

Summary Report

Tourists Conclude: Great harbour; Hard to get to, Little to do—Easy to fix.

Hong Kong, 27 February 2008 – Four visiting students published a study today called ‘Four Tourists and Hong Kong’s Harbourfront’.

The study was conducted on behalf of Designing Hong Kong and the Harbour Business Forum. It involved the students walking to each section of the waterfront from its closest transport hub or MTR station and rating the section. The students surveyed Victoria Harbour’s entire 100 kilometer waterfront over a period of eight weeks.

In the study report, Michael Hyde, Sean Seymour, Daniel Tennant, and Minh Truong from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts, USA, describe their experience as tourists. They also outline how they rated accessibility and vibrancy, their recommendations for improving the harbour, and what the best routes are for walking along the waterfront.

“The challenge was simple, but our experience was horrible,” they explained. “Most sections of the waterfront are very hard to find unless you are a native. We often got lost as we tried to find our way through shopping malls, dead-end sidewalks, and confusing tunnels and foot bridges. With only a few exceptions, we found nothing to eat or drink on the waterfront and no public toilets. This made it uncomfortable to stay and enjoy the spectacular views of the skyline and marine traffic.”

The study rates 17 different waterfront areas based on ease of access, available activities once there, aesthetic quality, and popularity. According to the study report, the four best waterfronts are Tsing Yi, Shau Kei Wan, Wan Chai and Tsimshatsui. The four worst are Kwun Tong, North Point, Cheung Sha Wan, and Sheung Wan.

The study finds that although Hong Kong boasts several excellent waterfronts, tourists face challenges trying to get to and enjoy them. Routes to waterfronts from public transportation hubs are often poorly marked or maintained. Adjacent waterfronts are not well-connected to each other, and visitors must deviate inland in their travels, increasing their chances of becoming disoriented.

The study also finds that while some good waterfronts are unpopular because they are difficult to access, other, more easily-accessible waterfronts are poorly designed and maintained. Promenades often lack restrooms or places to buy food and drink, discouraging visitors from enjoying the harbour for long periods of time.

The study concludes that waterfronts can be made more popular by ensuring that food, drinks, and restrooms are available for people who come to enjoy the view. Waterfronts can also become tourist attractions by improving their accessibility and maintenance. The study further says that allowing pets, games, street vendors, and other activities will help waterfronts become more popular among both residents and visitors.

The study offers ten key recommendations to improve the waterfronts around Victoria Harbour:

1. Designing a good signage system to direct people to the waterfront will keep visitors from getting lost or frustrated.
2. Creating street-level access routes and zebra crossings between the waterfront and nearby transportation will reduce their disorientation.
3. Removing fences and opening up links between promenades will allow visitors to explore the different districts along the harbour.
4. Widening pedestrian walkways and providing additional zebra crossings will increase the safety of visitors on foot.
5. Replacing chain-link fences with railings will make areas more pleasant and help visitors feel more connected to the harbour.
6. Replacing cement or dirt flooring with patterned-brick walkways and maintaining greenery will improve the waterfront's aesthetic quality.
7. Constructing restrooms, kiosks for food and drink, or restaurants with alfresco dining will entice visitors to go to the waterfront, bring friends, and stay longer.
8. Allowing street vendors and market activities along promenades will make the waterfront more interesting to tourists.
9. Allowing people to walk dogs or fish along the waterfront by legalizing current uses will attract more locals, who in turn will attract more visitors.
10. Publishing walking routes to the harbour specifying the views and activities along each waterfront will entice more visitors to visit Victoria Harbour.

For more information about Designing Hong Kong, please visit www.designinghongkong.com . For more information about Harbour Business Forum, please visit www.harbourbusinessforum.com .

For more information about 'Four Tourists and Hong Kong's Harbourfront' you can contact info@designinghongkong.com or brenda@bec.org.hk .

Ratings of Hong Kong's Harbourfront*

Kowloon	Accessibility	Activity	Quality	Popularity	Total
Tsing Yi	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	11
Tsimshatsui	★	★★	★★★	★★★	9
Lei Yue Mun	★★	★★	★★	★★	8
West Kowloon Cultural District	★	★★	★★★	★	7
Hung Hom	★	★	★★★	★★	7
Tsuen Wan	★★★	★	★★	★	7
Tai Kok Tsui	★	★	★★	-	4
Cheung Sha Wan	★★★	-	-	-	3
Kwun Tong	★	-	-	-	1
H.K. Island	Accessibility	Activity	Quality	Popularity	Total
Wan Chai HKCEC and Dog Park	★★	★★	★★★	★★★	10
Shau Kei Wan	★★	★★	★★★	★★	9
Quarry Bay Park	★	★★	★★★	★★	8
Central Ferry Piers	★★	★	★★★	★★	8
Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter	★	★★	★	★★	6
Kennedy Town	★	★	★	★	4
Sheung Wan	★	★	-	★	3
North Point Ferry Piers	★★	-	-	-	2

* Areas with inaccessible waterfronts (zero-star accessibility ratings) were not surveyed and are not listed in the table above. These areas include Kwai Chung, Yau Ma Tei, Kai Tak, and Admiralty.

Each of the waterfront areas around Victoria Harbour is rated against four criteria. Each of these criteria is in turn rated from zero to three stars. The overall ranking of each waterfront is based on its total number of stars.

- **Accessibility** was determined by comparing data collected from the survey to international sidewalk standards, including the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Greater London Authority's Planning Standards. A zero-star rating denotes no access to the waterfront. One star denotes poor, excessively long, or roundabout access, while two stars denotes moderate access that may lack signage. A three-star rating represents a well-maintained and direct route from public transportation to the waterfront, with clear signage and few barriers. Areas that are completely inaccessible (zero stars) were not surveyed for the report.
- **Activity** was determined by the number and variety of possible activities on the waterfront. These included viewing the harbour, using convenience facilities or dining opportunities, walking pets, fishing, as well as any other potential visitor or local activities. A zero-star activity rating denotes no activity on the waterfront aside from harbour views, which are always present. A one-star rating denotes very few activities, while a two-star rating denotes a moderate number of available things to do. A three-star activity rating represents a waterfront that supports a wide variety of distinct activities for visitors throughout the day. Areas that are completely inaccessible were not surveyed or rated for activity.
- **Quality** was determined by the aesthetic and developmental value of a section of the waterfront, including such aspects as sidewalk design, greenery, lighting, and fencing. A zero-star quality rating represents a waterfront without maintained greenery or footpaths; with rusted, obtrusive, dangerous, or absent fencing; and with lots of rubbish or other debris. A one-star rating denotes a waterfront with a promenade that is not well maintained, but still safe and open for public use. A two-star rating denotes a promenade that is clean and mostly well-maintained, but may not be attractive or inviting to visitors. A three-star quality rating represents a promenade that is clean, beautiful, wide, has safe but visually pleasing railings, and is inviting to visitors. Areas that are completely inaccessible were not surveyed or rated for quality.
- **Popularity** was determined by the number of the people actively using a section of the waterfront at different times throughout the week. A zero-star popularity rating represents an empty waterfront or a waterfront containing only a handful of visitors along its length. A one-star rating denotes a waterfront with a constant population scattered thinly over its length. A two-star rating denotes a waterfront with a continuous and noticeable presence of visitors, but that is nevertheless failing to meet its obvious potential. A three-star popularity rating represents a waterfront that is constantly busy through most of the day. Three-star waterfronts are not necessarily packed with visitors, but simply fulfilling their potential to attract people to their lengths. Areas that are completely inaccessible were not surveyed or rated for popularity.