

## **Preparation for Lunar New Year Golden Week**

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The Tourism Commission (TC) has taken the lead to coordinate with various government departments and the tourism industry in drawing up measures to prepare for the possible surge of visitors from the Mainland during the Lunar New Year Golden Week. These measures aim at enhancing the flow of visitors through various boundary control points, increasing the capacity of transportation facilities, and stepping up promotion and information dissemination to visitors on consumer protection and health issues.

Ms Eva Cheng, the Commissioner for Tourism, said, "Hong Kong is a popular destination for Mainland tourists, both for tour groups and individual travellers. We expect increased number of arrivals from the Mainland during the Lunar New Year Golden Week. The measures adopted for the last National Day Golden Week and Christmas/New Year were proven effective and demonstrated our capacity in receiving large volume of visitors. We need to make the best possible preparations and will continue with and strengthen those measures that have been proven effective. We endeavour to enhance the travel experience of every visitor to Hong Kong."

The measures cover the following areas -

- (1) Arrangements for immigration clearance at Boundary Control Points;
- (2) Protection of visitors' health;
- (3) Arrangement of facilities;
- (4) Information dissemination;
- (5) Visitors' information service;
- (6) Consumer protection;
- (7) Coordination with Guangdong Province

Ms Cheng added, "All the measures are by and large the same as those used in the previous National Day Golden Week. The departments are well prepared and will flexibly deploy the resources according to different situations. We will also maintain close liaison with the Guangdong Provincial Tourism Administration to understand more about the visitor flow."

Coordinated by the Tourism Commission, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC), Federation of Hong Kong Hotel Owners (FHKHO) and Hong Kong Hotels Association (HKHA) agreed to standardise the existing practice in hotel room reservations into a Good Business Practice for the hotels and travel agents and ensure high level of transparency.

The Good Business Practice lays down key principles governing the early release of information by hotel on room charges, availability and allocation, cancellation policy, as well as deposit arrangement, etc.

Ms Cheng added, "I am glad to see the three industry organisations agreeing to strengthen their coordination and continuously improve the service quality of the tourism industry.

Details of the measures for the Lunar New Year Golden Week are as follows:

(1) Arrangements for immigration clearance at Boundary Control Points (BCPs)

-Immigration Department (ImmD) will deploy additional staff to various Boundary Control Points (BCP) to ensure smooth passenger flow.

-ImmD arranged briefing sessions on January 12, 2004 for travel agents and familiarisation visits to Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau on January 16, 2004 to ensure that they understand the clearance procedures and familiarise themselves with the BCPs environment.

-A Joint Command Centre (manned by ImmD, Police, and Custom & Excise Department) will be activated from January 19- February 1 to monitor the visitor flow at land BCPs and to take prompt action if necessary.

(2) Protection of visitors' health

-To avoid re-surgence of SARS in Hong Kong, Department of Health (DH) has been maintaining, and will continue to implement health screening measures, including health declaration and temperature screening at all control points. To enhance the existing disease surveillance system, Hong Kong will continue to maintain close contact with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and overseas health authorities, and Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macau will notify each other on SARS and to

exchange information on other infectious diseases. DH has formulated tailor-made health instructions for different sectors of the community, including the tourism and hotel industries, and organise SARS-related training programmes for members of these trade.

-Tourism Commission (TC) has reminded the trade-Travel Industry Council (TIC), Hong Kong Association of Registered Tour Coordinators (HARTCO), Federation of Hong Kong Hotel Owners (FHKHO) and Hong Kong Hotels Association (HKHA) to comply with guidelines issued by DH and take appropriate precautionary measures against SARS.

-DH has maintained close liaison with the travel trade. DH has updated the trade regularly via letters on the latest SARS situation in Mainland with appropriate health advice. At the coordination of the TC, DH has met with the trade representatives on December 31, 2003 to update them on the implementation of the precautionary measures against infectious diseases, including SARS, and briefed the travel agents on January 12, 2004 on the precautionary measures at land BCPs in preparation of the peak of passenger flow during the Lunar New Year Golden Week.

### (3) Arrangement of facilities

#### (a) Transportation

##### Cross Boundary Coach Service

-Transport Department (TD) will issue 310, 70 and 104 ad hoc quotas for cross-boundary coach services via Lok Ma Chau (LMC), Man Kam To (MKT) and Sha Tau Kok (STK) respectively during the Lunar New Year period (Jan 17-31, 2004). In addition, TD will issue 75, 22 and 8 new regular cross-boundary coach quotas for LMC, MKT and STK respectively before the Lunar New Year. The total passenger capacity will increase by 23 560 (assuming each coach can hold 40 passengers).

##### LMC-Huanggang Shuttle Buses (Yellow Buses)

-The Yellow Buses will deploy additional buses and increase service frequency, to meet increase in passenger demand. Depending on the actual demand, it can deploy 7 additional buses to raise the passenger capacity by 40% from about 1,800 to 2,500 per hour per direction.

## Other transportation arrangements

-TD will activate, if necessary, its round-the-clock Emergency Transport Coordination Centre to liaise with relevant department and take necessary actions, such as broadcasting messages to the public, to deal with emergency.

### (b) Hotel Accommodation

-TIC has reminded the travel agents to ensure that group tours only set off after hotel accommodation had been confirmed.

-TIC, FHKHO and HKHA have been working closely to ensure high level of transparency of the existing practice of hotel rooms booking for Mainland tour groups. They also agreed standardising the existing practice in hotel room reservations into a Good Business Practice for the hotels and travel agents. The Good Business Practice lays down key principles governing the early release of information by hotel on room charges, availability and allocation, cancellation policy, as well as deposit arrangement. The three industry organisations will also tackle hotel room allocation problems to ensure appropriate accommodation arrangement for visitors.

### (c) Coordination with travel agents

- TIC has reminded travel agents to receive tour groups at BCPs on time to ensure smooth visitor flow.

-TIC has requested their members to distribute arrival cards and health declaration forms to mainland tour group leaders in advance so that the group visitors can complete the form prior to arrival at the counter to speed up clearance process. Health declaration forms can now be downloaded at [www.info.gov.hk/info/sars/c\\_tourist.htm](http://www.info.gov.hk/info/sars/c_tourist.htm) .

-Tour groups are requested by ImmD to cross the boundary through Lo Wu BCP between January 21 and 25, with a view to alleviate the burden at LMC BCP.

### (d) Crowd Control

-The trade has been requested to coordinate amongst themselves in order to avoid

bunching group tours at popular tourist spots.

-Police will step up patrol in the tourist areas to maintain law and order.

#### (4) Information Dissemination

-Between January 19 and February 1, ImmD will upload daily arrival statistics on their website. Such information will also be hyperlinked to the HKTB's homepage <discoverhongkong.com> and a joint website with Mainland and Macau tourism authorities <visitgd.com> for visitors' reference.

-The hotel trade will upload the forecast occupancy rate for the Golden Week onto the homepage of Hong Kong Hotels Association <www.hkha.org> for visitors' reference. Such information will also be hyperlinked to the HKTB's homepage.

#### (5) Visitors' information service

-Between January 22 and 26, the operating hours of customer service hotline of HKTB and TIC will be extended to 9pm.

-HKTB will step up visitor services at all BCPs from January 19 - 28. The operating hours of customer services counter at Airport and Lo Wu will be extended to 7am - 11pm. Additional staff will be deployed at LMC from 8am to 4pm, at China Ferry Terminal, Macau Ferry Terminal, and Hung Hom from 10am to 6pm.

-New information leaflets on festive events and enhanced Quality Tourism Service (QTS) Scheme will be distributed during the Golden Week in the BCPs.

#### (6) Consumer Protection

-TIC has reminded its members of the "100% Refund" Policy and will follow up the complaints against unsatisfactory services by travel agents.

-Tour guides are responsible for reminding visitors on the "100% Refund" Policy before bringing them to shop at their designated retailers.

-HKTB will step up promotion of the QTS Scheme.

-Police will step up patrol at tourist shopping areas and distribute consumer protection reminder leaflets at shopping areas in the vicinity of the blacklisted shops. They will tender assistance to the visitors if necessary.

-Visitors joining local tours organised by licensed travel agents will be offered assistance by TIC in the event of travel agent default and complaint on service quality.

#### (7) Coordination with Guangdong Province

-A meeting on "Arrangement for Festival Visitors" between Border Commanders (Police and ImmD) and their Mainland counterparts was held recently to discuss and examine the problems of passenger flows at BCPs.

-We have maintained close liaison with Guangdong Provincial Tourism Administration (GPTA) and will continue to facilitate each other in respect of immigration clearance, resources management, dissemination of consumer protection information and travel tips, etc. In view of the recent development in SARS, GPTA already agreed to step up health screening measures at BCPs as well as publicity on the travel tips related to personal health and hygiene and advance hotel room reservation.

-GPTA agreed to step up the promotional efforts in reminding the Mainland visitors to monitor their own health conditions, to seek medical treatment as soon as possible if not feeling well, in order to protect themselves and other people's safety.

End/Friday, January 16, 2004

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