

SCED's speech at opening of "Hong Kong Live at The Grove" in Los Angeles
(English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, at the opening of the Hong Kong Tourism Board's (HKTB) "Hong Kong Live at The Grove" in Los Angeles, the United States, on June 14 (Los Angeles time):

Peter (Lam) (the Chairman of the HKTB), Mr (Tom) LaBonge (Los Angeles City Council Member), friends of Hong Kong Inc, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. Thank you all for joining us for this promotion. I am delighted to see so many business partners as well as new friends of Hong Kong here today.

It is a pleasure and an honour for Hong Kong to be "performing" live at the Grove. I am sure you won't be disappointed by what we have to offer.

Peter (Lam) has just highlighted the importance of the US market as our largest source of long-haul visitors, with just over one million Americans visiting Hong Kong last year. Fortunately for us, they also spent a total of around US\$800 million in Hong Kong.

During this three-day promotion we hope to encourage more Americans to come and experience the sights, sounds and tastes of our city.

The US already has very strong economic links with Hong Kong, the world's freest economy and premier gateway to Mainland China. So it is no surprise that a large portion - roughly one in three - of our visitors from the US come on business.

Others choose Hong Kong as part of a multi-destination holiday, or they come to visit friends and family who are part of the large US community living, working and studying in our city.

Another option is to join a cruise to visit Hong Kong and other great port cities in our region. On this topic, I have a much-anticipated news flash to share with you.

Just two days ago, the huge cruise liner Mariner of the Seas was berthed in Hong Kong. The ship was the first to dock at our brand new Kai Tak Cruise Terminal, which is designed to handle the largest cruise liners in the world.

This is an exciting development for us because cruise tourism is a growing trend, especially in Asia, and Hong Kong is an ideal cruise destination.

We have all the mod cons and great shopping you would expect to find in a world-class city in Asia. We also have a fascinating East-meets-West culture where visitors can enjoy new experiences in a safe and relatively familiar environment.

Whether you come on business or on holiday, join a cruise or fly into Hong Kong, there is plenty to do and see for all the family.

We have some great theme parks, including Hong Kong Disneyland and Ocean Park, which are adding new attractions all the time. We have world-class hotels and a busy schedule of entertainment events. There are beaches and country parks for nature lovers, and great shopping and dining experiences, all with a unique Hong Kong twist.

I hope that you enjoy this three-day taste of "Hong Kong Live at The Grove". If you do, please don't hesitate to book a ticket to Hong Kong and experience the real thing. You will be most welcome in Asia's world city.

Thank you very much.

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