

Preparation for Labour Day Golden Week

The Tourism Commission has co-ordinated relevant Government departments and the tourism industry to draw up various measures to prepare for the arrival of Mainland visitors during the Labour Day Golden Week period (April 28 to May 7). These measures include enhancing the flow of visitors at various boundary control points, increasing the capacity of transport facilities, stepping up promotion to visitors on smart consumption, and advising locals and Mainland visitors to cross the boundary via Lo Wu or by sea as far as possible.

The Commissioner for Tourism, Miss Au King-chi, said the Labour Day Golden Week was one of the peak travel periods for Mainland visitors. "Government departments will deploy appropriate manpower resources and transport facilities to ensure smooth cross-boundary service for visitors," Miss Au said.

Many Hong Kong residents are likely to go to the Mainland during the Labour Day Golden Week period and this would put considerable pressure on the land boundary control points. Miss Au said relevant departments had arranged additional manpower and resources to handle the peak period for boundary crossing. For example, the Immigration Department will deploy additional staff to support immigration clearance at various land control points, and the Transport Department will issue ad-hoc quotas for cross-boundary coaches to enhance their capacity, so as to reduce queuing time at various land control points.

The Joint Command Centre set up by the Immigration Department and other relevant departments will also be activated during Golden Week to monitor the situation at land control points and take prompt and flexible contingency action when necessary.

"Despite the implementation of various measures and deployment of additional resources, we encourage Mainland visitors and local residents to cross the boundary via Lo Wu control point, which has a larger handling capacity, or by sea during the Golden Week period, and to avoid crossing the boundary during peak hours in the mornings and evenings in order to reduce any congestion at the Lok Ma Chau control point," Miss Au said.

"We have been maintaining close liaison with the Guangdong Provincial Tourism Administration to understand the visitor flow. The Government will continue to adopt the series of measures which have been effective in past Golden Weeks," she said.

"As a cosmopolitan city, Hong Kong provides a quality shopping environment for visitors, offering a wide range of choices in terms of product varieties, models and design, quality and prices for both Mainland and overseas visitors with great convenience.

"Most of the Mainland visitors travel under the 'Individual Visit Scheme'," she said. "Many retail shops in Hong Kong provide quality service, including 6,300 outlets accredited by the 'Quality Tourism Services Scheme' and more than 5,000 member shops of the Hong Kong Retail Management Association. Visitors can enjoy the convenience and pleasure of shopping freely according to their own preference.

"For visitors who choose to join tour groups, if their itinerary includes designated shopping activities, they will be guided to shops registered with the Travel Industry Council (TIC)," Miss Au said.

After recent shopping complaints by some Mainland group visitors, the Government and the industry have put in place various measures to combat unscrupulous sales practices of those TIC-registered retail shops targeting Mainland package tour groups and to better protect these visitors in Hong Kong. The Customs and Excise Department has been closely

co-operating with the Police in stepping up inspection of these retail shops for effective law enforcement. The TIC has also tightened the requirements for the 57 registered shops. In addition, the Customs, Police, Consumer Council and TIC have already established a fast-track referral system to handle visitors' complaints in Hong Kong.

To strengthening the regulation of inbound travel agents receiving Mainland tour groups, the inbound travel agents are required under the TIC directive to distribute itineraries to visitors upon arrival so that visitors can assess if the services provided by the inbound travel agents are the same as promised. "We have reminded TIC to step up surveillance and impose sanctions against non-compliant travel agents and tour guides," she said.

Miss Au urged all travel agents receiving Mainland tour groups to follow closely the TIC directive that they should deal only with outbound travel agents authorised by the China National Tourism Administration, otherwise they will be penalised by TIC.

"During the Labour Day Golden Week, the Government and the Hong Kong Tourism Board will distribute pamphlets and publicity material at various border control points and tourist districts with a view to promoting smart consumption to Mainland visitors and enhance their awareness of consumer rights and complaint channels in Hong Kong," she said.

"Most of the operators in the tourism and retail sectors operate properly and provide quality shopping service to visitors."

Miss Au reminded visitors, as well as Hong Kong residents who would travel, to make proper arrangements before departure. They should also take out suitable travel insurance in accordance with their own need for an enjoyable trip.

To assist visitors plan their trip, the Immigration Department will upload the daily arrivals at all control points on its website. The Hong Kong Hotels Association will also provide the hotel occupancy forecast on its website (www.hkha.org). Such information will also be hyperlinked to the tourism board's website (www.discoverhongkong.com) and the Visit GD's website (visitgd.com) for visitors' reference. In addition, the tourism board and the TIC will extend their hotline service 2508 1234 (HKTB) and 2807 0707 (TIC) to 9pm during the Golden Week to help visitors with enquiries. The service hotline of the Consumer Council (2929 2222) will also continue to operate during the Labour Day Golden Week.

Ends