

## Year 2009 designated Hong Kong-Japan Tourism Exchange Year

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The governments of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Japan today (October 31) jointly announced that 2009 will be designated “Hong Kong-Japan Tourism Exchange Year”.

The announcement was made during a press conference in Tokyo attended by the Principal Representative of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Tokyo (HKETO) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, Mrs Jennie Chok; the Regional Director, North Asia, of the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), Mr Kunio Kano; the Commissioner of the Japan Tourism Agency, Mr Yoshiaki Honpo; and President of the Japan National Tourist Organisation, Mr Tadatoshi Mamiya.

Speaking at the press conference, Mrs Chok said Japan was Hong Kong’s third largest source market for inbound tourism, with over 1.32 million Japanese people visiting Hong Kong last year.

“At the same time, Japan is also a favourite destination for Hong Kong travellers. Over the past five years, the number of Hong Kong visitors to Japan has increased from 290,000 in 2002 to 432,000 in 2007.

“Through the launch of the Hong Kong-Japan Tourism Exchange Year, we hope that a platform can be created for the two places to promote tourism and enhance cultural exchanges. This will not only help bolster our partnership with Japan on the tourism front, but will also generate economic benefits to both places,” she said.

Over the next year, a wide variety of events will be held in both places to promote two-way tourism. They include cultural exchange events such as a speech contest, joint participation in travel trade fairs and collaboration between Hong Kong and Japanese cities in organising tourism activities.

In Hong Kong, a creative approach will be adopted to repackage and promote a series of activities under the themes of local culture, local delicacies, arts, sports and green tourism, which appeal strongly to Japanese visitors.

For example, plans are underway to leverage large-scale events such as the International Chinese New Year Night Parade, the International Travel Expo and the

unprecedented staging of the East Asian Games in Hong Kong to promote the diversity of Hong Kong's tourism products to Japan.

A ceremony will be held in Hong Kong in January to formally kick off the event.

The year 2009 is the 45th anniversary of the liberalisation of overseas travel for Japanese nationals. It is also the fifth anniversary of the introduction of 90-day visa-free travel to Japan for holders of the HKSAR passport who wish to enter Japan for sight-seeing and other purposes.

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