

Speech by the Commissioner for Tourism, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Ms Eva Cheng
at a Tourism Promotion Luncheon in Singapore
24 June 2005

Discover the Hong Kong Magic

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I wish to thank you for coming to this event. It is our great pleasure to visit this beautiful city, and we are very excited to have a chance to brief you on the latest development in Hong Kong tourism. The multi-media show you have just seen is only a glimpse into the many facets of wonderful experiences that Hong Kong has to offer.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has invested heavily in our tourism infrastructure, amounting to some 4 billion US dollars in developing new tourist attractions over the past few years. Hong Kong has long been a popular international tourist destination. However, we do not and cannot rest on our laurels. Our vision is to position Hong Kong also as a premier destination for families in Asia by enhancing our appeal to this increasingly important market segment.

Tourism is a key driving force of Hong Kong's economy, and Singapore is our largest source market in South and Southeast Asia. Last year, we received over 460,000 Singaporean visitors, which represent a 75% year-on-year growth. This encouraging trend continues with Singaporean visitors registering a 57% growth in the first four months of this year compared to the same period last year.

Singaporean visitors have always shown strong interest in the irresistible shopping, dining, and vibrant night life of Hong Kong, and rightly so. Hong Kong is indeed a paradise for shoppers and gourmets. With the new flagship projects you have just seen, Hong Kong is set to go beyond our core strengths, into offering an exciting and captivating experience for you and your family.

For this group of visitors, probably the most significant event will be the opening of Hong Kong Disneyland on 12th of September. Our count-down clock at Disney tells us that there are 80 days to go to the Grand Opening. You'll hear more about it from Mr. Don Robinson in a few moments. The Hong Kong Government is proud to co-own Hong Kong Disneyland. We are working very closely with Disney to ensure that all visitors will have a most memorable and enjoyable stay. So I hope that the next trip you plan for your family, Hong Kong will feature as the number one destination. It takes only four hours to fly to Hong Kong and Singaporeans of course enjoy visa-free entry.

Another major attraction we are building is "Ngong Ping 360", a Skyrail on Lantau Island, providing a 20-minute cable-car ride and a panoramic view of Hong Kong's biggest and most beautiful island. The skyrail spans from Tung Chung, which is near to the airport, to the Ngong Ping Village, a new religious-themed attraction, as well as the Giant Buddha and the Po Lin Monastery. It will allow visitors efficient access to less trodden paths on Lantau Island, to visit the new Wisdom Path, a masterpiece of outdoor art or the fishing village of Tai O. We expect some 1.5 million visitors to enjoy this 360 degree experience each year.

Lantau is not the only place in Hong Kong for nature lovers. We also have a world renowned sanctuary, the Mai Po Marshes. Every year, more than 120,000 migratory birds arrive at Mai Po on their way between Russia and Australia, including some endangered species like the famous black-faced spoonbill. Adjacent to Mai Po, we are now building a 60-hectare Hong Kong Wetland Park. We are very proud of this world-class conservation, education and tourism facility. Apart from a fun day for families, the park will promote eco-tourism and offer family education without disturbing the wetlands at Mai Po. We expect over 500,000 visitors during its first year of operation.

And once you've had your fill of nature, you can return to the city for a spectacular sound and light extravaganza. Since January 2004, we stage a nightly light and sound show, "A Symphony of Lights", using choreographed movement of lights and music to turn the skyscrapers on the two sides of the Victoria Harbour into a kaleidoscope of colours. By the end of this year, A Symphony of Lights will extend to cover over 30 buildings on both sides of the harbour - a bigger and better show, with more rooftop fireworks on special holidays and during special events like the Hong Kong Shopping Festival, which begins tomorrow. Together with the nearby Avenue of Stars, it will be a great way to be mesmerized by Hong Kong's night life.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have briefly described to you a matrix of tourist hot spots that we think will be irresistible to visitors. I also have with me here today the leaders of the Hong Kong tourism industry - operators of new attractions, hotels, travel agents and airlines. We work together as a team to develop our tourism industry and maintain world-class standards. One of the most important members of this team is Mrs. Selina Chow, the Chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board. She will tell you more about the great ideas the Tourism Board has in promoting tourism. So, together with my team members, we invite you to come visit us, and "discover the Hong Kong magic".

Thank you very much and see you in Hong Kong soon.

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Tourism Commission
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