

# Speech by Acting Commissioner for Tourism at Opening Ceremony of 38th International Travel Expo and 19th MICE Travel Expo (English only)

Following is the speech by the Acting Commissioner for Tourism, Ms Joanne Chu, at the Opening Ceremony of the 38th International Travel Expo and the 19th MICE Travel Expo:

Mr Tong (Founder and Managing Director of TKS Exhibition Services, Mr Tong Kam-shing), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, friends of Hong Kong,

First of all, thank you so much for having me today. It is my great honour to participate in the Opening Ceremony of the International Travel Expo and MICE Travel Expo event. And may I also extend a warm welcome to all of you to Hong Kong. æièìŽæ^'â€'â...šâœ°çš,,æœ<âŦ<â^°é|™æ,~ä¼† (Our friends from the Mainland, welcome to Hong Kong). I remember there is a very famous book about travel around the world in 80 days. But now I can tell you, you can just do it in one day. The trick, of course, is to come and visit the International Travel Expo. So I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to KS and your team for staging such a wonderful event in Hong Kong about tourism because right now we are promoting tourism everywhere.

So back to the Travel Expo this year. I know the theme this year is "Forward to Full Recovery". I think in Hong Kong, we have a very good story to tell. First of all, in terms of the tourism figures, following the resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the rest of the world, we have been seeing a very good trend of recovery of our tourism market.

Just take 2023 as an example. We received 34 million visitors coming from all over the world. And just in the first five months of 2024, we have already welcomed 18 million visitors coming to Hong Kong from different parts of the world, representing an increase of 78 per cent, compared to the same period of 2023. And we are confident that the increasing trend will continue because thanks to the support of the Central Government, we are welcoming more and more Mainland visitors to Hong Kong under the Individual Visit Scheme, which has recently been expanded to cover 59 Mainland cities, including all the provincial capitals on the Mainland. Under the Scheme, it will be more convenient and much easier for our Mainland friends to come and visit Hong Kong.

Besides, we are also stepping up our efforts to reach out and expand our new source market, including the Middle East and the Muslim market. So we stand ready to welcome our friends from different parts of the world to come to Hong Kong. So please ask your friends to come to Hong Kong; share your unique experience here in your social media to attract them to come.

In fact we know that to sustain the momentum, we have to diversify our tourism products to enrich our tourism offerings. Actually in the past few years, apart from enhancing our very famous local attractions – the two theme parks, the Peak, etc – we have been putting a lot of efforts in developing the thematic tour experiences to our visitors.

Just take the work of the Tourism Commission as an example. We launched two signature projects in the past few years. One is called the Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival. I'm sure most of you will know that Sai Kung is the back garden of Hong Kong. If you have a chance to visit Sai Kung, I strongly encourage you to go there to see the paradise of our city. The idea of the Arts Festival is to connect the beautiful islands of Sai Kung together with arts and culture. Imagine – on one hand, you are enjoying the beautiful sunshine and beautiful natural scenery, and on the other hand, you can immerse yourselves in art installations and different cultural activities. So is it amazing? Sounds very attractive, right? I think I should have something back from all of you here. The upcoming Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival this year will start in November in Hong Kong. Please stay tuned for this.

Another signature project that my office is doing is what we called the Design District Hong Kong, #ddHK in short. Again, our idea is to connect the local neighbourhood with arts and culture to showcase the local characteristics. We will have art installations by different artists, and also different cultural activities for visitors and locals to join. We have done the #ddHK in Central and Sham Shui Po before. This year, we will bring that to the New Territories, in Tsuen Wan and Sha Tau Kok, two other emerging tourist destinations to Hong Kong. The #ddHK, again, will come in the fourth quarter of this year. Please also stay tuned for this event.

Ladies and gentlemen, just the efforts of the Government, of course, isn't enough. We have to count on our trade. That's why we have been working very closely with the Travel Industry Council to encourage our local industry practitioners to develop more thematic tours covering local heritage, culture, the rich history of Hong Kong, and even blue and green tourism, so that when visitors come to Hong Kong, through taking part in these thematic tours, they can get a taste of the authenticity, vibrancy, energy and rich culture of the city and, of course, experience the East-meets-West culture of Hong Kong.

Of course I know that just the product is not enough. We have to continue organising different types of exciting and special events for our visitors. Talking about events, there is one event I think you can't afford to miss, which is the upcoming International Dragon Boat Race, to be held this weekend at the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade. This is a carnival-like event combining local heritage. Of course, it's the legendary dragon boat race, entertainment, sports and tourism. I look forward to seeing you there at the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade this weekend, because the Hong Kong Tourism Board will also have the Summer Chill Food Lane there, where you can enjoy a variety of local delicacies.

Apart from the dragon boat race, we have already scheduled over 210 events for the rest of the year in Hong Kong. Right now we are also having

the Volleyball Nations League in Hong Kong. So do buy a ticket and support the volleyball teams that you like. Besides, if you are arts and culture lovers, right now we are having the Chinese Culture Festival and, later on, the International Arts Carnival. If you are a fan of comics, I am sure the 100% Doraemon and Friends Tour will be your cup of tea. If you are a foodie, no worries, do come and enjoy the Wine and Dine Festival to be held in October this year in Hong Kong.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure with the support of the Hong Kong Government and the efforts from all of us here, we can take the next step forward of the tourism industry and bring the industry to a new height. Once again, thank you so much for having me. I wish the twin expo another year of great success. Good health and prosperity to all of you here. Thank you so much.