



**Spain's Top Achievers Thrilled by
'Exotic' Hong Kong
Cultural Experience**



Hong Kong – Converging Team Spirit for Inspiring Corporate Events

As an incentive destination, Hong Kong is one of the world's most exciting places. This vibrant city offers superb facilities and a unique variety of attractions, making it the perfect place to motivate top-performing staff to reach even greater heights.

Catalana Occidente, one of the largest Spanish insurance groups, recently brought in an impressive group of its best performers – a total of 670 people, along with their family members to Hong Kong for a week-long visit. For the majority of them, this was their first visit to Hong Kong, and expectations were high.

The programme was tailor-made for the group to give them an experience of a lifetime. Participants were able to enjoy a traditional *sampan* ride (a Chinese wooden flat-bottomed boat), an unexpected dragon dance performance, visits to authentic Chinese temples, an exquisite Chinese garden and an enchanting fishing village. They also had the chance to look for treasure in several specialty markets. In addition, the group attended several exclusive events, including chartering the 'home-grown' Ocean Park for an unforgettable evening with fine dining and fun-filled thrill rides, visits to the aquarium and the Giant Pandas' habitat; a spectacular Star Ferry ride along the magnificent Victoria Harbour; and exclusive admission to the iconic Jumbo Floating Restaurant for a mouth-watering dinner.

The trip proved very successful. All participants went home having experienced delicious food and great shopping. Many said that in Hong Kong they had the best food they'd ever tried outside of Spain. So, all in all, this trip was a great success!

Jubilant High Achievers Rewarded for a Job Well Done

In May 2010, a group of 670 insurance agents from the Catalana Occidente Group received the ultimate reward for their commendable performance – an incentive trip to experience the vibrant city of Hong Kong for six days and five nights.

The company added an extra boost for its top achievers, allowing them to bring their spouse or another family member with them.

"This is important for the incentive winners. It makes them feel extremely proud of what they have achieved," said Angel Cartes, the Group's Communication and Promotion Manager.

"In 2009, when the entire world was affected by the global financial crisis, we wanted to motivate our employees by offering them something spectacular, so we decided to take them to Hong Kong," said Mr Cartes.

Catalana Occidente, based in Barcelona, is one of Spain's largest insurance groups, with a total of 2,800 employees. For many years, the company



"It is definitely worth it to send our incentive winners on trips like these, which motivate them to even greater achievements when they return. This year's trip to Hong Kong was absolutely fantastic!"

Angel Cartes, Communication and Promotion Manager, Catalana Occidente



The Ngong Ping 360 is a spectacular 25-minute cable-car-ride.

has organised trips for its employees to destinations around the world as an incentive, as well as a motivation-booster.

"Hong Kong is very different to other cities we have visited, being super-dynamic and very lively, and at the same time, very exotic from a Spanish point of view, as much of the traditional culture is still here," said Mr Cartes.

For the 2010 trip, though Catalana Occidente had considered other places as alternative destinations, but in the end, Hong Kong was the obvious choice.

Mr Cartes got excited when he described Hong Kong's advantages: "Hong Kong has everything! The hotels are magnificent, the conference centres are fabulous and there are so many tourist attractions to choose from," he enthused.

'The best trip ever'

As one of the top achievers, José Maria Méndez has worked for Catalana Occidente for four years and has been awarded incentive trips every year.

"When the company announced that Hong Kong would be the destination for the next incentive trip, I was thrilled and put in a lot of effort to qualify for the trip," said Mr Méndez, who had never been to Asia before.

He was also delighted to have the chance to take with him his fiancée, Maria Christina. As the couple was getting married two months after the Hong Kong trip, this was a kind of 'pre-honeymoon' for them and gave them many memorable moments. He

concluded that the trip was 'the best' they have ever taken. They enjoyed all excursions, especially those that included traditional Chinese culture, of which tea appreciation in the culturally themed Ngong Ping village on Lantau Island and meeting the people in Tai O fishing village were the most memorable. They were also impressed by the vast variety of cuisines available in Hong Kong's many restaurants, both Western and Chinese.

They were eager to tell their friends in Barcelona that they should absolutely visit Hong Kong if they want to get a real feeling of how East meets West: "They should not hesitate, they should just go! As for us, we will definitely be back ..."

Majestic landscape, modern skyscrapers

Another achiever who will without doubt return is Antonia Romero, who has been



The Spanish guests liked to try on traditional Asian hats – and perhaps pretend that they were Buddhists for a day ...



with Catalana Occidente for 11 years and has qualified for six trips. She is an experienced traveller, and has visited Beijing and Bangkok, so she already had an impression of Asia.

She and her husband, José Cuenca, especially enjoyed the trip to the world's tallest outdoor seated bronze Giant Buddha statue, located close to a monastery in a tranquil area on Lantau Island. **"The surrounding landscape there is so majestic and peaceful, and the statue is so huge! Still, it is very close to the city and easy to get to. I simply love this place,"** said Mrs Romero.

Nevertheless, shopping clothes for herself and electrical appliances for her family is evidently the highlight of her trip. 'Today is our last day and, for me, this is the big shopping day; Hong Kong is such a paradise for shoppers and I will make my credit card work really hard,' she exclaimed.

Conchi Garcia has spent 12 years with Catalana Occidente and been on seven previ-

Antonia Romero looked forward to shopping in Hong Kong and to make her 'credit card work hard'.



Hong Kong by night offers tremendous views of everything from modern skyscrapers to old sailing junks.

ous incentive trips with the Group. This time, she brought her daughter Lara to Hong Kong to share the exciting experience with her.

Mrs Garcia had been to Asia before, but not to Hong Kong, and she found her stay fascinating: 'People here are always smiling, which makes you feel good. It is also a very clean city and the food is absolutely delicious!'

She was particularly impressed by 'A Symphony of Lights', a spectacular multimedia light and sound show that involves Hong Kong's most famous skyscrapers on both sides of Victoria Harbour. Besides, spotting Hong Kong's traditional sailing junk with the company logo on the sails was a surprising and unforgettable sight, denoting a warm welcome by the city.

Mr Cartes concluded by saying that, "it is definitely worth it to send our incentive winners on trips like these, which motivate them to even greater achievements when they return. This year's trip to Hong Kong was absolutely fantastic!"

Conchi Garcia and her daughter Lara said that the food in Hong Kong is 'absolutely delicious'.



Hong Kong Makes Planning Hassle-Free

"There are several factors you have to take into consideration when you are planning an incentive trip. The attractiveness of the destination is very important, as is the quality of the hotels and venues. Not least, everything has to fit our client's budget," said Antonio Tortajada, Managing Director and founder of the Barcelona-based destination management company Ire Viajes.

Mr Tortajada has a long working relationship with Catalana Occidente and is familiar with what they want for their annual trips.

"For this year's trip, we were looking for a destination that is unique and different, and also one that would feel 'exotic' for Spanish people. Hong Kong offered all this – and more," he said.

One of the challenges for Mr Tortajada and his colleagues was to find a single hotel where the whole group of delegates could be booked for five consecutive nights. Grand Hyatt Hong Kong was able to offer just that and, as the hotel is also conven-

iently located adjacent to the state-of-the-art Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC), the venue for the awards and gala dinners; it turned out to be the perfect choice.

"Normally, when a big group like this goes on a trip, they stay for just two or three nights, so when Hong Kong was able to offer a hotel that could meet all our needs, it made the planning so much easier," said Mr Tortajada.

He was also very happy with the contribution from the Hong Kong Tourism Board's (HKTB) Meetings & Exhibitions Hong Kong (MEHK) department, which gave excellent advice on the programmes and ensured hassle-free arrangements of all the logistics. The MEHK also provided a Spanish guidebook and a welcome banner on the iconic *Duk Ling* junk for the cruise around Victoria Harbour.

Mr Tortajada named a few of the many factors that make Hong Kong the perfect incentive destination, noting: **"It is so unique, you**



The planner, Antonio Tortajada, said that Hong Kong is a perfect incentive destination.

can feel it immediately when you arrive. Hong Kong people are very friendly to foreigners. The city also has such a great variety, from exciting theme parks to cultural activities that you cannot find anywhere else. Last, but not least, Hong Kong is a very safe city. We have been to other cities that are completely the opposite," Mr Tortajada concluded.



Chinese drum performers entertained the guests at the Grand Hall of the HKCEC.

Customised Local Support – Gratified Participants

To organise an incentive trip, a company has to work with a local company at the destination itself to take care of all the practical details and offer the incoming group full support before, during and after the trip. Such a company also brings in know-how and combines this with an understanding of the international traveller to create the best fit for them.

Catalana Occidente used Destination China in Hong Kong as its local destination management company (DMC).

“Our job as a DMC is to ensure that the operations, from pick-up at the airport to the return journey, are seamless, safe, coordinated, creative and enjoyable,” said Gunther Homerlein, General Manager at Destination China.

“In every company’s schedule, you need to add an element that is different, something that the participants cannot experience at home and will help to create memories of a lifetime,” he added.

“The uniqueness we embraced for this trip was to offer different Chinese cultural elements that could not be found anywhere else in the world, such as trips to places where the participants

were shown the city’s unique cultural heritage,” said Mr Homerlein.

This included visits to an ancient Tin Hau Temple; the Nan Lian Garden, a Chinese garden that embodies the architectural style of the Tang Dynasty; and the Tai O fishing village, a rare example of a Chinese stilt-house community. Other such elements were the trip to the Giant Buddha, and the Po Lin Monastery; a gourmet seafood feast at the Jumbo Floating Restaurant. Last but not least, participants were delighted by a surprise dragon dance, a 1000-year old Chinese custom forming the cornerstone of a team-building activity.

“We often organise accommodations for large meetings or incentive trips, but a group of over 600 people is rare,” admitted Gordon Fuller, Area Vice President at Grand Hyatt Hong Kong. With over 70 per cent of the guestrooms at this luxury hotel overlooking the spectacular Victoria Harbour, it can house large groups with ease. In order to make these special guests feel at home, the hotel assigned a team of seven people fluent in Spanish to help out. “What’s more, close to 500 members of the hotel’s staff also learned a number of key words in Spanish.



Gunther Homerlein of Destination China helped to create memories of a lifetime for the 670 Spanish guests.



Gordon Fuller of the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong assigned a Spanish-speaking team to assist the guests from Catalana Occidente.

For breakfast, we offered some classic Spanish items and delivered the Spanish newspaper *La Guardia* every day to all the guestrooms,” said Mr Fuller.

Hong Kong – Awe-inspiring

As a city that is filled with a diverse spectrum of events and activities, Hong Kong helped to accomplish the task of Mr Tortajada of the Spanish DMC company Ire Viajes with seamless effort. “My job is to make all 670 participants feel very happy upon their return and Hong Kong has facilitated completion of my mission, which is more than we expected,” he said.

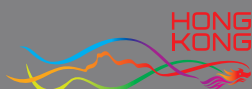
Catalana Occidente also anticipated that the traditional and modern Hong Kong will leave a memorable episode for all their participants. “We have made a right decision. I am sure that they will return and perform like a bullet, to work even harder and be inspired after this fabulous journey,” Mr Cartes concluded with a satisfying smile as he projected even better business results after the trip.



Website: mehongkong.com



HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD



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