



Top Tourist Destination

May 2011

Overview

With its unique blend of East and West, old and new, Hong Kong is one of Asia's top tourist destinations. From high-end shopping malls to bustling street bazaars, ancient Chinese temples to glass-curtained skyscrapers, neon-lit streets to verdant countryside, Hong Kong is a city of contrasts and colour.

In 2010, visitor arrivals registered a robust growth of 21.8 per cent, reaching a record of 36.03 million. Their total spending was estimated at \$210.0 billion (US\$26.92 billion).

New Developments

- A world-class cruise terminal is being developed at the former Kai Tak airport site. On completion of the first berth in mid-2013, the terminal will be able to accommodate the largest cruise ships, further enhancing Hong Kong's position as a regional cruise hub.
- The Hong Kong Tourism Board's Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival 2010 showcased Hong Kong's great wining and dining attractions. According to the industry, Hong Kong overtook New York to become the world's largest wine auction centre in 2010.
- The third edition of the *Michelin Guide Hong Kong Macao 2011* features 257 local establishments, including many inexpensive restaurants offering local delights such as dim sum, noodles, congee and roast goose, making

Hong Kong's Michelin restaurants the most affordable in the world.

- To further promote Hong Kong as the events capital of Asia, the \$100 million (US\$13 million) Mega Events Fund was established in May 2009 to help local non-profit organisations stage large-scale arts, cultural and sports events.
- The Hong Kong Tourism Board showcases the city's living culture and traditional festivals, through a series of mega events year-round, including the Chinese New Year Parade, the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Carnival, Halloween Treats and WinterFest.
- Hong Kong is taking increasing advantage of its unique culture and heritage to enrich visitor experience. Six specially-designed heritage tour routes, linking heritage buildings and sites under different themes, were introduced in 2010.

Asia's MICE Hub

Hong Kong is a premier destination for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE). Each year, over 300 major MICE events take place at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Asia World-Expo and other venues. The Government seeks to further upgrade MICE facilities and promote this sector. In the 2008-09 budget, the Financial Secretary set aside an additional \$150 million (US\$19 million) to step up MICE promotion over the following five years. A dedicated 'Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong' (MEHK) office works to attract

more MICE events to Hong Kong. With the joint efforts of the Government, MEHK and the MICE trade, Hong Kong attracted 1.43 million overnight MICE visitors in 2010, a significant increase of 22.8 per cent over 2009.

Notable Attractions

Over the past few years, the Government has invested \$30 billion (US\$4 billion) on new tourist attractions. They include:

- Ocean Park, which is undergoing a \$5.55 billion (US\$712 million) Master Redevelopment Plan. On completion in 2012, the Park will become a world-class marine theme park featuring more than 70 attractions. A star attraction, Aqua City, one of Asia's largest aquariums and an aquarium restaurant, as well as a new zone called The Rainforest, featuring a nature trail, an aviary, more than 70 tropical animals and a rafting ride called The Rapids, opened in 2011.
- Hong Kong Disneyland, which opened in 2005, is the third Disney theme park outside the US and the first in China. Under an expansion programme, scheduled for completion by mid-2014, the park will be enlarged by about 23 per cent with over 30 new attractions.
- Ngong Ping 360, which opened in September 2006, offers a 25-minute cable-car ride from Tung Chung, near the airport on Lantau Island, to religious and cultural-themed attractions, including Ngong Ping Village, the Giant Buddha, Po Lin Monastery and Wisdom Path.

- Ngong Ping Piazza, covering an area of 1.5 hectares, opened in August 2010. It blends with the religious ambience of Ngong Ping and links up various tourist attractions there.
- Hong Kong Wetland Park, a world-class conservation, education and tourism facility which opened in 2006, showcases Hong Kong's ecological richness and biodiversity.
- The 5 000-hectare Hong Kong National Geopark opened in November 2009. Its star attractions are unique hexagonal volcanic rock columns, covering an area much bigger than similar formations at the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland.
- A Symphony of Lights, recognised as the world's 'Largest Permanent Light and Sound Show' by *Guinness World Records*, was launched in 2004.
- The Avenue of Stars, featuring floor plaques with handprints and autographs of local entertainment celebrities, opened in 2004.

Facilitating Mainland Visitors

With the Central Government's support, Mainland visitor traffic has increased substantially. The Individual Visit Scheme, implemented in 2003 and later expanded, allows residents from 49 Mainland cities to visit Hong Kong without joining tour groups. Visitor arrivals from the Mainland reached 22.68 million in 2010, an increase of 26.3 per cent over 2009. Since April 2009, original Shenzhen residents can visit Hong Kong on one-year multiple entry permits. From December 15, 2009, people from outside Guangdong Province residing in Shenzhen can also apply for Individual Visit Endorsements in Shenzhen, without having to make applications in their home cities.

Eco-tourism

Perhaps no other city offers such a spectacular range of scenery within such easy reach of the city centre. About three-quarters of Hong Kong is rural. There are

24 country parks comprising scenic hills, woodlands, reservoirs and coastline easily accessible from the urban areas.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board's Great Outdoors Hong Kong marketing platform is promoting the Hong Kong National Geopark, hiking trails and other green attractions to nature lovers and the overseas travel trade specialising in green tourism.

Heritage Conservation

Hong Kong's heritage attracts tourists and the Government is keen to conserve and revitalise old neighbourhoods and historic buildings. The Commissioner for Heritage's Office oversees heritage conservation, publicises efforts and encourages community involvement.

There are currently 98 declared monuments, of which 80 are historic buildings (e.g. Government House, St John's Cathedral). The other 18 include ancient forts, rock carvings and archaeological sites. Notable achievements include the restoration of King Yin Lei, Kom Tong Hall (now the Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum) and Flagstaff House (now the Museum of Tea Ware). Another success is the transformation of the old Woo Cheong Pawn Shop in Wan Chai into an upscale restaurant and pub (The Pawn), keeping its historic features intact. Two heritage trails, showcasing buildings of historic or architectural interest in old Wan Chai, have also been launched.

The Revitalisation of Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme is going to transform six historic buildings into cultural landmarks, preserving the buildings' integrity while enhancing their utility. Under the scheme, the Former North Kowloon Magistracy has been transformed into a campus of the Savannah College of Art and Design (Hong Kong), which opened its doors in September 2010.

In September 2009, Cantonese opera was officially inscribed in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of

Humanity by UNESCO. In 2010-11, the Government injected \$69 million (US\$8.8 million) into the Cantonese Opera Development Fund to support more projects to preserve, promote and develop Cantonese opera.

Asia's Sporting Arena

With its multicultural population and superb location, Hong Kong has become a popular stage for a wide variety of world-class sporting events.

The city's best known annual sports event, the Hong Kong Sevens international rugby tournament, is held every March and attracts top teams and tens of thousands of rugby fans from around the world. Other major sports events include the Hong Kong Marathon, the Hong Kong Cricket Sixes, the Hong Kong Open (Golf) Championship, the Hong Kong Tennis Classics, the Hong Kong Squash Open, the Hong Kong Open Badminton Super Series and the FIVB World Grand Prix – Hong Kong (volleyball).

Football giants Liverpool, Manchester United, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich and the Brazil national team have played in Hong Kong in recent years. At the 2009 East Asian Games, Hong Kong won the football gold medal.

The Mega Events Fund supports a number of sports events in 2011, including the Hong Kong Tennis Classics, the Dragon and Lion Dance Extravaganza, the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Carnival and the Hong Kong Open (Golf) Championship.

Since 2005, the Government has spent over \$3.5 billion (US\$45 million) on building or upgrading sports facilities. In addition to a Multi-Purpose Stadium Complex in Kai Tak, indoor sports centres and games halls will be built.

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