

## Hong Kong Visitors Flock to Free Independent Travel with ITE 2025 Revealing Strong Preference for FIT with 72% Choosing It for Long-Haul Trips

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Hong Kong visitors are increasingly opting for Free Independent Travel (FIT), and the latest ITE 2025 survey sheds light on this growing trend. According to the survey, an impressive 72% of respondents prefer FIT for their long-haul journeys, reflecting a clear shift away from traditional group tours. This preference is driven by the desire for flexibility, personalization, and a more authentic travel experience. With FIT, travelers can design their own itineraries, explore destinations at their own pace, and enjoy a greater sense of independence. The ITE 2025 survey, which gathered responses from thousands of travelers, underscores the continued growth of FIT as the travel style of choice for Hong Kong's outbound tourists. This shift towards FIT aligns with broader global travel trends, highlighting a more adventurous and self-driven approach to exploring the world.



For more than ten years, the ITE Hong Kong Public Visitor Survey has consistently demonstrated a clear preference for Free Independent Travel (FIT), with approximately 80% of visitors opting for this style of travel. Specifically, the 2025 survey, which gathered 4,242 online responses in mid-year, revealed that 72% of respondents prefer FIT for long-haul trips, and this figure rises to 87% for short-haul journeys.

However, a follow-up survey conducted at the year's end, which focused on purchasing behavior, highlighted that even among those who favor FIT, some still occasionally consider package tours for certain trips.



### Survey Results Reflect Broader Travel Trends

The survey results align closely with official tourism data. For instance, Japan, which welcomed over 2 million visitors from Hong Kong in 2023, reported that 88.6% of these travelers were FIT. This trend is also gaining traction in Mainland China, where the percentage of FIT applicants for French visas increased from 39% in 2019 to 52% in 2024, while group travelers dropped from 47% to 22%.

#### ITE Public Visitors: Frequent and Affluent Travelers

ITE's public visitors are high-spending, frequent travelers. According to the survey, 90.8% of participants plan to either increase or maintain their travel budgets in the coming year. Additionally, over half of respondents hold university degrees, and another 23% have completed post-secondary education. Many are also proficient in English, highlighting that the ITE public visitor demographic is made up of premium FIT travelers.

### ITE 2025 Survey: Frequency of Overnight Leisure Travel for Outbound Trips

No. of O/B Leisure Trips	2025 (Jan-Jun)	2025 (Jul-Dec)
3 or more	48.2%	42.8%
0	6.2%	2.7%



The 2026 edition of ITE Hong Kong marks its 40th anniversary and its 6th live event since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2021, the event has continued to hold distinct days and sessions for trade professionals and general public attendees, even during the years of the pandemic.

### ITE 2025 Key Statistics

Category	Details
Exhibitors	502 (87.8%*) from 64 countries & regions (1/3 from non-Asia)
Buyers & Trade Visitors	7,626 (53.2%*)
Public Visitors	70,212 (80% FIT)
Seminars & Audience	135 seminars (9,224 seated audience)



### **From Outside Hong Kong / Overseas**

International Sourcing Platform for the Asian Travel Trade

Among the ITE's trade visitors, 30% hailed from Mainland China, while more than 20% came from other parts of Asia. These visitors included both individuals and travel trade association delegations from various cities in Guangdong.

Our B2B program, which is flexible and optional, offers Business Matching as the main feature, alongside free pre-show promotion for exhibitors' own trade seminars, speaking opportunities, and networking with key opinion leaders (KOLs).



## Maximising Sales During ITE Public Days

Public days at ITE present a strong buying signal, with surveys showing that 43% of visitors are either already making bookings or expressing interest in doing so. Many visitors also use their mobile phones to book and pay for holidays or travel products on-site, much like they would at home or in a café, without the involvement of exhibitors in the transaction.

Exhibitors attending under tourist visas are welcome to promote their offerings directly to visitors, showcasing products, distributing promotional materials like discount QR codes, and engaging with potential customers.



Packed seminars serve as another key buying indicator. During ITE, 135 trade and public seminars were held, attracting a total of 9,224 attendees, with the majority being members of the public. One of the most popular sessions even drew over 400 attendees, including many standing.

This gives exhibitors an opportunity to engage directly with premium Free Independent Travelers (FIT). They can also apply for a free 25-minute seminar session to promote their products.

#### Additional Survey on Visitor Buying Behaviour

To gain deeper insights into public visitors' purchasing habits, a supplementary survey was conducted in November 2025, gathering 224 responses.



a. The survey revealed that in the past year, 94.6% of visitors had taken at least one FIT holiday, underscoring the dominance of FIT travel in the market!

#### ITE 2025 Year-End Survey: Frequency of FIT Holiday

No. of FIT Holidays (Past 12 Months)	Percentage
Five or More	11.2%
Three to Five	34.8%
One to Two	48.7%
Zero	5.4%

b. FIT and Package tours can complement each other! While 43.3% (100-56.7) are open to considering package tours, just 5.7% (2.2 + 0.4 + 3.1) of visitors have a 60% or higher likelihood of opting for a package tour.

### ITE 2025 Year-End Survey: Travel Mode Preference

Category	FIT 100%	FIT 80-90%	FIT 60-70%	FIT 50-50	Package 60-70%	Package 80-90%	Package 100%
Results (%)	56.7%	17.0%	8.5%	12.1%	2.2%	0.4%	3.1%

c. In comparison, travelers opting for package tours typically require less time to prepare. This advantage of reduced preparation time makes package tours a more appealing option.

### ITE 2025 Year-End Survey: Preparation Time Required

Time Horizon	FIT (%)	Package (%)
At least 3 Months	32%	25%
1 - 3 Months	43%	32%
Within 1 Month	17%	29%
Around 1 Week	4%	8%
Any Time	4%	5%

d. When selecting a destination, travellers typically rely on the following sources for information.

### ITE 2025 Year-End Survey: Channels to Source Information

Channels ITE	Percentage
Traditional Media (TV, Guidebooks)	52%
Travel Portals (OTA / Airline / Hotel)	48%
KOLs	47%
Word of Mouth	46%
Official Channels (NTO etc.)	39%
Social Media	33%
Others	28%

e. Despite the lack of convenient transportation options, such as direct flights or high-speed train connections, certain factors still draw visitors to a destination:

#### ITE 2025 Year-End Survey: Major Factors

Attraction Type	Percentage
Scenic Area / Outdoor Adventure	63%
Cultural / Historical	49%
Festival / Mega Event	43%
Exquisite / Unique Cuisine	28%
Local Culture	28%
Landmark	23%
Wellness / For Relaxing	22%
Unique Accommodation	21%
Educational	11%

f. For most visitors, the travel budget is neither the primary concern nor the only factor to consider.

#### ITE 2025 Year-End Survey: Budgets

Budget Impact on Choosing Destination	Percentage
Will affect choice of destination	36.2%
Occasionally over budget for ideal destination	42.9%
Minor, emphasize more on experiences	21.0%

g. It's difficult to determine whether a visitor's daily food and beverage budget will be adequate, as it largely depends on the destination.

#### ITE 2025 Year-End Survey: F&B Expenses

Daily Spending on F&B, Meal & Snack (HK\$)	Percentage
Below \$500	26.8%
\$501 to \$1000	51.8%
\$1001 to \$2000	16.1%
Over \$2000	5.4%

Hong Kong visitors are increasingly embracing Free Independent Travel (FIT), with 72% choosing it for long-haul trips, according to the ITE 2025 survey. This shift highlights a growing preference for flexibility and personalized experiences, allowing travelers to create their own itineraries and explore at their own pace. FIT is rapidly becoming the top choice for those seeking independence and authenticity in their travels.

The upcoming ITE Hong Kong, organized by TKS Exhibition Services Ltd., will take place from 11 to 14 June 2026 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) in Hall 1. The event will feature the 40th ITE (Leisure) and the 21st ITE MICE, with the first two days dedicated to trade professionals and the final two days open to the public. The event enjoys strong backing from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, which will present the largest pavilion at the show. Other notable supporters include the Hong Kong Tourism Board, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, and the Macao Government Tourism Office.

Travel and Tour World

<https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/hong-kong-visitors-flock-to-free-independent-travel-with-ite-2025-revealing-strong-preference-for-fit-with-72-choosing-it-for-long-haul-trips/>