

## Travel and Tourism

*With the commissioning of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, 2018 was a fruitful year for Hong Kong's tourism sector, recording solid growth in the number of overnight visitors.*

The tourism industry of Hong Kong grew steadily in 2018 under the concerted efforts of the government, the Hong Kong Tourism Board and the travel trade, buoyed by the commissioning of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB). Compared with 2017, the number of overnight visitors rose solidly by 4.9 per cent to 29.26 million. Hong Kong welcomed 51.04 million visitors from the Mainland, representing a 14.8 per cent increase. The overall number of visitors grew 11.4 per cent to 65.15 million.

The government is implementing the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry, promulgated in 2017. The blueprint sets forth the government's vision to develop Hong Kong into a world-class premier tourism destination and its mission to ensure the balanced, healthy and sustainable development of the industry, as well as four development strategies supported by short, medium and long-term initiatives.

### Major Tourism Developments

The city makes special efforts to promote MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions), cruise tourism, mega events and green tourism, while boosting family and business travel.

#### **MICE**

Hong Kong is a premier MICE destination, offering world-class convention and exhibition facilities and a wide range of tourist attractions. It hosts some of the world's largest trade fairs, such as the Hong Kong Electronics Fair, Hong Kong Jewellery and Gem Fair, Hong Kong Gifts and Premium Fair, and Hong Kong Watch and Clock Fair. Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong is an office working under the board to promote MICE tourism.

In 2018, 1.97 million overnight MICE visitors arrived, an increase of 2.1 per cent over 2017. Major conventions and exhibitions included the Spine World Summit, 33rd Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology Congress, 71st CFA Institute Annual Conference, Cloud Expo Asia, Asian Attractions Expo, Forbes Under 30 Summit Asia, New York Times International Luxury Conference, International Society of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity Annual Meeting, 7th Asian Congress of Dietetics, 13th Pacific Rim Conference on Lasers and Electro-Optics, and 22nd International Congress of Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders.

### **Cruise Tourism**

The Kai Tak Cruise Terminal can simultaneously accommodate two mega cruise ships with a gross tonnage of up to 220,000 tons each. In 2018, the terminal handled 170 ship calls involving 156 calendar days. Total passenger throughput exceeded 810,000.

The government and the board promote regional cooperation of the cruise industry through the Asia Cruise Cooperation, which leverages the synergy among the partnering ports via an incentive scheme named Asia Cruise Fund; joint promotion events and major industry events, so as to drive ship deployment to Hong Kong and foster its position as a regional cruise hub.

### **Mega Events**

The government adopted a multi-pronged strategy in 2017-18 to support the staging of events varying in scale and nature in Hong Kong, so as to tie in with the policy objectives of product diversification and attracting high-yield overnight visitors. International events hosted in the city included the Hong Kong Tennis Open and the golf tournament Hong Kong Open, held in October and November respectively.

Mega events organised by the board annually include the International Chinese New Year Parade, Hong Kong Dragon Boat Carnival, E-Sports and Music Festival Hong Kong, Hong Kong Cyclothon, Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival, Hong Kong Pulse Light Festival and New Year countdown celebrations.

### **Green Tourism**

The Great Outdoors Hong Kong campaign promotes the Hong Kong Unesco Global Geopark, the natural scenery of outlying islands, hiking trails, cycling routes and other green attractions via the board's website, guidebooks, mobile applications, social media platforms, visitor centres and a hotline. A pilot scheme to support the travel trade in promoting in-depth green tourism was launched in January.

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

Hong Kong has something for everyone – the sightseer, the food lover, the shopper, the family, the businessman, the leisure traveller, the young and the old. Topping the popularity list of sightseeing spots is The Peak, which provides a panoramic view of Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and Victoria Harbour. Other attractions include theme parks, temples, heritage sites, the natural landscape, and the many shops that have earned Hong Kong the reputation as a shoppers' paradise. Accommodation options are also extensive, ranging from

licensed guesthouses and youth hostels to luxury hotels. As at the year end, 291 hotels and 1,507 licensed guesthouses were providing about 81,500 and 12,500 rooms respectively.

### **Ocean Park**

Ocean Park is a premier marine theme park featuring more than 80 attractions. Development projects under way include an all-weather indoor and outdoor waterpark at Tai Shue Wan and two hotels, namely Hong Kong Ocean Park Marriott Hotel and Fullerton Ocean Park Hotel Hong Kong, slated for completion progressively by 2021.

### **A Symphony of Lights**

Another attraction that captivates visitors is the nightly spectacle 'A Symphony of Lights', which is staged on both sides of Victoria Harbour and draws about 1.5 million viewers a year. The show was enhanced on 1 December 2017 and again on 29 November 2018, with the participation of 42 buildings and two attractions, namely the World Dream Cruise Ship and Hong Kong Observation Wheel.

### **Hong Kong Disneyland Resort**

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort is one of the best and most popular themed resorts in Asia, featuring more than 100 attractions. The resort is taking forward its multi-year expansion plan, rolling out new attractions such as the *Moana: A Homecoming Celebration* stage show in May 2018 and the *Ant-Man and The Wasp: Nano Battle!* interactive adventure in March 2019. Other items coming on stream in the next few years include an expanded castle with new day and night shows, and two new themed areas based on the *Frozen* and Marvel intellectual property.

### **Food Truck Pilot Scheme**

The two-year Food Truck Pilot Scheme aims at adding fun and vibrancy to tourist attractions and events. Fifteen food trucks are in operation. The scheme will be extended for two more years to 2 February 2021.

### **Wetland Park**

The 61-hectare world-class Hong Kong Wetland Park is home to a wide assortment of wildlife, including birds, dragonflies, amphibians, mammals, reptiles, butterflies and fish. The recreated wetlands, exhibition galleries, theatre and other facilities all underline the importance of wetlands to civilisation and biodiversity conservation.

### **Ngong Ping 360**

The Ngong Ping Cable Car offers a spectacular 25-minute journey with views of the flora and fauna of North Lantau Country Park, Tung Chung Bay, HZMB and Hong Kong International Airport. It takes guests to Ngong Ping Village, which is designed in a Chinese architectural style with attractions including VR 360, Motion 360 and Walking with Buddha. The Tian Tan Buddha, Po Lin Monastery, Ngong Ping Piazza and Wisdom Path are other attractions.

### **Peak Tram**

The Peak Tram is a funicular railway that began running from Garden Road in Central to The Peak in 1888. It offers a unique view of the ridgeline and skyscrapers of the city. Major upgrading works will start in 2019.

### **Hong Kong Tourism Board**

The board is a statutory government-subsidised organisation that markets Hong Kong round the world as a preferred travel destination. It comprises 20 members who represent various tourism-related sectors and communities. In addition to its Hong Kong head office, the board has 15 offices worldwide and representatives in six source markets.

### **Information Network**

There are eight visitor centres locally, at the airport (two centres), The Peak Piazza, Tsim Sha Tsui Star Ferry Concourse, Lo Wu boundary crossing terminal building, Hong Kong West Kowloon Station, HZMB Hong Kong Port and Kai Tak Cruise Terminal, whose visitor centre operates during ship calls.

Visitors can check out travel recommendations from locals through the Hong Kong Pals programme. Travel information is also available from the board via its website, mobile applications and social media. The website presents 22 market versions covering 15 languages, while the mobile site comes in 11 versions to address increased demand for mobile browsing.

### **Marketing**

The board spearheads the promotion of Hong Kong in major tourist source markets and strives to offer the best experiences for visitors. It adopts 'Best of all, it's in Hong Kong' as a destination brand to highlight that, from world-class attractions to the East-meets-West culture, Hong Kong warmly welcomes the world to experience the best it has to offer.

### **Service Quality**

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

The government works closely with the tourism industry and related organisations to promote honest and quality services for tourists. It cooperates with the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong to protect consumers' interests and ensure the healthy development and operation of the tourism market. Laws such as the Trade Descriptions Ordinance are in place to prohibit unfair trade practices and protect the legitimate interests of consumers.

The council inspects tour operations and registered shops regularly. It also operates a Refund Protection Scheme for Registered Shops, which allows Mainland tour group members who are not satisfied with their purchases to return the goods and seek refunds within 180 days of purchase, provided the goods are in proper condition.

The board's Quality Tourism Services (QTS) Scheme encourages shops, restaurants and visitor accommodation facilities to offer good services. It enjoys broad support; as at end-2018, some 1,246 establishments with about 8,200 outlets and 570 rooms 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 the community. About 250 young people render ambassadorial service on the programme every year.

### **Easier Entry for Visitors**

Hong Kong is one of the world's most immigration-friendly cities. Travellers from some 170 foreign countries and territories enjoy visa-free access for stays of seven to 180 days. The Mainland's Individual Visit Scheme permits residents of 49 designated Mainland cities to visit Hong Kong on their own instead of in tour groups. About 31 million Mainlanders visited Hong Kong under the scheme in 2018, representing about 61 per cent of all Mainland arrivals.

### **Protection of Travellers**

Travel agents must obtain a government licence and be Travel Industry Council members to carry out travel business under the Travel Agents Ordinance. The council specifies that only tourist guides it accredits can be assigned to receive inbound visitors. The council investigates complaints and takes disciplinary action against travel agents who do not observe its rules. Hong Kong had 1,764 licensed travel agents and 6,332 accredited tourist guides as at end-2018.

The statutory Travel Industry Compensation Fund provides ex gratia payments of 90 per cent of the loss of outbound fares to outbound travellers in the event of a travel agent default. In 2018, ex gratia payments close to \$2.6 million were paid to 713 travellers affected by five default cases. The fund also offers aid in cases of outbound travellers who sustain injuries or death in accidents in the course of an activity arranged by a travel agent. It made ex gratia payments of \$24,000 for one accident that happened in 2018.

### **New Regulatory Framework**

In November, the Legislative Council passed the Travel Industry Bill, which provides for the establishment of an independent statutory body, the Travel Industry Authority, to regulate travel agents, tourist guides and tour escorts in a holistic manner.

### **Tourism Cooperation**

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism are implementing the Agreement on Further Enhancement of Tourism Cooperation between the Mainland and Hong Kong to strengthen collaboration in market regulation, joint promotion and information exchange. As a global player, Hong Kong is a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Tourism Working Group and the Pacific Asia Travel Association, and an associate member of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation.

### **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)