signed with Thailand a co-operation arrangement on trade and economic relations, including tourism.

### ***Websites***

Hong Kong Tourism Board: [www.discoverhongkong.com](http://www.discoverhongkong.com)

Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong: [www.mehongkong.com](http://www.mehongkong.com)

Tourism Commission: [www.tourism.gov.hk](http://www.tourism.gov.hk)