

## 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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**  
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Hong Kong Tourism Board