

Tourism Commission prepares for Chinese New Year Golden Week

With the Chinese New Year Golden Week just around the corner, the Tourism Commission has coordinated relevant government departments and the tourism industry, and liaised with the Mainland tourism authorities, to draw up measures to prepare for the arrival of Mainland visitors during the travel peak period. These measures include enhancing the flow of visitors at various boundary control points, stepping up promotion of "honest and quality tourism" to better protect tourists' interests, and advising locals and Mainland visitors to cross the boundary via Lo Wu, or Shenzhen Bay Port and Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point commissioned last year as far as possible.

"Chinese New Year Golden Week is one of the peak travel periods for Mainland visitors and local residents travelling abroad. We will closely monitor the impact of recent snowstorms on the Mainland on inbound and outbound travellers and provide assistance when necessary. To ensure the safety of tourists, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) has issued notices relating to several outbound group tours with affected provinces as the destinations," Commissioner for Tourism, Miss Au King-chi said.

"The Tourism Commission held a meeting with the Guangdong Provincial Tourism Administration earlier to exchange views on the preparatory work and measures for the Chinese New Year Golden Week. Both sides have also established an emergency notification mechanism with a view to handling unexpected events concerning travellers of both places effectively," added Miss Au.

Miss Au said that the China National Tourism Administration had advised overseas visitors to avoid going to affected provinces or route through these areas. It also advised overseas visitors to exercise caution in making travel plans even when the weather situation was improving, in case the transport links and other infrastructure in these areas had not fully recovered and thus caused delay. She also appealed to visitors and local residents travelling abroad to make appropriate arrangements before departure and take out suitable travel insurance according to their needs to enjoy a pleasant and safe journey.

"Government departments will deploy appropriate manpower resources and arrange transport facilities to ensure smooth cross-boundary service for visitors. 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," Miss Au said.

"To reduce any congestion at Lok Ma Chau Control Point, we encourage Mainland visitors and local residents to cross the boundary via Lo Wu Control Point, which has a larger handling capacity, or the new Shenzhen Bay Port or Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point, and to avoid crossing the boundary during peak hours in the mornings and evenings during the Golden Week period," Miss Au emphasised.

"To better protect the interests of visitors, the Government and the tourism industry will continue to implement various measures to promote 'honest and quality tourism'. In respect of law enforcement, the Customs and Excise Department will closely co-operate with the Police in stepping up inspection of retail shops targeting Mainland group tours. Moreover, the Customs, the Police, the Consumer Council and the TIC will continue to handle visitors' complaints in Hong Kong with the fast-track referral system.

"As to industry regulation, the TIC will continue to strictly enforce a series of measures. These include requiring retail shops targeting Mainland package tour groups to implement the six-month '100% Guaranteed Refund Scheme'; requiring local agents receiving Mainland tour groups to register with the TIC the 'tour confirmation agreement' before the tour groups arrive in Hong Kong, and to distribute the itinerary to tour group visitors to enhance transparency. We have reminded the TIC to step up inspection," Miss Au stressed.

"In addition to the measures on law enforcement and industry regulation, raising consumers' awareness of smart consumption is also very important. The Consumer Council is actively promoting the website 'Shop Smart in Hong Kong' dedicated for Mainland tourists. The Government and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) will distribute pamphlets and publicity material at various border control points and tourist districts to promote smart consumption and to enhance their awareness of consumer rights in Hong Kong," she added.

To assist visitors in planning their trip, the Immigration Department will upload the daily arrivals at all control points on its website from February 7 to 18. 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 HKTB's website (www.discoverhongkong.com) and the Visit GD website (visitgd.com) for visitors'

reference. In addition, the TIC and HKTB will extend their hotline service 2807 0707 (TIC) and 2508 1234 (HKTB) to 8pm and 9pm respectively during the Golden Week period to help visitors with enquiries. The service hotline of the Consumer Council (2922 2222) will also continue to operate during the Chinese New Year Golden Week.

Ends/Tuesday, February 5, 2008

Issued at HKT 18:14

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