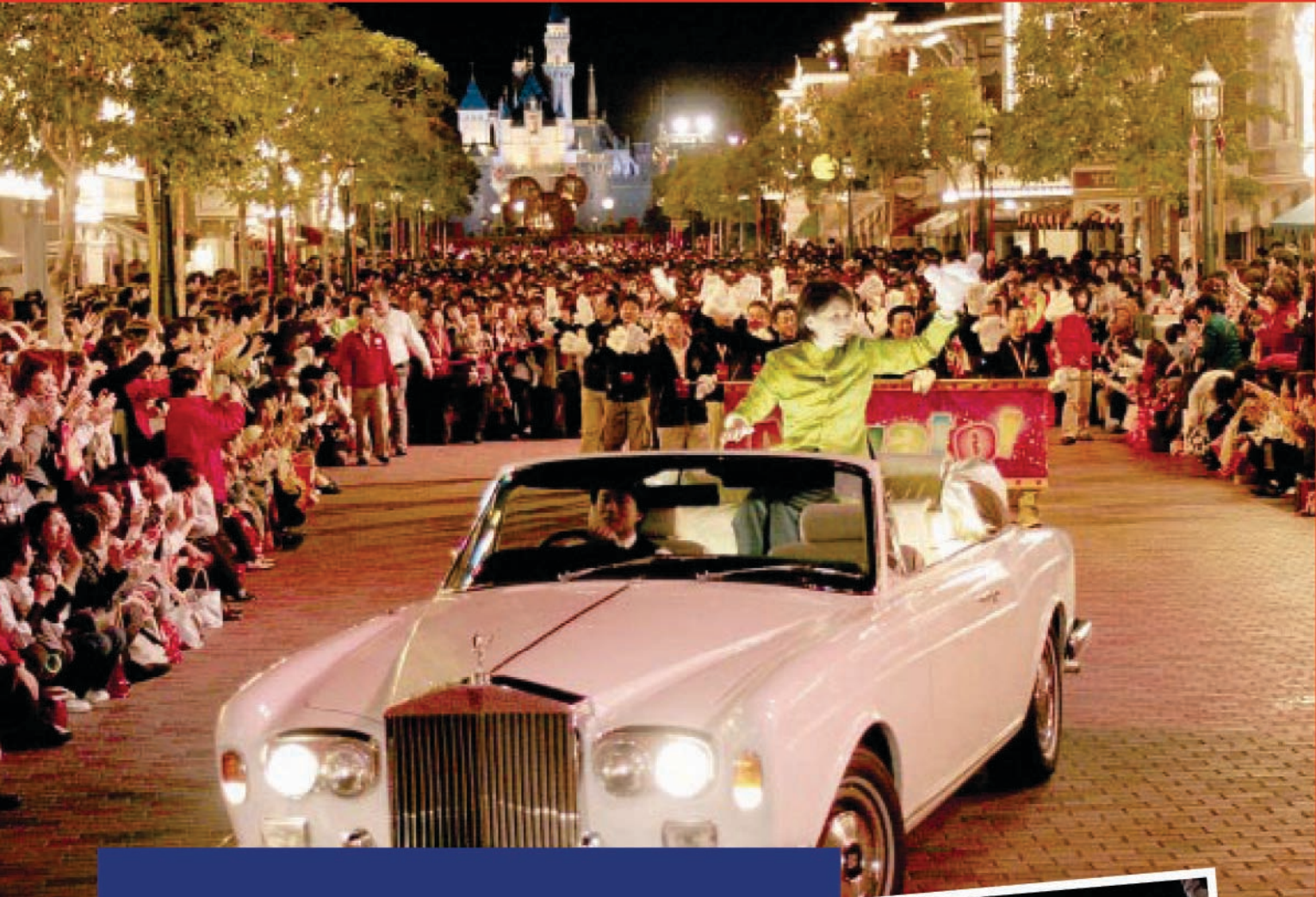


Excitement and surprises when Charle goes to Hong Kong



Companies worldwide are taking advantage of Hong Kong's unique attractions for a huge variety of corporate events. No matter whether you are planning a mega-event, a regional conference, a corporate meeting or an incentive trip, few destinations can match Hong Kong's diversity of activities, sights and venues.

The experience and spirit of Hong Kong's many tourism professionals will also guarantee that your event will be successful and a motivation booster for the attendees. And don't forget the Hong Kong Tourism Board is always ready to offer free advice on venues and social programmes, as well as a full range of marketing tools.

Read the testimonial inside – and book your next event here ...



Hong Kong-born singer Agnes Chan performs with Charle's president and some of the company's staff.



The 5,000 delegates shake hands for 30 seconds in a challenge for the Guinness World Records.

The Japanese ladies' underwear manufacturer, Charle Co Ltd, recently wrote itself into Hong Kong's history books, when it brought 5,000 female business members to Asia's world city for an unforgettable get-together. The trip included a chartered night at Hong Kong Disneyland and a surprise event that saw the delegates set a world record, which will find its way into the Guinness statistics.

Charle's trip was the largest Hong Kong has seen from a single company in Japan visiting Hong Kong at the same time. It was also the first time that anyone had chartered the entire Disneyland since its opening in September 2005.

"This was a different gathering compared to other trips we have made through the years," says Charle's president, Ms Yuko Mitsuya. "Before we used to be around 1,000 people, and the main purpose was to award sales results. This time we really wanted to gather all our business members together for some unforgettable days in which they could experience the passion of our company."

Charle is one of the market leaders in Japan for ladies' underwear, hosiery and lingerie. The company's products are

mainly sold by business members – agents and sub-agents – that sell door-to-door and arrange smaller gatherings in which the female customers can try on the garments.

A perfect city for women

The 5,000 delegates – their ages varied from 20 to 83 – flew in to Hong Kong for the four-day event in chartered flights from several different airports in Japan. One important reason for Charle's decision to choose Hong Kong as a destination was the convenience of transportation and the ease of accommodating thousands of people.

"Hong Kong is only a few hours away from Japan by air. We also needed around 25 top-class hotels for the accommodation plus 200 buses for transportation, which Hong Kong can easily provide," says Mr Atsushi Tsuda, planning manager at Charle. Another reason for choosing Hong Kong was the capacity of AsiaWorld-Expo, a venue that allowed all members to get together under one roof.

Since almost all its members are women, Charle was also concerned with finding a city which suits women well. Because of the widely varying ages



A Chinese junk welcomes the Charle delegates as they gather at the Avenue of Stars.

of the members, the chosen city also had to appeal to both younger and more mature women.

“There are a lot of things about Hong Kong that are attractive for women,” says Ms Mitsuya. “Not only the fantastic opportunities for shopping, but also the spectacular scenery, for example the night view from the Peak, and not least – safety. When we came here for an inspection tour, we found that Hong Kong is a very safe city, and also very clean and easy to get around in, for example on the underground railway.”

Challenge for world record

One of the days saw the entire group attend a business seminar in AsiaWorld-Expo. It included performances by Hong Kong-born singer Agnes Chan, who is famous in Japan, and a handshaking-ceremony challenge for the Guinness World Records. All the members shook hands for 30 seconds while standing up.

“The challenge was kept confidential until the very moment it took place, since we wanted it to be a surprise for the delegates. They were very excited to be part of a world record challenge and the atmosphere in the arena was stunning when they turned to each other and shook hands,” says Mr Tsuda.

Later the same day, the members experienced what for many was the highlight of the whole trip. Charle had chartered Hong Kong Disneyland for the exclusive use of its members for a number of hours in the evening.

“We have done a similar thing in Los Angeles in previous years, and that was a huge success,” says Mr Tsuda.

Charle received much assistance from the Hong Kong Tourism Board in the discussions with Hong Kong Disneyland, which had never before chartered out the entire park.

Disneyland made announcements in Japanese, and also hired Japanese-



The Charle delegates were excited over the entertainment revealing Hong Kong's fusion of Eastern and Western cultures.



The Hong Kong Police marching band leads the VIPs to the stage in the AsiaWorld-Arena.



The Hong Kong Police marching band honours the event.

Many contributions from the HKTB

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) worked closely with Charle on the trip's pre-departure preparation, which included meetings with Disneyland and site inspections for the Japanese travel agent. The HKTB also screened videos about Hong Kong for 2,000 Charle agents in Japan before the trip.

The HKTB was also arranging part of the programme for the business seminar at AsiaWorld-Expo, showing the living culture of Hong Kong. The

arrangements included a fusion of ancient Chinese traditions, such as lion and dragon dance performances, and more recent colonial influences, with a 70-strong Hong Kong Police marching band leading the VIPs into the arena, demonstrating the unique East-meets-West travel experience Hong Kong can offer to its visitors.

"I am so impressed by the hospitality shown by Hong Kong. We were welcomed by signs at the airport and on a junk. The arrangements and entertainment at the AsiaWorld-Expo were highly appreciated by all members," says Mrs Keiko Ozawa, one of the delegates.

speaking hosts for tour arrangements like the Junglee River Cruise.

The Disneyland programme included performances such as the Grand Marshal Parade, with Mickey Mouse and his female counterpart, Minnie, as well as a Charle Special Parade. It was the first time that the Disneyland team had put on a tailor-made night performance for corporate events. The show also allowed the Charle participants to watch the president, Mrs Mitsuya, appear in convertible car.

Wherever the members went in the amusement park they could see

Charle's logo illuminated on the ground by gobo projectors.

An event for getting together

Since 1988, Charle has arranged 18 trips all over the world. For the first two, in 1988 and 1989, Hong Kong was the destination. The number of participants has continued to increase over the years. Today, around two-thirds of the delegates are fully or partially subsidised, while the remaining third pay their own way.

Up until 2005, the purpose of the trips was to award members for their sales results. This year, Charle changed the

concept to an overseas seminar, where all members could get together and become more familiar with the company whose products they sell.

The purpose was to promote understanding of Charle's different activities and also to deepen the relationships between the business members.

"We wanted to give our members a good opportunity to get together; encourage each other and have their energy recharged. We also would like them to understand Charle's vision through sharing and sympathy, while expanding friendship among fellow members," says Ms Mitsuya.

Both Ms Mitsuya and Mr Tsuda say they like Hong Kong very much as a destination for a trip such as this, so it would not be a surprise if Charle will return to Hong Kong in the near future.

"We were all overwhelmingly happy that Charle took us to Hong Kong," says Mrs Keiko Ozawa, who has been selling Charle products last 25 years. "This was the best corporate event I have ever experienced, and I am sure that our business performance will double or triple after this exciting trip."

Mrs Ozawa says that many sales ladies are already talking about another trip to Hong Kong with their husbands or other family members.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board encourages international corporations to hold their meetings and incentive travel activities in Hong Kong. For more information about how the Board can assist in these areas, please visit www.DiscoverHongKong.com/mice.

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