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ITE HONG KONG 2019

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WORLD OF TRAVEL UNDER ONE ROOF

Two leading travel trade and MICE exhibitions salute Hong Kong's vibrant market for tourism spending

With a population of almost 7.5 million, Hong Kong is among the world's largest markets for tourism spending. According to "UNWTO World Tourism Barometer March 2017" report, the city was the world's 10th (and Asia's 3rd) largest market for international spending in 2016.

According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), total air ticket sales in Hong Kong for the year to March amounted to HK\$2.8 billion, a 4.5 per cent increase year on year.

Poised to capture the attention of Hong Kong tourists are the 680 plus exhibitors expected at the 33rd International Travel Expo and 14th MICE Travel Expo, which run together as ITE Hong Kong 2019, the city's only travel fair.

The four-day event opens today and runs until Sunday at halls 1A to 1E of the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai. A message from Joe Wong, Hong Kong's Commissioner for Tourism, will start the show.

For today and tomorrow, the event will be open only to trade and corporate professionals that have registered for the 20 or so trade and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions) seminars being staged. Some 200 exhibitors will target the MICE market, offering plenty of connection opportunities for those in the industry.

On Saturday and Sunday, the event will be open to the public and will feature nearly 100 seminars. Occupying nearly 14,000 square metres of space, this year's event promises to be a big and international affair, with 85 per cent of exhibitors from abroad representing 56 countries and regions, half of them from outside Asia.

New destinations this year represented by independent



The travel trade and MICE expo will feature more than 680 exhibitors.

exhibitors and national pavilions include Botswana, Madagascar, Somalia, Morocco and Tunisia in Africa; Colombia, Ecuador and Peru in Latin America; Spain, Cyprus, the Czech Republic and the Russian capital Moscow in Europe; Guam in the Pacific; India, Myanmar and Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city, in Asia.

There will be plenty of unique experiences on offer at those booths. You can, for example, book tours to the Galapagos Islands with its amazing wildlife made famous by the British naturalist Charles Darwin, or visit the Amazon to appreciate its magnificent biodiversity.

Or, for something even more cool (literally), there's an Ice & Aurora tour in the winter wonderland that is Finnish Lapland or a great train journey through Russia's Siberia.

Other unforgettable experiences on offer are visits to the Rescue Elephant Centre in Thailand; trekking in the Himalayas; or seeing the turquoise lakes in the canyons and dunes of the great steppe around Almaty.

If you like something more historical for a change, the Mycenaean archaeological

remains on Cyprus or the heritage cities of Spain are a good bet. Shopping in Spain with its long opening hours and generous sales tax rebates probably does not hurt, either.

But the two largest pavilions at ITE Hong Kong are China, with about 110 booths, and Japan with 80 or so.

Consisting of several large blocks of booths, the huge China pavilion features sub-pavilions divided by province or city featuring different designs and highlights. There will also be desks for about 10 Hong Kong travel agents selling tours to China in case you decide to book a holiday on the spot.

Taking a different approach, booths inside the Japan pavilions are divided into smaller "islands" by prefecture or group of prefectures. It will also be your chance to pick up specially themed travel products from those destinations.

There are other large pavilions representing locations that exhibit regularly including Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand and Egypt among others.

ITE Hong Kong will also be keeping pace with current affairs,



The International Travel Expo (ITE) Hong Kong opens today at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai and runs until Sunday.

reflecting developments closer to home such as the Greater Bay Area and other key infrastructure developments. The mainland's High Speed Train and coach services across the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge will also be exhibiting for the first time.

With mascots on show and interactive games with prizes of souvenirs, exhibitors are prepared for the crowds and business when ITE Hong Kong opens to the public.

In addition, there will be a display area in the China pavilion featuring the winning entries of a Chinese travel writing competition. To promote Study Tours, ITE has put together two student travel writing competitions, one in Chinese and the other in English.

The response to that has been fantastic, with thousands of entries received. The winning

pieces will be displayed and there will be prize presentation ceremonies attended by students, teachers and parents.

For those in the travel and tourism trade, ITE's MICE events are a wonderful time to connect and learn. There will be business-matching activities between buyers and sellers, along with concurrent events to help people keep abreast of trends such as the Belt and Road trade forum by the *Commercial Daily*.

Meanwhile, the mainland's Ministry of Culture and Tourism is staging a travel event, while MICE forums such as "The business case for green travel & events" by ILEA (International Live Events Association) Hong Kong Chapter; and a seminar series covering destination, theme/travelling tips, MICE & corporate, and social media & content marketing and so on.

Other discussions and topics of interest include Macau's planned new hotels and government incentives; views from popular Chinese bloggers about how to build brands around the way people in China acquire travel information; and an explanation of how to work with travel channels on mainland TV stations to attract tourists.

No matter what your target market, it is highly likely there will be something interesting that fits your business model.

Members of the public can visit the booths to collect travel maps, attend some of the 100 travel seminars to help with their holiday planning, or just go ahead and book a holiday at ITE.

In fact, it pays to do so. Visitors who buy tickets on June 15 or 16 can take part in a lucky draw. The grand prize is round-trip economy class tickets for two

from Hong Kong to Mauritius sponsored by Air Mauritius and two nights each at the Constance Belle Mare Plage and the Constance Prince Maurice sponsored by Constance Hotels, Resorts and Golf, worth a total of more than HK\$65,000.

ITE Hong Kong is organised by TKS Exhibition Services Ltd and is supported by China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Hong Kong Tourism Board, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, the Macau Government Tourism Office, MICE and trade associations.

For more details and online registration as a trade visitor and/or for trade and MICE seminars, please visit www.itehk.com.

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