

Travel and Tourism

Hong Kong's tourism sector remained frozen in 2021 as travel restrictions continued to stay in place amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Overall visitor arrivals to Hong Kong dropped by 97 per cent.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to severely affect tourism in Hong Kong in 2021 with only about 91,000 visitor arrivals recorded.

Despite this, the government continued to implement various initiatives under the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry, promulgated in 2017. The blueprint sets out the government's strategy to develop Hong Kong into a world-class premier tourism destination.

Support Measures for Tourism Industry

The government made a cumulative commitment of about \$2.85 billion of direct financial support to the tourism industry.

Other support measures include the government's extension of waivers of travel agent and hotel licence fees and monthly fixed rent and management fees for the operator of Kai Tak Cruise Terminal; the Hong Kong Tourism Board's (HKTB) waivers of participation fees in travel trade shows and travel missions, application fees of the Anti-epidemic Hygiene Measures Certification Scheme, and merchants' membership renewal fees under the Quality Tourism Services Scheme; and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong's subsidies for tourist guides to complete the Continuing Professional Development Scheme in order to renew their tourist guide passes.

Major Elements of Inbound Tourism

MICE

Hong Kong is a premier MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions) destination, offering world-class convention and exhibition facilities and a diversified range of tourist attractions. However, the pandemic meant that most MICE events were cancelled, postponed or switched to virtual format in 2021.

Cruise Tourism

As the epidemic situation stabilised, cruise tourism in Hong Kong resumed in late July after a suspension of nearly 18 months. Cruise lines were allowed to operate ‘cruise-to-nowhere’ itineraries for Hong Kong residents, under a set of stringent health precautionary measures specifically designed for cruise travel. In 2021, Kai Tak Cruise Terminal handled 84 ship calls over 75 days. Total passenger throughput exceeded 250,000.

Mega Events

The government supports staging events varying in scale and nature to tie in with the policy objectives of product diversification and promote a positive local ambience and international tourism image. In 2021, mega events gradually resumed under stringent anti-epidemic measures. Those organised by the HKTB in ‘online+offline’ format included Fortunes at Home and the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival. The HKTB also restaged physical events for Hong Kong WinterFest and Hong Kong New Year Countdown Celebrations, with the latter including a countdown concert.

Green Tourism

The Great Outdoors Hong Kong campaign promotes Hong Kong’s natural landscape, rich biodiversity, hiking trails, cycling routes, the Hong Kong Unesco Global Geopark and trail running events via the HKTB’s promotion channels. In 2021, the HKTB launched the ‘360 Hong Kong Moments’ campaign, adopting videos and virtual tours to create an immersive experience of Hong Kong’s natural gems for global audiences. To enhance facilities at hiking trails with tourism appeal, the government began improvement works to the MacLehose Trail Section 4, Wilson Trail Section 2, Sharp Island Country Trail and the path between Lau Shui Heung and Hok Tau reservoirs.

Creative Tourism

The Tourism Commission, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Design Centre and the Hong Kong Comics and Animation Federation, completed the three-year creative tourism project ‘Design District Hong Kong (#ddHK)’ in 2021. For the project finale, seven sets of creative installations by local and overseas artists were displayed along the promenade of Victoria Harbour in Central, Wan Chai and Causeway Bay in June and July under the theme of ‘transFORM’, attracting more than 220,000 visitors.

Tourism Infrastructure, Facilities and Attractions

Hong Kong has something for everyone – the sightseer, the food lover, the shopper, the family, the businessman, the leisure traveller, the young and the old. Topping the popularity list of sightseeing spots is The Peak, which provides a panoramic view of Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and Victoria Harbour. Other attractions include theme parks, temples, heritage sites, the natural landscape, and the many shops that have earned Hong Kong the reputation as a shoppers’ paradise. Accommodation options are also extensive. As at the year end, 319 hotels and 1,413 licensed guesthouses provided about 88,600 and 11,900 rooms respectively.

Ocean Park

Ocean Park is taking forward its future strategy to transform itself into a destination which focuses on conservation and education, grounded in nature and complemented by adventure and leisure elements to enhance visitor experience. The all-weather water park, Water World, was opened in September.

A Symphony of Lights

'A Symphony of Lights' is a nightly multimedia light and sound show staged on both sides of Victoria Harbour, which symbolises Hong Kong's dynamic energy and contrasting culture.

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort is one of the best and most popular themed resorts in Asia. In June, the resort debuted a new daytime musical show, *Follow Your Dreams*, at the Castle of Magical Dreams which opened in 2020.

Food Truck Pilot Scheme

The Food Truck Pilot Scheme which aims to add fun and vibrancy to tourist attractions and events through 12 food trucks will end on 1 June 2022.

Wetland Park

The 61-hectare world-class Hong Kong Wetland Park is home to a wide assortment of wildlife. The recreated wetlands, exhibition galleries, theatre and other facilities all underline the importance of wetlands to civilisation and biodiversity conservation. In May, the government obtained funding to upgrade the exhibition and visitor facilities to enhance the park's appeal as an eco-tourism attraction.

Ngong Ping 360

The Ngong Ping Cable Car offers a spectacular 25-minute journey with views of the flora and fauna of North Lantau Country Park, Tung Chung Bay, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) and Hong Kong International Airport. It takes guests to Ngong Ping Village, which is designed in a Chinese architectural style with attractions including the Cable Car Discovery Centre and Walking with Buddha. The Tian Tan Buddha, Po Lin Monastery, Ngong Ping Piazza and Wisdom Path are other attractions.

Peak Tram

Operating since 1888, the Peak Tram is a funicular railway offering a unique view of the ridgeline and skyscrapers of the city. Major upgrading works continued in 2021.

Hong Kong Tourism Board

The HKTB is a statutory government-subsidised organisation that markets Hong Kong round the world as a preferred travel destination. It comprises 20 members who represent various tourism-related sectors and communities. In addition to its Hong Kong head office, the board has 15 offices worldwide and representatives in seven source markets.

Information Network

There are seven visitor centres locally, at the airport (two centres), The Peak Piazza, Tsim Sha Tsui Star Ferry Concourse, Hong Kong West Kowloon Station, HZMB Hong Kong Port and Kai Tak Cruise Terminal. Travel information is also available via HKTB's website (in 13 languages), DiscoverHongKong.com, and social media channels.

Marketing

With inbound travel brought to a standstill, the HKTB launched the 'Holiday at Home' campaign to encourage Hong Kong people to rediscover their city and increase local consumption, while showcasing Hong Kong positively to the international audience as a future destination. The campaign also rolled out a series of Spend-to-Redeem programmes to encourage the public to spend in local outlets and support tourism-related sectors.

Building Safe Tourism Image

The HKTB, in conjunction with the Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency, operates the Anti-epidemic Hygiene Measures Certification Scheme, a standardised hygiene protocol for the tourism-related sectors. By end-December, around 2,800 outlets were certified under the scheme.

Service Quality

Honest and Quality Tourist Services

The government works closely with the tourism industry and related organisations to promote honest and good quality services for tourists. It cooperates with the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) to protect consumers' interests and ensure the tourism market's healthy development and operation. Laws such as the Trade Descriptions Ordinance are in place to prohibit unfair trade practices and protect consumers' legitimate interests.

The TIC also operates a Refund Protection Scheme for Registered Shops, which allows Mainland tour group members who are not satisfied with their purchases to return the goods and seek refunds within 180 days of purchase, provided that the goods are in proper condition.

The HKTB's Quality Tourism Services (QTS) Scheme encourages shops, restaurants and visitor accommodation facilities to offer good service. As at December, 1,128 establishments with 7,602 outlets and 228 rooms had earned QTS accreditation.

Hospitality Initiatives

Hospitality is essential to sustaining tourism. Every year, the government runs a Hong Kong Young Ambassador Scheme to train about 250 young people to be polite and helpful to visitors and to develop a strong hospitality culture in schools and the community.

Easier Entry for Visitors

Hong Kong is one of the world's most visitor-friendly cities. Visitors from some 170 countries and territories enjoy visa-free access for stays of seven to 180 days. The Mainland's Individual Visit Scheme permits residents of 49 designated Mainland cities to visit Hong Kong on their

own instead of travelling in tour groups. As the issuance of endorsements under the scheme has been suspended since January 2020, no Mainland visitors came to Hong Kong under the scheme in 2021.

Protection of Travellers

Travel agents must obtain a government licence and be TIC members to carry out travel business under the Travel Agents Ordinance. Only TIC-accredited tourist guides can be assigned to receive inbound visitors. As at end-2021, Hong Kong had 1,652 licensed travel agents and 5,366 accredited tourist guides.

The statutory Travel Industry Compensation Fund provides ex gratia payments of 90 per cent of the loss of outbound fares to outbound travellers in the event of a travel agent default. In 2021, ex gratia payments of around \$8.92 million were paid to 2,507 travellers affected by 12 default cases. The fund also offers aid in cases of outbound travellers who sustain injuries or die in accidents in the course of an activity arranged by a travel agent. No such payments were made in 2021.

Tourism Cooperation

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, the Macao SAR Government and the governments of the nine Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area jointly established the Tourism Federation of Cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Joint Regulatory Alliance of the Tourism Market of 9+2 Cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to promote tourism cooperation and development within the region. The Culture and Tourism Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, promulgated in December 2020, sets out the directions for development of the Greater Bay Area into an exchange hub for culture between East and West and a world-class tourism destination.

Hong Kong is a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Tourism Working Group and the Pacific Asia Travel Association, and an associate member of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation.

Websites

Hong Kong Tourism Board: www.discoverhongkong.com

Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong: www.mehongkong.com

Tourism Commission: www.tourism.gov.hk