

MESSAGES FROM CHAIRMAN & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chairman's Message

Hong Kong's tourism industry has been turned upside down in the past year. First, visitor arrivals fell by nearly 40% in the second half of 2019 because of the social incidents. Then, from early 2020, the world was progressively and rapidly impacted by the emergence of COVID-19. The pandemic has not only affected tourism in Hong Kong but has brought the global tourism industry to a standstill, grounding travellers worldwide and sending shockwaves throughout the retail, catering, hotel, as well as convention and exhibition industries.

With strict quarantine conditions in place, visitor numbers to Hong Kong have faded to practically zero in recent months, plunging us into a situation far bleaker than during the 2003 SARS crisis. As I write this message, the global pandemic continues to spread and recovery for the tourism industry still seems to be a long journey in the context of the uncertain situation in some parts of the world.

However, I am confident visitors will return to Hong Kong when the pandemic eases and international travel resumes. Despite the difficulties we faced, Hong Kong was rated the world's most popular city for visitors for the ninth consecutive year in 2019 by the UK-based Euromonitor International, a world-leading independent provider of strategic market research. The past nine years have not always been smooth for our tourism industry. Yet the achievement reflects the appeal of Hong Kong as a destination with diverse experiences, an unmatched air traffic network and top-class infrastructure.

Above all, it reflects the irrepressible spirit of the Hong Kong people and our incredible ability to stand up to any challenge. Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, Hong Kong citizens have worked together to fight the virus, united in their determination to use innovation and experience to find solutions to carry us through the darkest of days. This spirit also infuses our tourism industry. And there is every reason to believe that Hong Kong people will actively lead the way when we emerge into a new normal for world travel when the global epidemic is under control.

Our airport, our public transport network, and our exhibition venues, for instance, have strengthened their disinfection routines. Hotels, restaurants and tourism related businesses, with the support of the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb), have introduced new protocols and procedures to ensure the health of all customers. Tourism attractions meanwhile have put in place new booking arrangements. All of these important steps have been taken with one goal in mind: To ensure that the Hong Kong public and visitors feel safe in our city.

Although there are greater immediate challenges for us all, tourism matters to Hong Kong. The industry brings in hundreds of billions of dollars in revenue every year and is a key pillar of our economy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Hong Kong SAR Government for its support for our tourism industry and the HKTb, providing to us the resources to face up to fiercer regional competition and to win back visitors in the post-pandemic era.

The livelihoods of around 800,000 citizens depend upon our tourism industry directly or indirectly, with many serving in front line positions. Their wellbeing has an impact on countless families throughout our city, and thus I would like to seek your continued steadfast support in striving for the recovery of the tourism industry.

Hong Kong has weathered many storms in the past, and we have always emerged stronger. With determination, resilience and our can-do spirit, I am certain we will ride out this very massive storm. We look forward to Hong Kong emerging into a new era of growth and prosperity for our tourism industry, and to the future success of the economy of our extraordinary city.

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Chairman, Hong Kong Tourism Board



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