

DUTCHCHAM MAGAZINE



INTERVIEW WITH A CHIEF

4

LEAD STORY

10

**The new frontier of
hotel experiences**

**Bart Buring, Marriott
International**

**A piece of Dutch
certainty - OOM**

Insurance

In loving memory of



Annemarijn de Boer

3 September 1991 - 12 April 2023

The Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong is deeply saddened by the passing of Annemarijn de Boer.

Over the years, Annemarijn had been actively involved – in different roles – with many activities at the Chamber. She was a member of several committees, among were our PR and Publication Committee, Creative Committee and Gala Committee 2021. Annemarijn was also our Chief Designer of the DutchCham Magazine and was instrumental during the major redesign of its publication last year. Furthermore, she was responsible for many of the visuals for flagship events, including the Business Award Gala.

The Chamber will sincerely miss Annemarijn; her creativity, positivity, empathy and social attitude. The void she leaves behind is immense.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the DutchCham Office Team and the PR & Publication Committee, the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong offers its condolences to the family of Annemarijn in these extraordinary difficult circumstances.



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CONTENTS

3	Chairman's Note
4	Interview with a Chief The New Frontier of Hotel Experiences
6	News & Views
10	Lead Story A Piece Of Dutch Certainty
12	Passport to HK
14	Tax focus
15	Go Green
16	Beyond Borders
17	China focus
18	Passing The Pen
19	Lifestyle
20	Survey
22	Event photos
24	New members
25	DutchCham info

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TRAVEL



By the time you find this magazine in your hands, summer will be in full swing. Many of our members will have temporarily traded the bustling streets of Hong Kong for a myriad of other destinations, and so, it is fitting that the theme for this issue is 'Travel.'

I have had the opportunity to join a special trip: "Exploring New Opportunities in the Greater Bay Area (GBA)" organised by Commissioner Liu of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong S.A.R.

A delegation of consuls general, chambers and industries visited four cities in four days; Shenzhen, Dongguan, Guangzhou, and Zhuhai, where we experienced the developments over the last three years. An impressive infrastructure between multiple cities in the GBA has been almost completed and we visited many interesting companies (e.g. BYD, Tencent, Huawei, Nanshan Energy Eco-park, China Spallation Neutron Source, Songshan Lake Materials Laboratory, MINO Equipment Co., Medprin Biotech, IFLYTEK South China Research Institute, APT Electronics, Gree Co., MTU Maintenance Co.), Planning Exhibition Hall of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone, Zhuhai International Convention and Exhibition Center and the Exhibition Hall of the Eastern Artificial Island. Brochures and information are available in our Dutch Chamber office.

These developments open up a world of business expansion opportunities for our members in the GBA. Critical to this will be Hong Kong's positioning and ensuring the free flow of capital and resources - matters that we discuss regularly in our International Business Committee meetings with the Hong Kong Government.

In March, we sent a Dutch Chamber Membership Survey. I want to thank you all for the valuable feedback. A summary can be found in this issue of the magazine. During the AGM in September, we will go through the results as well.

As for our Board, I am thrilled to announce that Harmen Overdijk of Leo Wealth has joined as the new Chair of the Finance Committee. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Martyn van Wensveen from EY for his interim Chairmanship following Edgar's departure. My best wishes to Edgar and his wife for their time in Malaysia. Additionally, I am excited to announce Quinten Kah from Intertrust Group and Arend Oldenziel from KPMG as new candidates for the Board of Directors. Quinten Kah will serve as Chair of the China Committee, and Arend Oldenziel as the new Treasurer.

I am incredibly pleased with our current and new team. I want to thank all the Board members for their time and efforts so far and for the 'new' joiners, I am looking forward to working together!

Frery Winkel

THE NEW FRONTIER OF HOTEL EXPERIENCES

In this exclusive interview, we speak with **Bart Buring, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer for Asia Pacific at Marriott International**, a recently joined Gold Member at the Chamber. Bart shares valuable insights into the future of hospitality, discussing trends, technological innovations, and Marriott's strategy for creating exceptional guest experiences.

■ By Zuba Adham-Bos



Bart Buring

Please tell us a bit about yourself

My name is Bart, and I am currently the Chief Sales and Marketing Officer for Marriott International's Asia Pacific division. I hail from a quaint village called Roden in the Netherlands, situated just 15 km south of Groningen. After attending hotel school in Maastricht, I embarked on my overseas career.

I have been with Marriott for 23 years. My journey with the company began as the F&B Director at the JW Marriott in Mumbai, India. Since then, I've held various roles within the organisation, and this is now my 13th job with Marriott. I transitioned from running Operations to becoming the Chief Sales and Marketing Officer three and a half years ago.

My responsibilities are quite diverse, encompassing sales, marketing, overseeing the Marriott Bonvoy loyalty program, communication, IT, digital, and branding. My team and I also explore concepts and develop F&B strategies for new hotels.

I've witnessed tremendous growth during my time with Marriott. When I first joined, we had around 40 hotels in the Asia Pacific region. Earlier this year, we celebrated a significant milestone with the opening of our 1000th hotel.

Marriott International boasts an impressive portfolio of 31 brands, including prestigious names like the Ritz-Carlton, St. Regis, JW Marriott, and Bulgari hotels. Our loyalty program, Marriott Bonvoy, plays a crucial role in our operations, with approximately 177 million members worldwide.

The travel and hospitality industry has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Have you noticed any differences in what your customers are looking for now?

Indeed, the Covid-19 pandemic was quite challenging for the travel industry. We're grateful to have moved past it and to see people travelling again, which is the lifeblood of our industry.

We have observed several changes in customer behaviour. One notable trend is the blending of business and leisure, with guests opting for longer stays. They often combine a business trip with a family getaway, extending their stay for a long weekend, for example. In response to this, we've launched a new brand called Apartments by Marriott Bonvoy, which caters to this evolving traveller preference.

Another emerging trend is the focus on wellness and wellbeing. Guests are increasingly prioritising their physical and mental health, leading to a higher demand for services such as spas and more vegetarian and vegan food options.





Lastly, we've witnessed a rise in purposeful travel. Guests want to travel with a meaningful intent, giving back to the communities they visit and seeking authentic, local experiences. To cater to this desire, we introduced Good Travel with Marriott Bonvoy. At over 100 of our hotels, guests can engage with the local community in various ways, such as through education or sustainability initiatives.

Technology and digital innovations are transforming the way people travel and experience hospitality services. Can you share some examples of how Marriott International is leveraging technology to enhance the guest experience in the Asia Pacific region?

The Marriott Bonvoy app lies at the heart of our customer experience. The app allows guests to perform mobile check-ins and check-outs, access contactless keys, and engage in real-time chats with the hotel. Additionally, guests can earn points when dining at our restaurants. The app has become our primary tool for connecting with customers, far more than just a few years ago.

Another key aspect is our strong partnerships in the region. For instance, we have a 6-year-old joint venture with Alibaba in the travel space, which keeps us at the forefront of technology. We have also invested heavily in WeChat and its mini apps, particularly in China. More recently, we entered into a partnership with Rakuten, a major digital player in Japan, and are exploring additional partnerships with large digital ecosystems.

While we prioritise the human touch and genuine hospitality during a guest's stay at our properties, we also recognise the importance of technology in enhancing their experience, especially in the lead-up to the trip. The convenience of online check-ins, easy communication with the hotel staff for last-minute arrangements, and having a digital key on guests' phones are features that our guests truly appreciate.

Can you share some examples of successful marketing campaigns or initiatives that have helped Marriott International strengthen its brand presence and drive customer engagement in Hong Kong & China?

Our marketing efforts primarily focus on two objectives: growing our Marriott Bonvoy member base and creating awareness of our 31 brands within the portfolio, ensuring customers recognise the affiliation between brands like St. Regis or Ritz Carlton and Marriott.

In the Asia Pacific region, food and beverage marketing is a significant aspect, as it contributes to about 40% of our business. We invest in marketing our restaurants and celebrating our Michelin-starred establishments in Hong Kong and other cities.

We've executed several destination campaigns aimed at inspiring travellers to visit places like Bali, Melbourne, and Sydney. We recently completed a stunning Hong Kong destination video, and are about to shoot one for Phu Quoc in Vietnam.

In Hong Kong, we ran the 'Power of Travel' campaign, featuring large displays on trams and at Hong Kong Station, to create awareness for Marriott Bonvoy and its associated brands.

We collaborated with renowned actress Shu Qi for a high-profile campaign last year. Additionally, we continuously carry out activations for our brands and the loyalty program to maintain engagement with our customers.

Which industry trends do you expect in the next 5 years?

I foresee three major trends shaping the hospitality industry in the coming years.

Firstly, sustainability will play a significant role, driven primarily by younger generations who are increasingly concerned about the environment and our planet's future.

Secondly, the luxury segment is experiencing a boom. With eight luxury brands in our portfolio, we concentrate on providing exceptional customer experiences, making stays at our luxury hotels truly memorable.

Lastly, we anticipate a swift return of business travel to pre-pandemic levels. The pandemic highlighted the pent-up demand for leisure travel, which remains strong. However, we've also observed a resurgence in business travel demand. In Asia, personal relationships and face-to-face interactions are crucial for conducting business, reinforcing the importance of business travel.

Overall, we are pleased with how travel has evolved over the past few months, particularly after China's reopening.

TRAVEL SAFE, TRAVEL WELL

In the post-Covid era, people start travelling again and business trips resume as usual.



Some multinational companies employ occupational medicine physicians to provide the most updated travel advice for their business travellers and sponsor their staff to arrange pre-travel consultations, sometimes in their own on-site clinics. Even if you just travel for leisure, here are a few tips for you to stay healthy during the trip and reduce the havoc caused by unexpected illnesses that are actually preventable.

Firstly, find out if you are considered a “high-risk traveller”. These include pregnant women, young children, the elderly, patients with chronic illnesses, etc. These people are encouraged to consult a travel health professional who can conduct a comprehensive evaluation of their medical history and provide travel advice accordingly.

Afterwards, list out the specific regions of travel as immunisations and precautions are arranged according to the endemic diseases specific to the destination. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website provides a list of travel advice based on the destinations¹. Doctors will give you additional advice if you will engage in high-risk activities such as water sports, contact with wildlife and high-altitude hiking. For the schedule of required immunisations, you are advised to bring along your immunisation records as you consult your healthcare professionals.

The ideal time to consult a travel health physician would be around 2-3 months before the trip so that sufficient time is allowed for completing the optimal immunisation schedule. Vaccines are further classified into routine, required and recommended vaccines, which you can again check from

the CDC website as it varies by destinations¹. In Hong Kong, although most vaccines are commonly available in private clinics (e.g. influenza, Japanese encephalitis, rabies, hepatitis and typhoid vaccines), yellow fever vaccination is only available in Travel Health Centres operated by the Department of Health². The International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ie, the “yellow card”), will be provided by request. The list of countries requiring proof of vaccination against yellow fever can be found on the World Health Organization website³.

Generally speaking, travellers are suggested to avoid consuming tap water and raw food to reduce the chance of contracting gastroenteritis. Moreover, try to avoid outdoor activities during vector feeding times (usually between dusk and dawn) to reduce the chance of insect bites. Wearing long sleeves and using insect repellents that contain DEET also protect travellers against vector-borne illnesses. Travellers may prepare a travel health kit that contains antimalarials and antidiarrheal medication for self-treatment according to the physician’s advice. Oral rehydration powder, analgesics, contraceptives and antihistamines are among other items that are commonly included in the kit. No matter how prepared you are, accidents can still happen. Therefore, remember to check the coverage of your medical insurance and how you can access medical care abroad.

Nowadays, many people are staying abroad for a few months to visit their relatives. As my patients ask me for health advice before their trips, I usually remind them to bring along a hard copy of their medical records. The records may include the current medications, a summary of previous operations and drug allergy alerts.

I wish you all a pleasant journey and have fun exploring different cultures!



■ By Dr Leung Cheuk-yiu
General Practitioner at
Gleneagles Hospital Hong Kong
MB ChB (CUHK), MPH (UNSW),
DFM (HKCFP)

¹ Destinations | Travelers’ Health | CDC [Internet]. [cited 2023 Apr 25]. Available from: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

² Travel Health Service Yellow Fever [Internet]. [cited 2023 Apr 25]. Available from: https://www.travelhealth.gov.hk/english/faqs/yell_fever.html

³ Countries with risk of yellow fever transmission and countries requiring yellow fever vaccination (November 2022) [Internet]. [cited 2023 Apr 25]. Available from: [https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/countries-with-risk-of-yellow-fever-transmission-and-countries-requiring-yellow-fever-vaccination-\(november-2022\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/countries-with-risk-of-yellow-fever-transmission-and-countries-requiring-yellow-fever-vaccination-(november-2022))

17TH CENTURY DUTCH ENTREPRENEURS RESHAPING FORT KOCHI, KERALA, INDIA

As someone of Dutch heritage, married to an Indian woman, the Dutch connection to Fort Kochi's history has personal significance.

Fort Kochi's location on the Arabian Sea made it an attractive destination for foreign traders, attracting Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonialism. The Dutch influence can be seen in the town's architecture, in the beautiful Dutch-style houses still standing today. These houses feature distinctive gables and red-tiled roofs, and many of them have been converted into hotels and guesthouses, offering visitors a glimpse into the town's colonial past.

The Dutch played a significant role in shaping Fort Kochi's history when they established a trading post here for spices and in particular pepper. Cultural anthropologist, Dr Bauke Van Der Pol says the Dutch were purely commercial whereas the Portuguese were more religious. If you visit Fort Kochi, take in the Dutch Palace which was taken from the Portuguese in 1663 and renovated. The David Hall is another restored Dutch home now hosting art exhibitions and the best pizza in town. And sample Fort Kochi's very own *bruder* bread-dark brown in colour with a sprinkling of raisins tastes just like in the Netherlands. And Burgher Street, which now hosts the famous Kashi Art Café, was home to those that did not work for the Dutch East India Co as its definition suggests 'free from their landlord'.

But Fort Kochi is not just a town of historical significance.



It is also famous for its natural beauty, and it is often referred to as "God's Own Country." The state is home to some of the most breathtaking landscapes in India, from the misty hills of Munnar to the serene backwaters of Alleppey and the wonderful migratory birds documented by Dr Salim Ali. Fort Kochi has a vibrant art scene and hosts India's only Biennale in 2024/25 - not to be missed.

One cannot overlook the famed Keralan cuisine, with its blend of spices, coconut oil, and fresh seafood, which makes it a must-try for any foodie. One of my favourite things is slowly enjoying a full vegetarian Keralan Sadya consisting of over 25 small dishes...

But for me, the real beauty of Kerala lies in its people. The locals are warm and welcoming, always eager to share their culture and traditions with visitors. Whether you're strolling through the bustling streets of Fort Kochi or exploring the quiet villages in the countryside, you'll find that the people of Kerala are always ready to offer a smile and a friendly greeting.

The fact that the Dutch played such an important role in the development of this town, and indeed this entire region, is a testament to the adventurous spirit and entrepreneurialism of my ancestors. And as I walk through the streets of Fort Kochi, taking in the sights and sounds of this vibrant town, I can't help but feel a sense of excitement that all the cultures in my life have collided at this point. Fort Kochi is a town that is rich in history, culture, cuisine and natural beauty. From the Dutch-style houses to the palm-lined beaches, there is something here for everyone to enjoy.



■ By Don van de Pol
Resort Owner & Business Coach
www.indiansummerhouse.co

MY JOURNEY THROUGH CHANGING CHINA

As an entrepreneur in China with over twenty years of experience, including five years of residing in Shanghai, I have witnessed an impressive transformation in the Chinese transport landscape.

Despite my home base being in the Netherlands, we maintain close ties with China through our head office in Shanghai and other branches. We offer a range of quality control services for businesses sourcing from China.

A Journey Through China's Transport Evolution

My journey began in a time when China's transport system was primitive, characterised by limited connections and frequent delays. Over the years, this system has evolved into an efficient, modern network seamlessly connecting every corner of this vast nation.

One remarkable aspect of this transport revolution is the development of the road network. New highways have transformed long-distance travel into comfortable experiences. The quality of these roads and their associated infrastructure has left a lasting impression on me.

China's railway network has seen similar growth, with high-speed trains reaching up to 350 km/h. These trains have made rail travel a popular and efficient option, allowing me to easily reach cities like Beijing, Guangzhou, and Chengdu.

China's aviation sector has also been transformed, with modern airports and an increase in the number of domestic and international flights. These developments have given me the opportunity to explore China in a new way.



Revolution in Urban Transport

Urban transport has also undergone a revolutionary change. Advanced metros have provided commuters and visitors with an efficient way to get around the city. Although I often preferred taxis, thanks to user-friendly Chinese apps, the urban transport network has left a significant impression on me with its modernity and integration.

Sustainability and Innovation

China's transport revolution encompasses more than infrastructure. Sustainability plays a significant role, with an increasing number of electric vehicles on the road. Bike-sharing programs and app-based transport services offer innovative solutions for a more efficient and sustainable transport ecosystem.

Quality Control China and More

As the owner of Quality Control China, I understand the significance of reliable and efficient transport links for businesses. The improvements in China's infrastructure have tremendously boosted our efforts in ensuring quality control and risk management, opening up more opportunities for collaboration.

Conclusion

The transformation of China's transport system over the past decades is remarkable. These changes have contributed to economic growth, regional integration, and improved quality of life. Despite the travel restrictions and limitations due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I have always remained eager to return to China. I look forward to once again walking the bustling streets of Shanghai, and enjoying the diverse and engaging transport opportunities the country offers.



■ By Ties Coolen
Owner of Quality Control (QC) China
www.qcchina.nl

DISCOVER ASIA'S HISTORIC DISTRICTS THROUGH THE LENS OF LOCALS

In many of Asia's historic districts, family-run businesses and long-time residents are struggling to survive, while at the same time, travellers are looking for an authentic experience.



So, why not tap into locals' insider knowledge to find these unique places and put them on a map? iDiscover packages community intelligence into handcrafted neighbourhood walking itineraries and illustrated maps for the most curious travellers.

The iDiscover website presents over 50 carefully curated self-guided city walks in more than 12 cities, created by locals who handpick sites and craft them into easily navigated routes. They know the places that are worth a detour. Not just the temples and monuments but also popular cafes, local hangouts and lesser-known sites. With different media - text, photo, audio and video - to choose from, it's a tool for travellers that are not the group tour type, like to explore at their own pace and feel like a local. Each digital route comes with a dedicated illustrated map, an artistic ode to the spirit of the place, designed by a local artist.

The iDiscover team works with schools, universities, NGOs and community groups in historic districts to map what matters to them and translate perspectives into story walks that take visitors far beyond the beaten path, through little-known backstreets and to unsung neighbourhoods. To see streets they've not yet walked down and find the hidden gems in the urban jungle through the eyes of people that call the city home.

The maps serve another purpose too. They help to amplify the voice of the local community, often the marginalised groups. This way iDiscover provides an inclusive, bottom-up process to promote responsible tourism, social cohesion and urban walkability. The iDiscover maps have also been used for planning and placemaking in old neighbourhoods, where they become a local depository of places needing more love and attention, a persuasive tool for a community to gain agency in shaping their urban future.

iDiscover also does a lot of educational programs: out-of-the-classroom learning projects, student field schools and summer internships. For example, the team is now working on a youth-led mapping and storytelling project in nine Dutch Fort cities along the Sri Lankan coast, including Colombo, Galle and Jaffna.

In Hong Kong, travellers can use iDiscover to explore authentic eateries along the tramline, walk the HK Island Coastal Trail, find artisan shops on Lamma Island or explore Sai Kung through the lens of HK Academy students. Some of our other favourite walking routes in the region include a street art walk in Macau, resident's stories in Galle Fort in Sri Lanka, city life along the Circular Railway Line in Yangon, Myanmar, student's top street food joints in Bangkok Creative District, and a cycling tour along family-run local eateries in Bali.

Note: iDiscover is a Hong Kong-registered charity. If you know of a school or NGO that would like to make a map of their neighbourhood, please reach out. Meanwhile, keep exploring, and try to get a little lost, without getting lost. Learn as you walk, support local businesses, communicate with cultural confidence, and explore like a true local.



By Ester van Steekelenburg
Charlot Teng

www.i-discoverasia.com



A PIECE OF DUTCH CERTAINTY

As an expat, you embark on an adventurous journey filled with fresh possibilities and challenges. But in all this excitement, there is often one aspect that is overlooked: the need for suitable health insurance.

There is a partner who comprehends what you, as an expat, require: OOM Insurance. In this piece, we have a conversation with Chantal Deen, a manager at this insurance company based in Rijswijk.

■ By Zuba Adham-Bos

What sets your insurance products apart from “standard insurance” or travel insurance?

We provide health insurance specifically tailored for Dutch nationals who long for a piece of Dutch certainty, no matter the length of their stay abroad. To understand the situation well, we regularly visit our clients and hospitals to understand healthcare provision in the country. By investing time in on-site visits, we interact directly with doctors and specialists in both public and private hospitals, giving us first-hand insight into the healthcare systems. If possible, we also try to spend time with our insured clients, to listen to their challenges and their experiences. We collect this information and incorporate it into our insurance plans wherever possible. This helps us provide our clients with accurate information about the best healthcare services locally.

We fully comprehend that a stay in a public hospital in Hong Kong is not the same as in the Netherlands. And, it's comforting to communicate with someone in your native language when you need assistance. Especially at those moments when things can be hectic, we are there to take care and assist you with your insurance. Even if you return to the Netherlands for a family visit or vacation to another

country, you remain insured with us during that period. Our policies don't put a cap on the reimbursement of healthcare costs. We cover the cost price, essentially what it costs in the respective country.

What challenges do Dutch expats encounter abroad concerning insurance? And how do you address these challenges?

The kind of health insurance - and other insurances - that we have in the Netherlands isn't as common in other countries. When you emigrate, you deregister in the Netherlands, and by doing so, you forfeit your rights to health insurance in the Netherlands. The countries that have a similar health insurance system to ours can be counted on your fingers. Experience shows that Dutch people prefer the same kind of care they're accustomed to back home. For instance, we often hear that Dutch people working in Hong Kong have local health insurance provided by their employers, but it's not sufficient. Besides, cultural differences can come into play. Services like physiotherapy or midwifery, which are commonplace in the Netherlands, may not be as common in Asia.





Could you share a success story where your product made a significant positive impact on a customer?

There was a case of a Dutch couple residing in Los Angeles, America, with their daughter. Their daughter was born prematurely at 27 weeks and spent 101 days in the neonatology ward. At such uncertain and stressful times, you want the medical care to be top-notch and you wouldn't want to worry about the administrative aspects. The final bill amounted to 1.7 million US dollars. This case underlines the importance of having thorough insurance that not only provides a maximum coverage amount but covers the actual treatment costs in the country. The child is almost two years old now, and this is a story we at OOM Insurance won't easily forget.



Looking ahead, what are your plans for the further development of your products/services?

Our products are becoming increasingly tailored to the individual. You could almost say they are becoming bespoke. No longer is it a world where insurers dictate coverage. We literally visit OOM clients everywhere from New York to Hong Kong to ask what they feel is missing in their coverage or insurance. Personalisation is definitely a growing focus for us. We believe it's essential for our customers to have clarity about what they're insured for and to get quick and efficient assistance when needed. This is an ongoing improvement process. The world around us continues to evolve, and so do the needs of our clients. We insure people with unique stories and strive to ensure that our insurance products align with the customer's situation. We want them to carry a piece of Dutch assurance with them, no matter where they choose to live in the world.

Is there something specific you would like to share with the audience in Hong Kong?

It's crucial to be aware of what happens to your insurance when you decide to move to, or if you're already living in, another country. When you're emigrating, insurance often isn't your top priority. Finding the nearest school or the best route to the supermarket or a charming restaurant usually takes precedence; insurance tends to be an afterthought. However, wherever you go, you take your health with you. Take some time to review your insurance, even if it's just an hour. Make sure you fully understand what costs you're able to and willing to bear and which unforeseen incidents you want to be adequately covered.

A THEORETICAL WEALTH

When Hong Kong was returned to China during the Handover in 1997, this also impacted the existing land ownership rights system that existed.



Since 1997 almost all land in Hong Kong has been owned by the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Chief Executive of Hong Kong, acting on behalf of the Government of the Hong Kong SAR, has the power to lease and grant state land to the public for ownership for a limited period of time (legally defined as "leasehold" land).

In other words, a land "owner" actually leases the land from the Government but the relevant lease period can be very long, 50 years or more. Even the property developers never own their land but have paid for long-duration rights to develop and exploit the lands.

There is a reason that I wrote "almost" all the land in Hong Kong is owned by the PRC. There is one, and only one, notable exception: St John's Cathedral on Garden Road in Central.

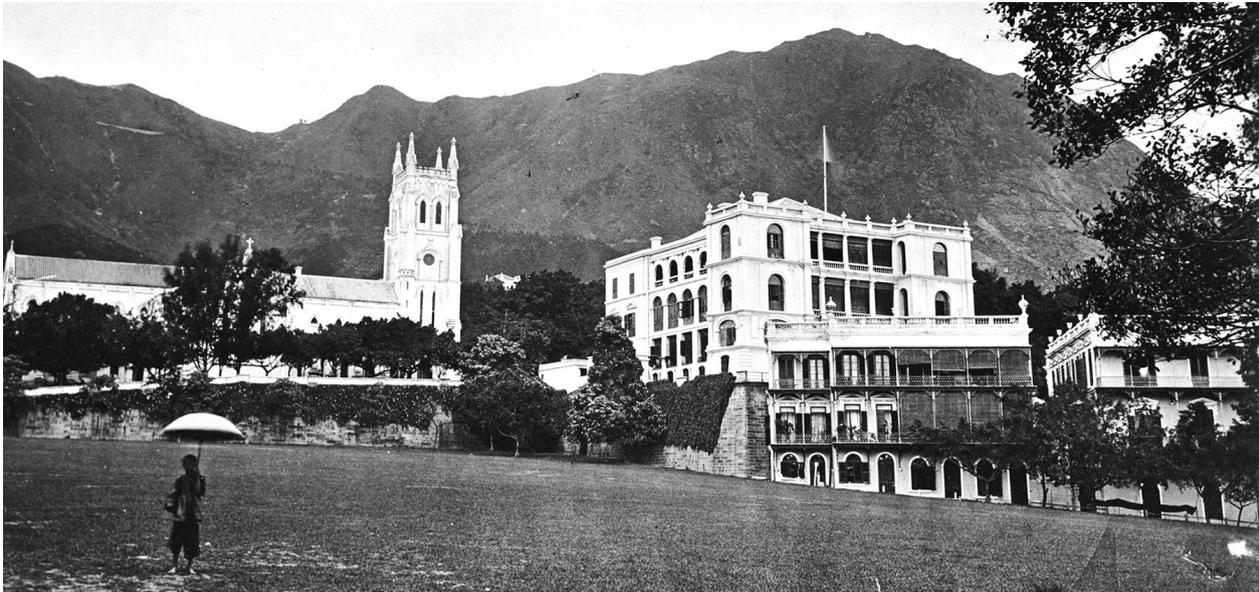
The plot of land which is 53,147 square feet (or almost 5,000 m²) is the only "freehold lease" in Hong Kong, meaning that it is owned exclusively by a non-government entity. The owner is, in fact, the Church of England, headquartered in

London, making it the only still-existing British piece of land in Hong Kong, twenty-six years after the Handover!

The history dates back to 1847, when Queen Victoria declared that she would provide the Church of England a freehold lease to ensure that British Anglicans would always have a place to worship, as well as to ensure that Hong Kong remained very British in religion and in culture.

This freehold lease ensured that the St. John's Cathedral can exist as a non-government-owned land, in perpetuity, under the condition that the land must be continually used for ecclesiastical purposes. This was later codified in Hong

Today, St. John's Cathedral is the oldest surviving Western ecclesiastical building in Hong Kong and the oldest Anglican church east of Jerusalem.



St John's Cathedral in the 19th century

Kong law in 1930 in the now-Church of England Trust Ordinance. It ensures that the cathedral will continue to remain in the possession of its trustees for as long as the land remains in the hands of the Church of England.

During the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong (1941-1945), the cathedral was converted into a social club for the Japanese. Many of the original fittings and all Christian imagery were stripped out, including the original stained-glass windows. The clergy were all interned in Stanley, where they continued to hold mass for the prisoners.

The Cathedral itself, built in English 13th century gothic style, was built by local labour and completed in 1849. The first church service was held on Sunday, 11 March 1849, when it was named "Hong Kong Colonial Chapel". Only in 1852 was it consecrated as St John's Cathedral.

Today, St. John's Cathedral is the oldest surviving Western ecclesiastical building in Hong Kong and the oldest Anglican church east of Jerusalem. It is also certainly the



most valuable piece of land that the Church of England owns in the world. The average price per square meter for a Grade A location in Central in 2022 was HKD 410,515, according to Hong Kong government statistics. This makes the Cathedral and lands worth over HKD 2 bln (or EUR 230 mln).

But on the other hand, if the Church of England were ever to sell the lands to the HK government, the perpetual freehold lease rights would be lost, and the Church would depend on the government to find suitable alternatives to lease. The wealth is therefore purely hypothetical, as the sale will never happen, notwithstanding the dreams of all the property developers!



St John's Cathedral



■ By Daniël de Blocq van Scheltinga
Managing Director at Polarwide Ltd
www.polarwide.com

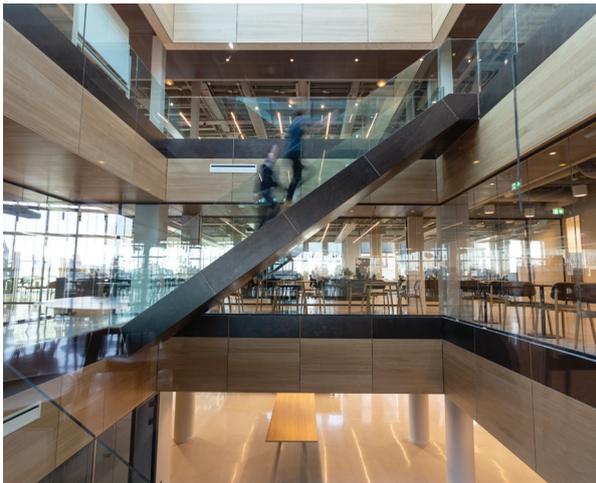
TAXATION OF HOLIDAY JOURNEY BENEFITS & OTHER FRINGE BENEFITS

Besides salaries and bonuses, Hong Kong employers may offer fringe benefits like holiday journey benefits, share options, and retirement benefits to motivate employees. However, employees might not receive the full amount of benefits due to salaries tax.

General tax rules

Hong Kong tax laws require employees to pay taxes on their income, including but not limited to salary, bonus, and benefits, unless specific tax exemptions apply. A benefit is generally tax-exempt if the following two conditions can be met:

1. The employer is solely responsible for paying a third party for the benefit, for example if the employer signs up for club membership to give their employees access to club benefits.
2. The benefit cannot be converted into money or money's worth.



Holiday journey benefits

Holiday journey benefits do not follow the above tax exemption rule. If an employer offers holiday journey benefits to its employee, the employee must pay taxes on the amount paid by the employer, regardless of who is responsible for the payment and if the benefit can be converted into money or money's worth.

The Inland Revenue Department (IRD) will determine if a trip is business or holiday-related according to the IRD's Departmental Interpretation and Practice Notes No. 41. For example, in case a holiday is merely incidental to a business trip, the benefit will potentially be non-taxable.

If an employer pays for an employee's travel when they relocate to or from Hong Kong for work, then the payment is not taxable. However, annual trips home provided to expatriates are regarded as holiday purpose and thus taxable.

Share option/award benefits

Share option/award benefits are generally regarded by the IRD as taxable. When an employee exercises share options or receives share awards, they must pay taxes on the share-based benefits. Specific rules exist for calculating gains. If the employment is a non-Hong Kong sourced employment (e.g. the employer being a non-Hong Kong resident), some share-based benefits might be tax-exempt depending on factors like grant date and vesting period.

Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) contributions

In Hong Kong, employers and employees must contribute to a pension scheme like MPF unless exempted. In addition, they can also make voluntary contributions to the MPF scheme. If an employee permanently leaves Hong Kong, the employer's mandatory contribution to MPF is tax-exempt. Voluntary contributions may be non-taxable if the employee worked with the employer for 10 years or more. Be aware of foreign income tax when leaving Hong Kong. For example, a Dutch person returning to the Netherlands might have to pay taxes on funds withdrawn from MPF. It could be more efficient to withdraw funds before leaving Hong Kong.

Figuring out the taxability of fringe benefits and the taxable amount is not always straightforward. Tax relief or credit under double tax treaties might reduce the tax burden. If needed, consult a tax lawyer for advice.



■ By Willem Jan Hoogland

David Lo ■

HKWJ Tax Law & Partners Limited
www.hkwj-taxlaw.hk



TRAVELLING IN A GREEN WORLD

As you might expect, the Green Ideal has also struck the travel world. This concerns travel, the type of transport, hotels, and the like.



Green resorts are “in”, accompanied by healthy eating, lots of exercise, organic ingredients and, above all, thinking about whether you still want to fly, a rewarding theme for those who do not renounce to make us understand that we are not doing so well.

Well, if you look a little further and think outside the box, you will see all sorts of ways to travel, just type “travel in a green world” on YouTube, and a world will open for you.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, 8-10% of global CO₂ emissions are caused by the travel and tourism sector, with most of these emissions coming from travel to the destination. And unfortunately, these numbers will only get bigger as more people start travelling; unless we consciously do something about it.

Eco-friendly travel focuses on minimising the impact on the local environment and communities. It’s about choosing ways that are sustainable and environmentally friendly.

But how do you find out that you are doing well and have not been gardened by companies that call themselves very eco-friendly, but are not? The term here is Greenwashing. Ideally, any company that offers ‘green travel’ could back that up with actions and results. Unfortunately, that is not (yet) the world we live in.

Here are some tips:

1. Choose sustainable destinations
2. Choose a place that will benefit from your visit
3. Think about what you pack
4. Choose green accommodation
5. Choose sustainable modes of transportation
6. Eat, stay, and shop locally

Just a few to mention. And if you want to go far, and you need to travel by plane, try to find an airline that is making efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions, by using more and more biofuel, for example. It’s easier than you think, don’t be perfect, just try....

A few words about resistance to a new world. Often people say: “I am only one person, what difference would it make?”. If this person is the only one, they are correct. But let me give you some numbers because we all should embrace the idea:

According to research carried out by Booking.com, 78% of travellers say they intend to stay in a more sustainable property in the coming year – yet 29% don’t know how to find sustainable travel options.

So, saying all this, what can I do myself? Well, in June we plan to visit Berlin, Germany. And we will travel by train. The car can be cheaper, but our footprint is much better if we take the train. We stay in an eco-friendly hotel. In September we aim to travel to the north of Spain. This time by fuel-efficient car (unfortunate lack of charging stations for EVs), as flying is not a good option, and unfortunately, international train connections are not yet all up to speed.... We try, do you?



■ By Bernard Scheffens
CEO at WSS Asia Ltd
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TRAVEL IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA

“Checkerboard Hill” –aka Kowloon Tsai Hill, once an integral part of Hong Kong’s Kai Tak Airport

In the previous edition’s Chairman’s note, our chair announced the recent resumption of non-stop flights between Amsterdam and Hong Kong by national flag carrier and Dutch Chamber Gold Member KLM. A magnanimous, and presumably much needed, gesture which immediately begs the question whether the French Chamber would see fit to follow suit - and of course, whether other gold sponsors will now look for a similar helping hand to kick-start their Covid-impaired businesses.

Just prior to the onset of Covid-19, flights between mainland China and Hong Kong, in particular from Beijing and Shanghai, showed a pattern familiar to those travelling in the late 1980s and early 1990s – like Yours Truly. Frequent delays, more likely for late afternoon and evening flights, and therefore a significant risk of missing connections to European flights.

Who remembers sitting at the rear of the Lockheed Tristars with three engines directly overhead and to the side, causing the fillings to vibrate out of your teeth on take-off?

In fact, precisely such a missed connection represents one of my most vivid memories, in 1994, of Kai Tak airport - besides the obvious “sweaty-palm” landings with the 47-degree right-hand turn whilst already below rooftop level of the surrounding Kowloon City highrises.

Just having arrived on a Dragonair flight from Shanghai, I witnessed the KLM jumbo to Amsterdam I was meant to be on, taxiing the width of the terminal building in front of my eyes on its way to the runway. As if to rub it in, it seemed to move at snail’s pace, as was the sole Dragonair ground staff behind a transfer desk PC, the six (!) colleagues next to him giggling, but not lifting a finger.

The 36 hours I had in Eindhoven before my next flight to Madrid (and thence back to Hong Kong for important contract negotiations in Shenzhen) were reduced to a measly 12 hours, in which I now had to wash and dry all my laundry. Suffice it to say I was not impressed with the travel experience.

Whilst delays of this kind are inevitable as long as the current system of ultra-narrow flightpaths through mainland Chinese airspace and strict control by the Chinese military

of that airspace remain, mercifully some of the more obnoxious travel inconveniences have long gone: who remembers sitting at the rear of the Lockheed Tristars with three engines directly overhead and to the side, causing the fillings to vibrate out of your teeth on take-off? The bus rides in pouring rain for lack of sufficient airbridges? The really quite substandard Regal Airport hotel as it then was?

The late-night flights to Europe remain, although pre-Covid day flights to some destinations were available. That ended in early 2020 and it is good to see that airlines, even those slighted by the flight bans for carrying infected passengers, are now returning. We are not quite there yet: my daughter flew in for the Rugby Sevens on Saturday morning and returned to Boston on Sunday evening. In via Zurich and out via San Francisco, as there was only one direct flight a week...

Recently I refereed a rugby game at Kowloon Tsai sports ground for the first time. The checkerboard I saw right next to the grounds evoked more memories of nailbiting Kai Tak landings. When asked about the proximity of buildings, I replied: not close enough to read the subtitles, but sufficiently close to see one flat was watching a different channel from their neighbours!



■ By Ralph Ybema
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THE CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN CHINA

There is an old Chinese proverb, “Reading ten thousand books is not as good as travelling ten thousand miles”. It might be a cliché, but travelling can be a good way to learn more about a country’s social and economic development.



During the Easter holidays, I spent a splendid time in Huainan and Hefei, cities in the Anhui province of China. Geographically, both cities are close to other metropolises such as Nanjing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Wuhan. Today, China’s massive high-speed rail network not only significantly reduces travelling times but has also helped foster the development of urban towns. Modern apartment buildings, neighbourhood shopping centres and public utilities are commonly located near the train stations. Interestingly, unlike Shanghai and Wuhan, Huainan city seems to have little foreign investment.

During an authentic Tofu meal in Huainan, I was informed that the city is undergoing a digital transformation. Leading tech companies have been introduced and several high-tech development and economic zones will be developed in the coming years. Huainan was selected as one of the first batch pilot cities for China’s digitalised smart cities in 2013. Like many mainland cities, strategic companies and top-notch talent are offered competitive salaries and benefits packages by the local government. The local government would likely continue to support the implementation of relevant policies to help transform its economy further. Electronics, digital creative arts, new energy vehicles and new industrial materials are examples of key industries that the local government would like to develop.

But it is uncertain whether there will be an adequate supply of local talent. It is alarming that China’s birth rate fell to a record low of 6.77 per 1,000 people in 2022. The challenges of China’s failing birth rate have started

to surface at the county level. As the number of students in the countryside decreases, more schools are expected to close down in the coming years. Due to gloomy career prospects, enthusiastic young adults may be reluctant to work in Huainan or similar cities to serve as teachers. Teacher salaries and tuition fees are a serious problem in many primary and secondary schools.

Meanwhile, soaring education costs have also become a strain for young parents. In particular, it was reported that at least 4.37 million of China’s smallest businesses closed down permanently in 2021. It is possible that young parents that are struggling to pay for school fees and they are less likely to encourage their children to attend additional IT-related courses at an advanced level. In the long term, there is a huge STEM opportunity gap for underprivileged children. The local government should consider this problem seriously.

Even in the short term, competition between cities is growing. Many fresh graduates and talent are persuaded or pressured by their families to take jobs that are more secure. Big companies are more likely to offer job opportunities and higher salary positions in bigger cities such as Shenzhen, Guangzhou or Hangzhou. Competition is extremely intense among Chinese cities. It is an important task for the local government to set up unique policies that could attract leading or even foreign companies to continue to build on the economic momentum. As China’s leaders emphasise that innovation is the key to its economic future, there will be expectations around building more smart and sustainable cities. I am positive that there are still many business opportunities for both local and foreign companies to explore in Huainan and Hefei cities in the years ahead.



■ By Wing Lok Hung
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PASSING THE PEN

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Organisation: Hyva

Email: peter@cons-e-l.com

Who am I?

I was born and raised in Benthuizen, a Dutch town nestled between Zoetermeer and Alphen aan den Rijn. With a population of just 3600, it's where my roots lie. In 2001, my professional journey started at Hyva, a Dutch firm based in Alphen aan den Rijn. Hyva specialises in engineering, manufacturing, and selling hydraulic loading and unloading systems for the commercial vehicle industry, as well as waste handling equipment.

In 2004, my path veered towards China as I moved to Yangzhou to establish Hyva's telescopic cylinder factory. The incredible growth and numerous business opportunities kept me there for a compelling 13 years. My time in China was a whirlwind, marked by visits to hundreds of places, vibrant cultural experiences, and a firsthand observation of the country's rapid development.

Hong Kong became my home in 2016, where I currently reside with my wife and our 6-year-old son. The city's unique blend of Chinese and Western cultures, as well as its multinational inhabitants, captivate us. Here, I indulge in my love for sports, particularly boxing. I am an active member of the Verano Boxing Club, which operates under the professional guidance of coaches from the Philippines and Hong Kong. Contributing to this sporting community by helping organise events like the thrice-annual 'fight nights' is a pastime I cherish.

My educational background includes a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the Haagse Hogeschool. Furthermore, I recently completed the Executive Program in Management at Columbia Business School. Engaging with my diverse peers and learning from distinguished professors has enriched my professional life tremendously.



I moved to Hong Kong because:

My move to Hong Kong marked a pivotal change in my career as I took up the role of Managing Director for several Asian countries including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. My wife is also working in Hong Kong. We like Hong Kong for its multicultural environment, excellent connectivity within Asia, and its unrivalled public transport system - a stark contrast to my hometown's hourly bus schedule.

I work for:

I've worked at Hyva since 2001, witnessing its growth from a small firm with a revenue of Euro 35 million to a global player generating around Euro 700 million annually. In Hong Kong, it's rewarding to see our hydraulic telescopic cylinders at work in the city's commercial vehicles.

My most remarkable work story:

The highlights of my career include witnessing China's fast-paced growth, immersing myself in diverse cultures, and building a proficient team spread across Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and China. Meeting and working with other cultures in Asia is a great asset and I enjoy it every day.

I find most of my business contacts through:

I forge valuable business contacts through my existing network, trade missions, exhibitions, and events. These connections pave the way for exciting new opportunities.

One day I will be:

Having my retirement during the summers in the Netherlands and winters in Hong Kong.



THREE ASIAN LOCATIONS PERFECT FOR REMOTE WORKING

Whether you're a digital nomad, a professional seeking a shift from your work-from-home setup, or an entrepreneur aspiring to be inspired, Asia has an abundance of destinations that could be your next remote working hub.

We've curated a list of three locations that combine captivating natural beauty, reliable connectivity, and vibrant cultures, creating the perfect environments to spark productivity and exploration.

Chiang Mai, Thailand

Tucked away in the northern region of Thailand, Chiang Mai has become a beacon for remote workers over the last few years. Known for its lush landscapes, intricate temples, and slower pace of life, it offers an environment ripe for deep work and relaxation. The city brims with culture, allowing you to indulge in traditional Thai cooking classes or tranquil yoga sessions after a hard day's work.

Reliable high-speed internet is prevalent, with many co-working spaces offering 24/7 access to dedicated workstations. Nimman neighbourhood, with its quirky coffee shops and vegan eateries, is particularly popular among digital nomads. Chiang Mai's affordable cost of living is another big draw, allowing you to enjoy a quality lifestyle without breaking the bank.

Ubud, Bali, Indonesia

Amidst the lush rice terraces and Hindu temples of Ubud, Bali, you'll find a haven for remote workers seeking a mix of tranquillity and inspiration. Ubud is famed for its artistic and spiritual roots, allowing you to strike a balance between work and personal development.

The town boasts numerous co-working spaces, offering high-speed internet, ergonomic workstations, community-building activities, and networking events. These locations are often just a stone's throw away from cafes, yoga studios, and artisanal markets. Despite its popularity among tourists, Ubud retains a relatively low cost of living, making it



a sustainable choice for long-term remote working.

Busan, South Korea

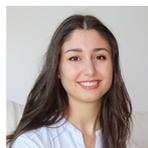
For those wanting a slice of cosmopolitan life while remote working, look no further than Busan. South Korea's second-largest city offers a blend of bustling city life, serene beaches, and scenic mountains, making it an ideal location for those who seek diversity in their surroundings.

The city is renowned for its world-class digital infrastructure, offering fast and reliable internet speeds. It boasts a rapidly growing number

of co-working spaces, catering to local and international remote workers. Busan's thriving expat community, and the locals' warm hospitality helps newcomers settle quickly.

Busan's food scene is another key highlight, offering you many delicious Korean dishes to explore, from street food to high-end restaurants. And for moments of relaxation, the Haeundae and Gwangalli beaches are perfect for unwinding after a productive day.

In summary, Chiang Mai, Ubud, and Busan offer unique yet equally appealing propositions for remote working. Each city provides robust digital connectivity, a vibrant culture, and opportunities for personal growth and relaxation alongside work. So, pack your laptop and embark on an enriching journey that redefines your work-life balance in the captivating landscapes of Asia.



■ By Zuba Adham-Bos
Editor of DutchCham Magazine
[linkedin.com/in/zubaadham](https://www.linkedin.com/in/zubaadham)

DUTCHCHAM MEMBER SURVEY 2023 - KEY OUTCOMES

The re-opening of Hong Kong and China earlier this year was an opportune moment to take stock of the status of the Dutch Chamber and Hong Kong as a business location. Therefore, we developed a survey and circulated this among our member base. Your response was collected in March and April of 2023.

The main topics covered in the survey were: membership satisfaction, events and communication, business landscape of Hong Kong and Greater Bay Area (GBA) attractiveness.

In this piece, the main outcomes of the survey are summarised and several follow-up actions are outlined. Let me take this opportunity to thank our members for their responses and detailed feedback. We take your input on board as we navigate the Chamber into a new era of growth and business opportunities.

Methodology

In total, we received 41 completed questionnaires from our members. This represents a significant sample of the population and therefore allows us to have a good picture of our member base. Most of the responses came from members who have been members of the Dutch Chamber for 6 or more years.

As shown in Figure 1 below, the financial industry represents a sizable segment in the member base – around half of the respondents are directly (e.g. banking) or indirectly (e.g. consultancy and accountancy) active in this industry.

Membership satisfaction

DutchCham members are generally highly positive about the Chamber membership: we are grateful that 72% of the respondents gave us a score of 8 or higher (see Figure 2). That gives us confidence we are on the right track. Some specific comments about services for certain topics (e.g. GBA, ESG) and/or segments (e.g. sourcing) we will further work on. One element on which participants were particularly satisfied were our events – in terms of event quality, topics, speakers and networking opportunities. Increased collaboration with other Chambers was seen as a positive development, boosting the possibilities for matchmaking and attracting speakers & sponsors. The main benefits of a membership are: networking, spotting business opportunities, staying up-to-date or purely social reasons.

Business landscape of Hong Kong & Greater Bay Area

Over 90% of the survey participants remain confident in Hong Kong as a business location (see Figure 3) – they are not planning to leave Hong Kong and/or their business will continue to be located here. A much smaller percentage is

Figure 1: Industry type

What type of industry are you or your company in?

41 responses

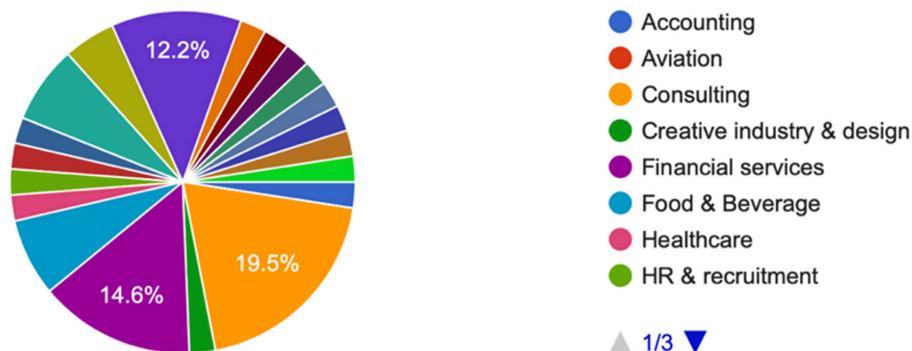


Figure 2: Overall satisfaction DutchCham Membership

How satisfied are you in general with the overall performance of DutchCham?

40 responses

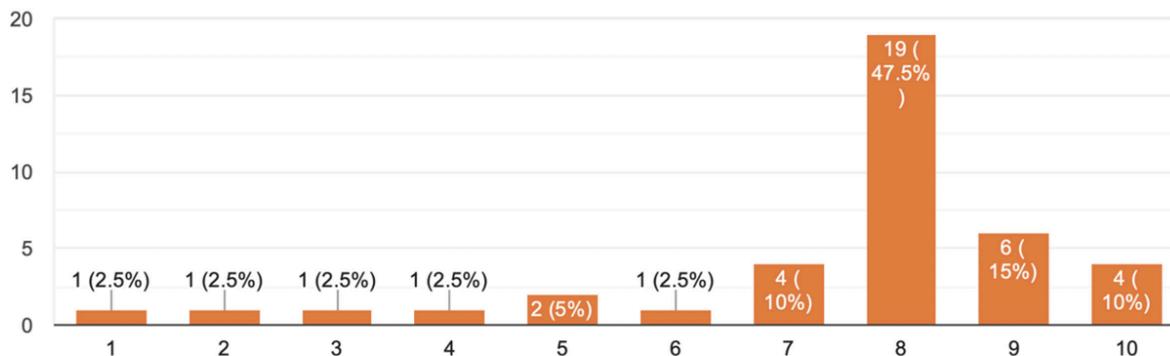
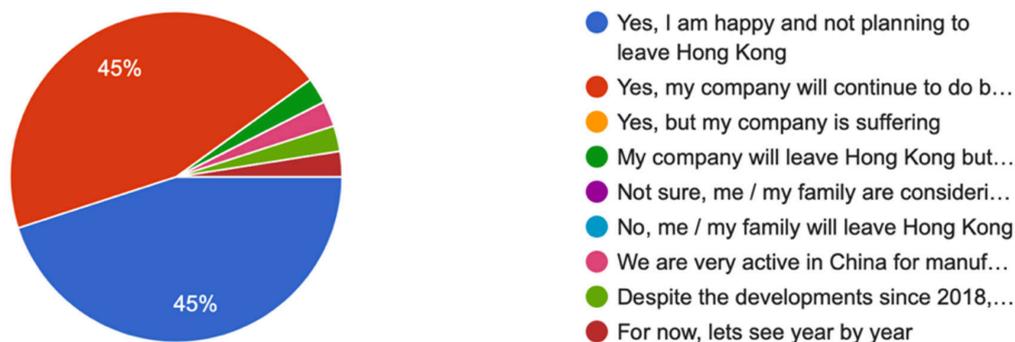


Figure 3: Confidence in Hong Kong as a business location

Are you still confident in Hong Kong as a location for you / your business?

40 responses



leaving the city for family reasons or looking at the situation year-by-year. Regarding the attractiveness of the Greater Bay Area (GBA): around 52% of the members are very interested in doing business in/with the GBA. The other half is more sceptical or does not have sufficient information to assess the opportunities.

Follow-up actions

The survey outcomes have been discussed with the Board of Directors and the Advisory Board (AB). We thank our AB for their constructive comments and feedback. Based on the survey, we will strive for even more high-quality/content-driven events – where possible together with partner chambers or stakeholders. We continue to broaden our network of chambers and organisations, creating new opportunities for matchmaking and content. The GBA is

a topic on which there is a need for more information. A review will be conducted on membership pricing, including a benchmark study with other chambers. Finally, our marketing and communication strategy will transition to digital channels – allowing our members to be informed more comprehensively and timely. Do not hesitate to approach us in case of further suggestions or comments; we are here for you!



By Tom Bakker
General Manager at Dutch Chamber of
Commerce Hong Kong
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Event photos



12 April
Joint Chambers Happy Hour



18 April
Munch with a Member



3 May
Joint Chambers Happy Hour



18 May
New Members Lunch



31 May
How to Build a Brand



1 June
ESG Reporting From Desire to Reality



2 June
Tax Breakfast



13 June
Creative Mixer



14 June
Economic Outlook China



14 June
Tax Summer Cocktail



21 June
Rabobank Herring Party by
SeafoodFriday



21 June
Rabobank Herring Party by
SeafoodFriday



21 June
Rabobank Herring Party by
SeafoodFriday



27 June
Travelling in the Greater Bay Area

NEW MEMBERS

Mr. Edwin Perée

Associate Membership

Ms. Floor Sougé

Young Professional

Ms. Suutwah Tang

Young Professional

Mr. Brian Blömer from Moore – MS Advisory

Corporate Membership

Mr. Mark Scholz

Associate Membership

Mr. Guru Balasubramaniam

Associate Membership

Ms. Wendi Xu from Hengeveld Consultancy Limited

Start-up Membership

Mr. Philippe Holthuizen from FUSED Footwear

Start-up Membership

Mr. Pieter Deconingh from Tidalis APAC Limited

Corporate Membership

Mr. Mike Spaan

Young Professional

Mr. Guang Ming Luo

Young Professional

We are an independent, member-driven, non-governmental, non-profit business association which serves to facilitate business in Hong Kong and Greater China for its members by providing networking, knowledge sharing and company profiling opportunities.

As the representative body of Dutch business in Hong Kong, we maintain close relationships with both the Dutch and the Hong Kong SAR governments.

DutchCham Gold Members



Membership & Annual fees

- Gold Member HK\$ 20,000
- Corporate Member HK\$ 8,500
- SME Member HK\$ 3,500
- Associate Member HK\$ 3,500
- Young Professional HK\$ 750
- Start-up Member HK\$ 1,750
- Overseas Member HK\$ 2,500

Joining fee waived for 2023

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Young Professional Committee



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