

SCED: Geopark a new attraction for tourists (with photos)

Hong Kong is rich in natural scenic beauty. The opening of the Hong Kong National Geopark adds yet another valuable treasure to the diversity of Hong Kong's tourist attractions.

"The geopark offers visitors a refreshing experience in addition to Hong Kong's glittering metropolitan life," the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs Rita Lau, said during a visit to the High Island Geo Trail together with the Consul-General of Japan in Hong Kong, Mr Shigekazu Sato, today (February 6). The High Island Geo Trail is rated No.1 among the "Top Ten Hong Kong Natural Attractions" with its unique landforms.

Mrs Lau said: "Hong Kong is endowed with a rich variety of natural scenic spots with unique characteristics and amazing beauty. With the growing popularity of green tourism, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has stepped up co-operation with the travel trade to promote Hong Kong's natural attractions."

Following the success of the "Great Outdoors Hong Kong" green tourism promotion campaign launched by the HKTB last year, which attracted large numbers of hikers from the region, including Japan, Mrs Lau said she believed that even more visitors would be attracted to explore the richness of the Hong Kong National Geopark, hiking trails and outlying islands.

Speaking after the visit, Mr Sato said he was enchanted with the beautiful hexagonal rock pillars in the High Island Geo-Area. "It is a wonderful experience to be able to see first hand the geological wonders and to enjoy the lush greenery and fresh air of Hong Kong's countryside.

"In the eyes of many Japanese visitors, Hong Kong has always been a place of shopping and gourmet, but actually Hong Kong is a city of contrast and colour. From high-end shopping malls to bustling markets, ancient Chinese temples to glass-curtained skyscrapers, neon-lit streets to verdant countryside - everyone would surely find something to satisfy his or her appetite," he said.

Noting that many people in Japan are nature lovers, Mr Sato said he believed that the newly opened geopark, together with the many other green attractions in Hong Kong, would definitely be a big draw for them.

Also joining the expedition today were the Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Commerce, Industry and Tourism), Miss Yvonne Choi; the Commissioner for Tourism, Mr Philip Yung; the Deputy Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, Dr Leung Siu-fai; the Deputy Consul-General of Japan in Hong Kong, Mr Daisuke Matsunaga, and the Executive Director of the HKTB, Mr Anthony Lau.

They started with a visit to the Geopark Visitor Centre at the Lions Nature Education Centre in Tsiu Hang, Sai Kung, which was opened in December 2009 by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department to provide the public with an overview of the Hong Kong National Geopark and to showcase interesting rock and fossil specimens.

They then toured the East Dam of High Island Reservoir, where they viewed the sea stack at Po Pin Chau, before touring the spectacular hexagonal columns and S-shaped columns, as well as associated geological features such as the fault, the Mafic Dykes and the joints.

The High Island Trail is one of the eight geo-areas of the Hong Kong National Geopark. More information about the geopark rock wonders can be found at (www.geopark.gov.hk/en_index.html).

The HKTB has been actively promoting Hong Kong's natural attractions through different channels and activities. Under the "Hong Kong Nature Kaleidoscope" programme, visitors can take part in a range of eco-oriented tours, such as the Northeast New Territories Island Hopping Tour, Tai O Eco-tour, Long Valley Eco-tour, Mai Po Wetland Experience, Hong Kong Wetland Tours and Dolphin Watching Tours, to explore Hong Kong's nature. In October 2009, the HKTB launched a brand new "Great Outdoors Hong Kong!" promotion, highlighting Hong Kong's unique hiking experiences to visitors. Details are available on HKTB's website, (www.discoverhongkong.com/eng/attractions/green.html).

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