

Travel and Tourism

Tourism continued to thrive despite challenges and competition. An exciting 'Hong Kong Pulse 3D Light Show' was introduced in the year, as Hong Kong received more than 60 million visitors.

Hong Kong received over 60.8 million visitors in 2014, an increase of 12 per cent over 2013. The Mainland continued to be the largest source of visitors, surging by 16 per cent over 2013 to 47.2 million in 2014. There was also a notable growth in visitors from a number of other source markets, including India (plus 18.7 per cent), South Korea (plus 15.5 per cent) and Singapore (plus 5.4 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 1.8 million overnight MICE visitors to Hong Kong in 2014, a rise of 11.1 per cent over 2013. 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 2014, Art Basel, Vinexpo 2014, Nu Skin Greater China Convention 2014, International Trademark Association 136th Annual Meeting, International

Conference on Emergency Medicine, 8th International Congress for Cognitive Psychotherapy, 4th Hong Kong International Dental Expo and Symposium and 2nd Asia Pacific Glaucoma Congress. Major events to be staged in Hong Kong in the coming years include 6th World Glaucoma Congress 2015, UFI Asia Seminar 2015, ASAE Asia Pacific Great Ideas Conference 2015, HxGN Live Asia 2015, World Business Forum 2015-2017, World Congress of Anaesthesiologists 2016, Million Dollar Round Table Experience 2016, 38th Asia Pacific Dental Congress 2016 and CFA Institute Annual Conference 2017.

Cruise Tourism

The Kai Tak Cruise Terminal, commissioned in June 2013 and built on the site of the former Kai Tak Airport runway, is capable of accommodating cruise ships with a gross tonnage of up to 220,000 tons. In its first full year of operation in 2014, there were 28 ship calls at the terminal for a total of 50 days, with total passenger throughput over 130,000. The number of ship calls is expected to continue to increase in the coming years.

To promote regional co-operation of the cruise industry, the HKTB collaborated with neighbouring ports in launching the 'Asia Cruise Fund' in April this year. The fund provided incentives to encourage cruise lines to include ports in the region, including Hong Kong, in their cruise 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 24 events.

In 2014, 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 Pulse 3D Light Show; the Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival; the Hong Kong WinterFest; and the New Year Countdown Celebrations.

Green Tourism

The HKTB's 'Great Outdoors Hong Kong' promotes the Hong Kong Global Geopark of China, the natural scenery of outlying islands, popular hiking trails and other green attractions. In 2014, the HKTB continued to promote the nature attractions of Hong Kong through various channels such as its official website, guidebook, travel hotline and visitor centres.

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'. Meanwhile, Hong Kong offers a wide range of accommodation options for visitors, from licensed guesthouses and youth hostels to luxury hotels. As at the end of 2014, there are more than 240 hotels and 950 licensed guesthouses providing over 72,700 hotel rooms and 8,800 guesthouse rooms respectively.

Ocean Park

Ocean Park is a world-class marine themed park featuring more than 80 attractions. It has started developing an all-weather indoor cum outdoor waterpark at Tai Shue Wan and its first hotel, Hong Kong Ocean Park Marriott Hotel, both scheduled for completion by 2017.

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 47 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 50 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. Further to the launch of the new night time parade, 'Disney Paint the Night', in October 2014, the Hong Kong Disneyland will continue to introduce a series of new initiatives, including the 10th Anniversary Celebration in 2015, a new themed area based on Marvel Comics' hero 'Iron Man' by end 2016, and a new hotel with the spirit of exploration as its theme in early 2017.

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.

In June 2014, the cable car was included in a feature by the UK's *Daily Telegraph* on 'Cable cars: 10 amazing rides around the world'. Two new attractions, 'Stage 360' and 'Motion 360', were launched in August to present a Hong Kong movie-themed live stunt performance and to showcase the natural beauty of Lantau Island respectively.

Hong Kong Tourism Board

The HKTB is a statutory government-subsidised 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 worldwide and has representatives in six 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 offers travel information in 22 versions and 15 languages. In 2014, 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 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 also works with the TIC to enhance consumer protection and to ensure the healthy development and operation of the tourism market. Laws such as the Trade Descriptions Ordinance are also in place to prohibit unfair trade practices and protect the legitimate interests of consumers, both visitors and local residents alike.

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 2014 some 1,270 local establishments with about 8,200 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 2,900 young people have joined the programme so far, rendering more than 250,000 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 31 million Mainlanders visited Hong Kong under the scheme in 2014, representing about 66 per cent of all Mainland arrivals. In 2014, 14.85 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 1,744 licensed travel agents at the end of 2014.

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 \$504,000 was paid to 49 travellers affected by a default case in 2014 and three default cases in 2013. 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. No such ex gratia payment was made in 2014.

Travel agents have to assign accredited tourist guides to receive inbound visitors. There were 6,726 accredited tourist guides in Hong Kong at the end of 2014.

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 the new legislation and undertaking other relevant work for the establishment of the TIA.

Tourism Co-operation

Mainland

The government maintains close liaison with the Mainland tourism authorities, and meetings are held whenever necessary 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 maintain 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).

Websites

Hong Kong Tourism Board: www.discoverhongkong.com

Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong: www.mehongkong.com

Tourism Commission: www.tourism.gov.hk