

MESSAGES FROM CHAIRMAN & ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chairman's Message

When I was appointed Chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board in April, I was honoured and thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute to our thriving tourism industry and to further its amazing achievements. Visitor arrivals reached a record high of 65 million in 2018, an 11% year-on-year growth, and overnight visitors increased by 5%.

As I write this opening message a few months on, however, tourism in Hong Kong has taken a heavy blow from the continuing social unrest. Visitor arrivals have reversed their trend of double-digit growth in the first half of 2019 and fell back 40% in August, the biggest one-month drop since the SARS outbreak of 2003.

People ask me whether tourists will come back. Can Hong Kong restore its status as a leading destination for visitors? My answer is a very definite and resounding yes.

Hong Kong has strong fundamentals as a world-class destination, offering visitors a diversity of unique experiences that sets it apart from other cities. Our 2018 survey tells us visitors are very satisfied with their stays and 92% said they would come again and recommend Hong Kong to friends and relatives.

It is a destination overflowing with enticing attractions, from the exciting calendar of events including traditional festivals, exceptional

culinary events, international art exhibitions, and major sporting events, to the allure of colourful neighbourhoods steeped in a rich culture and a spirit of the living past.

On top of this, Hong Kong has seen its infrastructure connections significantly boosted by the arrival of the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. A wealth of tourism resources in the Greater Bay Area is now within easy reach of visitors to Hong Kong from around the world, and our tourism industry is entering an exciting new era of opportunity.

Tourism is always vulnerable to external circumstances but history teaches us a more important lesson. Time and again Hong Kong has faced many major challenges, and time and again we have overcome them and shown our great resilience and can-do spirit. Together we bounced back from SARS, together we bounced back from the global financial crisis, and together we will bounce back from the current difficulties, and emerge stronger and more united than ever.

Tourism is a pillar of Hong Kong's economy and it needs the support of everyone in the city. Let us seize this opportunity to build on the strong foundations we have and maintain Hong Kong's status as one of the world's leading travel destinations.



Dr Pang Yiu-kai, GBS, JP
Chairman
Hong Kong Tourism Board

Acting Executive Director's Statement

I have worked with the Hong Kong Tourism Board for more than 20 years and I have experienced many of the tourism industry's highs and lows. Through the years, however, there is one constant truth: Whenever our city goes through a challenging time, it always emerges stronger and more resilient.

In the aftermath of the SARS outbreak in 2003, Hong Kong launched a concerted effort immediately after the lifting of the WHO travel advisory and visitor arrivals rebounded from a year-on-year decline of 70% in May to 10% growth in August. Visitor arrivals declined again in 2015 and 2016 following earlier incidents of social unrest but with a similar joint effort, they bounced back with a 3.2% rise in 2017 followed by a record-breaking 11% increase in 2018.

None of this would have been possible without the unwavering support of all sectors of society. Thanks to the help of the Government, the travel trade, and the community at large, we have made great achievements not only in visitor numbers but in the sheer variety of experiences we have to offer, the business opportunities we have created, and the reputation we have established of Hong Kong as a leading destination.

We have hugely expanded our calendar of events from a handful of mega events each year to promoting and staging more than 90 different events in 2018. They include the Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival, a home-grown, world-class culinary event that celebrated its 10th edition with its biggest gathering yet, the Hong Kong Cyclothon which attracted athletes from around the world, and the Hong Kong Pulse Light Festival which saw the city's first ever international Light Art display. Meanwhile the Sham Shui Po promotion launched in 2018 successfully expanded our Hong Kong Neighbourhoods initiative to draw visitors into the beating heart of our city and discover Hong Kong like a local.

To fuel our business growth, we participated in 18 trade shows and travel fairs and organised 16 travel missions and networking platforms covering 14 markets and creating networking opportunities for over 800 industry partners. We also teamed up with more than 180 travel trade partners to provide exciting deals to attract family visitors and young people who account for 70% of overnight visitors to Hong Kong.

With the backing of additional Government funding, and by working with the travel trade, we secured more than 30 major international MICE events involving about 120,000 MICE visitors in 2018 and subsidised more than 450 small MICE groups.

To enhance Hong Kong's image as a destination with a broad diversity of experiences, hundreds of captivating stories about Hong Kong have been sent out to a worldwide audience through HKTb's social media platforms and our DiscoverHongKong.com site which has 10 million followers and 140 million page views a year. Our PR communications platform generated a global publicity value of HK\$7 billion in 2018.

Meanwhile, the opening of the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge have given us a unique opportunity to roll out promotions globally to raise multi-destination travel to a new level and establish Hong Kong as a tourism hub for the Greater Bay Area.

Hong Kong's tourism industry is built upon extremely solid foundations capable of withstanding any shock. I am confident that with our passion, our ingenuity, and our resilience, we can overcome our current challenges and maintain Hong Kong's deserved status as one of the world's most extraordinary and spectacular travel destinations.



Becky Ip
Acting Executive Director
Hong Kong Tourism Board