

NOT EVERYBODY LOVES THE TOURIST FROM CHINA

As the Government of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) works to try to lure more residents of the PRC, proper, to the territory on holiday excursions, there are quite a number of the residents and business people of the HKSAR, who would, dearly, like to see the Government fail in its endeavours.

The HKSAR Government claims that the more PRC tourists, who visit the territory, the more money that will be tipped into the coffers of the treasury by virtue of payments for goods and services, those goods and services, provided by HKSAR merchants, who, in turn, will pay their share of the booty to the Government via increased payments of taxes, brought about by an accelerated rate of resurgence of the poor-suffering economy of the past 5 years.

One is told by the HKSAR Government that the hospitality industry and the retail industry will benefit, almost immediately that the HKSAR is put on the preferred list of places for PRC tourists to visit.

But, if one were to ask the management of just about any 5-star hotel in the territory, and if the management of that hotel were to open up, honestly, one would get another opinion, one that differs, vastly, from that of the Government of Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa.

Ask the operators of shops at Pacific Place, The Landmark, Exchange Square, The Ocean Terminal or any other well-managed, commercial complex and one would obtain a completely different opinion to that of the officials of the Tourist Board about the gathering of the PRC tourists in the HKSAR.

In the Hermes Boutique at Pacific Place, **TARGET** was told by one saleslady, recently:

'Watch your pocket book when the Chinese (meaning the PRC) tourists enter this shop! Also, don't be too sure about the Japanese!'

Tourists from the PRC, proper, are not always welcome in many shops, selling brand-named items, such as Hermes, Escada, Gucci, Lowe, Christian Dior, Salvatore Ferragami, Prada, Bulgari, Channel, Yves Saint Laurent, Louis Vuitton, to name but a few of the well-known, brandnames, prominently displayed in shops in the Central District of Hongkong Island.

The reason for this is that it is well known that the majority of these tourists cannot afford to purchase such items and, even if they could afford to buy them, the attitude and manners of many of these tourists is totally offensive to many HKSAR residents, and of tourists from other countries, also.

One of the problems that has been encountered by these high-class shops is that some of the PRC tourists, often very poorly dressed and smelling, strongly, of alcohol, enter the shops to look and take up room, without any intention of buying anything.

In a conversation with a Manager of a 5-star hotel, **TARGET** was told how, only too often, PRC tourists have to be reminded that they cannot put their feet on the furniture at the food outlets, and that they may not spit on the marble floors of the lobby and in other public areas.

*'We have had incidents of Chinese tourists, doing objectionable things,' the Manager explained to **TARGET** in very diplomatic language, 'but, after we explain things to them, they, usually, follow the rules.'*

When **TARGET** asked the Manager what would happen if a Chinese tourist refused to follow the hotel's rules, he said:

'If a person does not respect me, then, I would call for security and ask the person to leave, immediately. That does not happen too often, however.'

The pat and almost immediate answer of this Manager to **TARGET**'s very pointed question suggested, in very definitive terms, that the rules of the hotel with regard to PRC tourists had been laid down as to what action to take under certain circumstances.

There is only one 5-star hotel in Pacific Place that is frequented, often, by Chinese tourists, who are not part of chaperoned tours.

The other 2, 5-star hotels employ surreptitious methods by which, without refusing admission to anybody, it is made very apparent that the hotel does not cater for a certain class of tourist, be he Chinese or any other nationality.

The prices of food and beverages in the one, 5-star hotel in Pacific Place, which is only too often overrun with Chinese tourists, are, in many cases, between 30 percent and 50 percent below those of the other 2, 5-star hotels.

Also, the security in the 2 hotels that, clearly, do not welcome a certain class of tourist, is much more in evidence than in the competing hotel in the area.

In the public toilets of the hotels that employ a policy of not welcoming a particular class of Chinese tourist, who is considered objectionable by the hotel managements, they are manned by an army of cleaners, throughout the day.

Not so for the one hotel that welcomes the Chinese tourist of all classes, tourists, who have not been exposed to the way of the West, for, in that hotel, some of the public toilets have been described as being a disgrace – and **TARGET**'s reporter has confirmed this to be the case on a number of occasions.

In the coffee-shop toilets of this hotel, there is ample evidence of male visitors, having urinated on the floor, and, on occasions, commodes, that have not been flushed, emit the pungent odours of faeces that is caked to the toilet bowls.

Soiled hand towels, only too often, litter the sinks and floors of these facilities.

In the coffee shop, itself, little to no consideration is given to the smoking and non-smoking areas, and, **TARGET** has been told, the staff fear for their jobs if they make a complaint about the situation.

So, this lone, 5-star hotel has become the haven of one class of guest, while the other 2, 5-star hotels, attract another class of guest.

However, it would be interesting to learn which of the 3 hotels earns the most money.

According to another Manager of one of the 5-star hotels at Pacific Place, her hotel, today, will not accept certain group tours from the PRC, proper.

A number of years ago, the hotel did take several large tour groups from the PRC, proper, filling up the hotel, completely.

After the tours left, however, what was discovered so horrified the Management that it was determined that certain group tours from the PRC, proper, would be discouraged.

What Management of this hotel found, after the tours had vacated their rooms, included, inter alia:

1. Electrically controlled curtains had been damaged or destroyed because the PRC tourists, not understanding how to operate the curtains, ripped them and broke the curtain rods that held the heavy material;
2. Smoking in the non-smoking rooms was very evident, with holes, burnt into the carpets;
3. The toilets had been misused (no exact details were given as to the meaning of '*misused*'); and,
4. Some of the guests had been spitting on the floors of the rooms; and,
5. Items in the rooms had been stolen.

In a hotel in Wanchai, one that caters, exclusively, for the tourists from the PRC, proper, the lobby area is often frequented by the visitors who, with feet on the sofas, discuss the matters of the day – while the lobby is an ocean of smoke from their cigarettes.

The objectionable habits of many of the Chinese tourists to the HKSAR is nobody's fault for, in a country where, since 1948, there has been a way of life, dedicated to trying to make certain that the human population of some 1.30 billion people are fed, clothed and housed, there has been little time to educate the population into the niceties of good manners and consideration for one's neighbour.

For the international tourist to the HKSAR, little to no consideration and understanding is being made for the Chinese tourists, who have never had to follow rules of what the Western World would consider to be, just good, plain manners.

A ride on the **Mass Transit Railway (MTR)**, during certain times of the day, impresses one, instantly, of just how rude can these Chinese tourists appear to be – without the tourists even realising it because that is the way of life in the PRC, proper.

Only too often, the Chinese tourist makes certain that there is room for him/her in the train, more often than not at the expense of anybody else, regardless of ethnicity or age.

The Monks

In an effort to earn a living from the HKSAR, beggars from PRC, proper, dressed in the traditional robes of monks, invade the territory to prey on the ignorance of the international tourists.

Resplendent in the yellow or brown robes of Chinese monks, robes that have been purchased in the PRC, proper, and ringing their brass bowls by striking them with a wooden stick, into which a \$HK10 bill has been conspicuously displayed, they beg for arms from the unwary.

But dedicated monks do not beg, for money or anything else, and, definitely, a monk would not stand near a shopping arcade in the hope of teasing out a smile from an unwary European's face ... just before the tourist, reaches into his or her pocket for some money to feed the brass bowl.

Aside from the monk scam, there are the Chinese beggars who, as with their counterparts in Madras, Calcutta or Bombay, India, make themselves look as miserable as possible in order to obtain pity from a passerby.

Rolling on the pavement or holding a young baby in the beggar's arms is but one of the ploys, employed by some of the beggars.

At the entrances to many shopping arcades, it is now commonplace to find hawkers, nearly all of whom have come for a couple of days from Lowu, a PRC border town with the HKSAR, selling their wares from cardboard boxes.

Many of the goods, being displayed by these hawkers, are counterfeits, with names on the boxes, proclaiming that the contents to contain essences of Gucci, Christain Dior, Aramis, Hermes, Hugo Boss, etc.

Because of the vast numbers of these PRC hawkers, the Hongkong police are unable to keep them under control for very long.

For many of the residents of the HKSAR, they see the changes, taking place in the territory, and, they do not like it.

However, for many shops, especially those in the open bazaars, in Mongkok, Shamshiupo, Wanchai, and Causeway Bay, the tourist from the PRC, proper, is most welcome because these areas sell mostly cheaper products and the shop-owners/operators cater for this class of tourist, especially.

However, in Hongkong Park and Victoria Park, both major tourist areas on Hongkong Island, it is a common sight to find some of these Chinese tourists, sleeping on the benches, with their luggage, in bags, beside them.

Times are changing in the HKSAR, for certain, but many of the changes are hardly welcomed by all.

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