

Preparations for National Day Golden Week completed

The Tourism Commission, in co-operation with relevant government departments and the local travel industry, has drawn up various measures to prepare for the reception of Mainland visitor arrivals during National Day Golden Week (October 1 to 7), a government spokesman said today (September 28).

The spokesman said the Tourism Commission had, through the mechanism for information exchange and emergency handling established for Golden Weeks, liaised with Guangdong and Shenzhen tourism authorities on the relevant preparatory and co-ordination measures, as well as the timely handling of unexpected events involving travellers of both places.

He added that during Golden Week, relevant government departments would deploy appropriate manpower and co-ordinate transport services 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 passenger traffic from October 1 to 7 will be very heavy. To avoid congestion during the morning and evening peak hours at various boundary control points, we urge Mainland visitors and local residents to cross the boundary at less busy hours during the Golden Week period," the spokesman said.

"Mainland visitors planning to come to Hong Kong during this period are also reminded to confirm their accommodation arrangements prior to their arrival," he 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 Golden Week.

On law enforcement, the Customs and Excise Department (Customs) and the Police will step up the 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 to Mainland tourists. An advisory note on consumer rights for Mainland group tour visitors has been uploaded to the websites of the Tourism Commission and relevant bodies, and was also published in the Mainland through the China National Tourism Administration. The Government and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) will distribute publicity materials at major boundary control points including Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau and Visitor Service Centres to enhance visitors' awareness of their consumer rights, consumption choices in Hong Kong and the Quality Tourism Services Scheme. The HKTb's Visitor Hotline will be extended to operate from

9am to 8pm on October 1 to 7.

To protect group tour visitors' rights, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) will continue to enforce a series of regulatory measures on arrangements for receiving inbound Mainland group tours, which includes requiring Hong Kong travel agents to register with the TIC the itineraries of the Mainland inbound tours that they received together with proof of accommodation within a specified period. The Customs, the Police, the Consumer Council and the TIC will handle visitors' complaints in Hong Kong under a fast-track referral system. Moreover, the TIC will deploy additional manpower for conducting inspections in districts where many of the registered shops are located, such as Hung Hom and To Kwa Wan, as well as for offering immediate assistance to tourists and tourist guides. In case of emergency situations, inbound tourists, tour escorts and tourist guides of inbound tour groups can also seek assistance directly from the TIC by calling its service hotline.

Furthermore, the TIC issued a notice in January 2014 reminding travel agents that prior to receiving any tour groups which will visit other countries or places after touring Hong Kong, they should seek confirmation from the Mainland tour's organising agents that the required visas for tour participants have been obtained, so as to ensure a smooth journey and protect the interests of both travel agents and visitors.

"With the Tourism Commission's co-ordination, major tourist attractions will extend their opening hours as appropriate and formulate 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 October 1 to 7. Such information will also be hyperlinked to the HKTB's website (www.discoverhongkong.com) for visitors' reference.

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

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