

# Keynote speech by SCST at Hong Kong Tourism Overview 2025 (English only)

Following is the keynote speech by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, at Hong Kong Tourism Overview 2025 today (March 20):

Dr YK Pang (Chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Dr Pang Yiu-kai), Dr Peter Lam (Chairman-Designate of the Hong Kong Tourism Board), distinguished guests, friends from the travel industry, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is with enormous pleasure and a lot of emotion that I join you all at today's Hong Kong Tourism Board's Tourism Overview. I was a regular attendee from 2011 to 2016, but this is my very first time joining this important event as the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism. Really happy to see so many old friends of the tourism industry in the audience, and for new friends in this room, a very warm "hello" to all of you.

## Strong rebound of tourism performance

Tourism has been a cornerstone of Hong Kong's economy all along. It may not be a major source of foreign investment, but travel and related sectors gallantly provide employment for some 150 000 people of our workforce. In 2024, we welcomed close to 45 million visitors, marking a more than 30 per cent increase year on year. Among them, Mainland and non-Mainland visitors exceeded 34 million and 10 million respectively, with year-on-year increases at 27 per cent and 44 per cent respectively, injecting momentum into the local economy, and showcasing the collaborative efforts of the Government and the industry. As we entered 2025, we continue to see handsome growth, and achieved in January alone the highest monthly record of 4.74 million visitor arrivals since the pandemic.

And for these remarkable achievements, I would like to take the opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to Dr YK Pang for leading the Hong Kong Tourism Board with dedication and passion over the past six extraordinary years, particularly through the difficult times during the pandemic. As the Chairman, you have guided the Board with exemplary leadership in successfully overcoming various challenges and then driving the recovery of Hong Kong tourism. Thank you for your invaluable contributions to the Board and to Hong Kong's tourism development.

To sustain the momentum of the recovery, it is essential for all of us in the Government and the industry to recognise that the global tourism landscape has indeed changed substantially after the pandemic, and is continually evolving. With the advancement in digital technology and changing traveller preferences, we must embrace innovation, adapt our traditional offerings and craft new ones to maintain our competitive edge.

## Tourism Blueprint 2.0

With this in mind, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau promulgated on December 30, 2024, the Tourism Blueprint 2.0, setting out the vision and mission for the development of Hong Kong's tourism industry for the five-year period from 2025 to 2030.

Blueprint 2.0 is obviously a roadmap, but it is also a pragmatic and forward-looking action plan comprising four development strategies and 133 measures, which cover product development, visitor source expansion, smart tourism and service enhancement, to name but a few. We will vigorously press ahead with the implementation of these measures, many of them are suggestions from the audience in this room, to achieve our vision of consolidating Hong Kong's position as a world-class premier tourism destination and the mission of implementing "tourism is everywhere".

I am sure most of you have already read the Blueprint 2.0, maybe several times, so I am not going to bore you with the details yet again. But I think it is useful for me to elaborate the three key messages, which form the bases of the Blueprint 2.0, to you in person, which will shape the direction of the tourism industry in the coming years.

### Opportunities to capitalise – Mainland's support measures

The first message is Hong Kong's uniqueness as an international tourist city with the advantage of being backed by the motherland, the Mainland of China. This is our core strength and fundamental asset, and it is getting even more important at this day and age as we are under the cloud of geopolitical tension. It is paramount that we make the most out of the wide range of supportive measures that the Central People's Government has so generously endowed Hong Kong, through the rolling out of the resumption and expansion of multiple-entry permits for Shenzhen residents and the gifting of two precious giant pandas "An An" and "Ke Ke", to name just a few. These measures have injected fresh impetus into our travel, retail, catering and hospitality industries. The entire tourism industry must strategically utilise these initiatives to maximise the benefits for Hong Kong as a whole.

### Traditional and new tourism offerings

This naturally brings me to my second message. Hong Kong boasts significant traditional tourism advantages, including world-class tourist attractions, like the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, which will be celebrating its 20th anniversary later this year; Ocean Park, especially with "An An", "Ke Ke" and the two cute panda cubs "a@1a\$0", "ç´°ä½¬-"; our diverse cuisine, from corner delis "chaa chaan teng" to Michelin-star restaurants; efficient urban management and transportation systems. One thing that we in Hong Kong take for granted and tourists from abroad may not be aware, Hong Kong is in fact one of the safest cities in the world for business and leisure travel. It is essential that we continue to fortify these traditional assets and optimise and strengthen our infrastructure. But it is also crystal clear that amidst fierce competition from nearby cities, there is no room for

complacency at all, and we surely cannot just rely on our traditional tourism mode and attractions anymore.

In the Blueprint 2.0, we promote the four "+ tourism" directions, covering culture, sports, ecology and mega events, in which Hong Kong possesses world-class resources that have yet to be fully presented to global visitors. This is where you, my friends in the travel and tourism trade, must and can all work together and rack your brains to develop innovative and interesting tourism products that speak to the desire of new-generation travellers' aspiration for in-depth exploration of Hong Kong's rich, diversified, and unique characteristics. Island tourism, for example, is one of the areas that we are actively working on. Hong Kong's countryside and outlying islands are our hidden gems. Within an hour, we can travel after attending a formal business meeting in the bustling city centre to our countryside and explore the amazing wonders of nature, just like I did just this past Sunday when I hiked for five hours from Shek Pik Reservoir to Tai O in Lantau in the day, and then dressed up to the nines for a wedding banquet in the evening. We should develop more island tourism and eco-tourism itineraries for our global visitors who now have an increase in preference in this area. Our stunning Victoria Harbour is also one of the most beautiful and must-go photo points among the world's top visit places. We must make better use of our harbour and the surrounding water body by developing more innovative products like yacht tourism to attract tourists. Horse racing is another world-class tourist attraction that Hong Kong excels and has lots of potential, and I'm glad that CTS (China Travel Service) has recently signed an MOU with the Hong Kong Jockey Club to promote horse-racing tourism, and I believe more will come in this direction. And these days I cannot attend any public speaking engagement without mentioning the Kai Tak Sports Park, our new and proud landmark with a 50 000-sized stadium, with which we are now in a position to bring truly mega sports and entertainment events befitting Hong Kong's role as an international metropolis. It is only by infusing the city with fresh energy through new tourism offerings can we enhance the ambiance of our vibrant city and attract visitors from around the globe. On this, I look forward to the support and efforts from all of you in unleashing our creativity and developing products that will captivate the hearts of visitors.

Everyone is tourism ambassador

My third message, which I have been repeating at every opportunity since appointment as the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, is that everyone in the community has a role to play in the development of tourism in Hong Kong, in particular in welcoming our visitors from around the world. This is surely most important for all of us present today, who is always the first point of contact with our tourists. Positive and warm hospitality is the key to prosperous tourism development. Hospitality is not just about providing accommodation and dining services but also about offering attentive and caring services, making visitors feel like home and willing to consume, if I am honest. Therefore, we advocate the concept of "Everyone is a tourism ambassador", and I would encourage everyone in the tourism trade, as well as members of the public, to welcome every visitor with a warm and friendly

smile. Every sunny smile by a member of the public will add to the happy vibe that we could bring to our community, and will more likely bring about quality service provided by hospitality professions. We launched the Hospitality Campaign in 2024 with various government departments, the tourism and related sectors, the education sector and district representatives, encouraging the trade and the entire community to go an extra mile in promoting the spirit of hospitality. We will continue to encourage quality services to welcome every visitor. One of our development strategies in the Blueprint 2.0 is to expand and diversify our visitor source markets. These include the Muslims, silver-haired, family, study-tour, and youth visitors. In order to attract these different segments of visitors, in addition to providing attractive tourism offerings, we must understand their needs and show our respect to make them feel welcomed and valued. This is hospitality and I am confident that our tourism industry will excel in it, giving the warmest welcome to our visitors.

## Conclusion

My dear friends, we have come a long way recovering from the pandemic, and it is now time for us to work together to bring Hong Kong tourism to new heights. Hong Kong is a city full of energy and endless adventures. The Government, along with the tourism industry, the business sector and the community, and indeed everyone in Hong Kong, need to act together to shape Hong Kong's attractive tourism brand vividly. I always call myself a tourism veteran, and you have my assurance that I am all ears when you have a new idea to tell me, and I shall be in action when I know that there are things that my bureau could do to facilitate your business. Equally, I hope I have your assurance that you are walking with me to rejuvenate our travel and tourism industries, and that I can count on your diligence and creativity on this journey. I also look forward to working closely once again with the new Chairman of Hong Kong Tourism Board, Dr Peter Lam, to bring Hong Kong tourism to the new and next level of excellence.

Thank you very much.