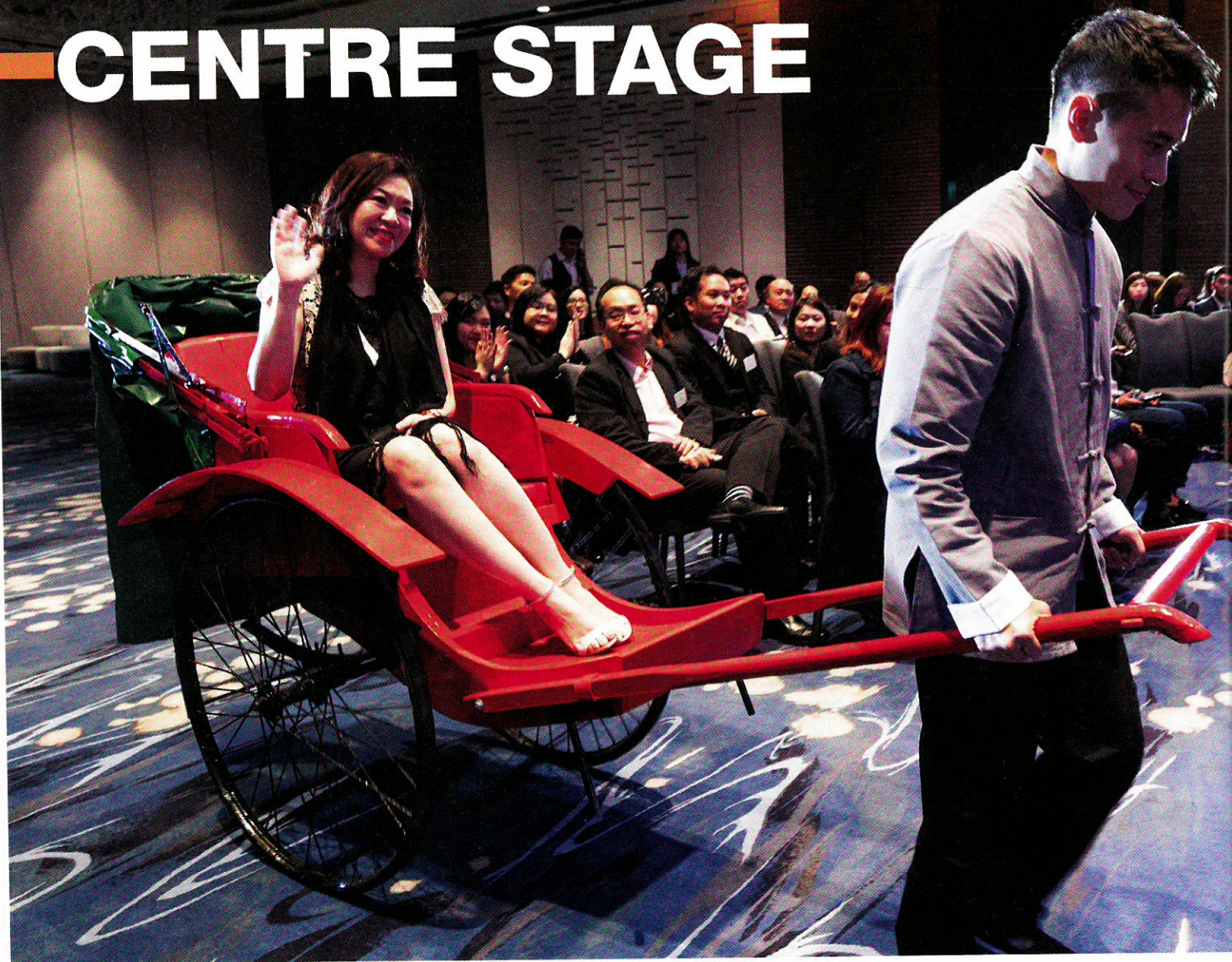


CENTRE STAGE



OLD WAYS GREET NEW FRIENDS

Top group organisers treated to gala at Ocean Park Marriott, visits to seabridge, an old jail, theme parks, rural Hong Kong and more

A MEGA seabridge, a high-speed rail link, a former prison and an old textiles factory revitalised into a visitor centre and business incubator were among the sites that impressed 60 award-winning agents who bring MICE groups to Hong Kong.

Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong (MEHK), a division of Hong Kong Tourism Board, organised the five-day fam trip with the Top MICE Agent Awards Ceremony as the gala highlight.

Agents from five strategic markets – mainland China, India, Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand – were taken on a tour of old and new landmarks across Hong Kong.

Kenneth Wong, general manager of Hong Kong Tourism Board's MICE and Cruise Division, said there were close to two million overnight meetings, incentive, and business event arrivals in the city in 2018. This marked a 2.1 per cent growth on the previous year.

Short-haul markets performed particularly well with a growth rate of 8.7 per cent, with double-digit growth in the meetings and incentive segments,

including South Korea and Thailand, which were the tourism board's "new strategic markets".

"In 2019, Hong Kong is setting off to a new era for MICE tourism as we have many new infrastructures, new business potential with the Greater Bay Area and, most importantly, exciting new experiences for MICE groups," said Wong. "Travel agents play a pivotal role and we would like to express our greatest appreciation through an excitement-filled ceremony and customised itinerary, to showcase there's so much more Hong Kong can offer."

Sites visited included the HZMB seabridge and tunnel link to Zhuhai and Macau; the Hong Kong section of the new high-speed rail link to Guangzhou; Tai Kwun, the former Central police station, magistrates and prison, which dates back 170 years and is now an arts and cultural centre; and the Mills, a revitalised textile factory in Tsuen Wan that is now open to visitors and houses small enterprises.

Tsuen Wan is one of the areas designated by city tourism chiefs to be "MICE hubs". The others

are the south of Hong Kong island and Lantau island in addition to Central and Tsim Sha Tsui, the tourism board's annual review on March 26 heard

At the gala ceremony in the Marriott Ocean Park ballroom, top-performing agents were transported to the stage in a traditional rickshaw. Other experiences that the groups enjoyed included trips to rural Hong Kong, which featured a Geopark boat trip near Sai Kung, and a seafood lunch on Lamma Island. The Tea House at Xiqu Centre, part of the West Kowloon Cultural District Development, was another new venue that impressed the groups.

Visits were also arranged to Hong Kong Disneyland Resort and Ocean Park, while Thai groups said they were impressed with famous city temples, such as Man Mo and Wong Tai Sin.

Wong said organisers were also being encouraged to combine events on ocean liners with land-based activities as the cruise market in Hong Kong was set to become increasingly important to the local travel industry. ●

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CARRYING ON

Activities enjoyed by the groups ranged from ukelele teambuilding and temple visits to wine tasting and a rickshaw ride to the stage for top performers



TOASTING CLASSY HONG KONG

New luxury events spaces join Old Town character as city continues to reinvent.

Martin Donovan reports

FOR STARTERS
Business event travel organisers from China raise a glass at Crown Wine Cellar, Hong Kong, during the recent farm trip and awards organised by MEHK.
Picture: Hong Kong Tourism Board