

Tourism Commission co-ordinates preparations for peak tourist arrival during "National Day Golden Week"

The Tourism Commission, in co-ordination with the relevant government departments and the local travel industry, has drawn up various measures to prepare for Mainland visitor arrivals during Mainland's "National Day Golden Week" (Golden Week) (October 1 to 7), a government spokesman said today (September 29).

The spokesman said the commission had, through the mechanism established for golden weeks, liaised with the Guangdong and Shenzhen tourism authorities on information exchange, emergency handling and preparatory measures for the Golden Week as well as the timely handling of unexpected events involving travellers of both places.

He added that during the Golden Week, relevant government departments would deploy appropriate manpower and arrange transport facilities to ensure the provision of efficient cross-boundary services for visitors.

The Joint Command Centre set up by the Immigration Department, the Police and other relevant departments will be activated during the period to monitor the situation at land control points and take contingency action where necessary.

"It is expected that the passenger traffic between October 1 and 3 will be very heavy. To avoid congestion during the morning and evening peak hours at various boundary control points, we suggest that Mainland visitors and local residents cross the boundary at less busy hours during the Golden Week period," the spokesman said.

"Mainland visitors planning to come to Hong Kong during the period are also reminded to confirm their

accommodation arrangements prior to their arrival," the spokesman said.

To better protect the interests of visitors, the Government and the travel industry will continue to implement various measures to promote "honest and quality tourism" during the National Day Golden Week.

On 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.

As regards consumer awareness, the Consumer Council will continue to promote the "Shop Smart in Hong Kong" website dedicated for Mainland tourists. The Government and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) will distribute pamphlets and publicity materials at major boundary control points, areas with major registered shops and Visitor Service Centres to enhance visitors' awareness of their consumer rights and consumption choices in Hong Kong, as well as the Quality Tourism Services Scheme.

At the same time, the Customs and Excise Department, the Police, the Consumer Council and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) will handle visitors' complaints in Hong Kong under a fast-track referral system.

To strengthen the regulation of inbound travel agents receiving Mainland group tours to protect visitors' rights, TIC will continue to strictly enforce its directives. These include forbidding tourist guides from coercing or misleading tour group members to make purchases or stay inside registered retail shops and requiring registered retail shops receiving Mainland group tours to adhere to the requirements of the six-month full refund protection scheme. TIC also requires local agents receiving Mainland group tours to register with the council the "tour confirmation agreement" prior to the tour groups' arrival in Hong Kong; distribute the itinerary to group tour visitors, which states

clearly that tourist guides must not coerce tour group members to shop. The itinerary will also provide detailed information of tourist guides and the name and duration of visit to each registered shop, so as to provide clear information on the tour arrangements and enhance transparency. TIC will also step up inspection and take rigorous enforcement action against travel agents and tourist guides in case of non-compliance.

"With the Tourism Commission's co-ordination, the major tourist attractions will suitably extend their operating hours and devise measures and contingency arrangements for crowd control," the spokesman said.

To assist visitors in planning their trips, the Immigration Department will upload the daily arrival figures at all control points on its website (www.immd.gov.hk) from September 30 to October 7. Such information will also be hyperlinked to HKTB's website (www.discoverhongkong.com) for visitors' reference.

Visitors may call the service hotline of TIC (2807 0707), HKTB (2508 1234) and Consumer Council (2929 2222) for enquiries.

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