

Somehow in the fast moving world of tourism the world's most visited city stands still

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When discussing the world's most visited place, it seems that whether you are talking about the past, present or future the city doesn't change. Paris you say, or perhaps London or Rome?

Not by a long way. Recently Hong Kong again took the title of the world's most visited city in Euromonitor's annual Top 100 City Destinations Ranking – for the ninth consecutive year.

Hong Kong has claimed the title with **30 million international** visitors in 2018. London hangs in third place, with just under 21 million international tourists expected, Paris, with 16.9 million, and Rome, with 9.7 million are far behind and must make do with sixth place and 15th place, respectively.

How can this be? In part Hong Kong remains the top city in the world as it benefits from its strategic geographic location and relationship with China, boosting not just leisure tourism but also business visitors with commercial trading links.

It will be helped too by a uptick in visitor numbers expected, especially from the mainland, due to two new cross-border transport links that opened last year, making access between mainland China and Hong Kong even easier. The first of these transport links is the world's longest sea bridge connecting Hong Kong, Zhuhai, and Macau. The second is an express rail link to Guangzhou (a city with a mere 13 million residents).

Generally though it is obvious why tourists might be attracted to the city. Hong Kong is known for its incredible atmosphere – it really is an Eastern New York, a city that never sleeps. Combining Eastern and Western cultures across 263 islands, this exotic blend of marine culture, rural greenery, mountains and impressive skyscrapers helped make Hong Kong the world's most visited city last year.

Despite standing still in the rankings, in many respects Hong Kong is actually achieving that by evolving. The ranking showed that six out of the top 10 most visited cities are in Asia, with Hong Kong and Bangkok as the top two performers and with Singapore, Macau, Kuala Lumpur and Shenzhen in the global top 10. More generally, Asia continues its rise, accounting for 41 out of the top 100 cities globally in 2018, up by four.

This is why at Hotelbeds we have been had a deep presence in Asia Pacific for many years, with a hub office in Singapore and over 200 employees just in China. In fact, the Chinese source market for us is our fourth biggest globally – and many of those Chinese travellers are visiting Hong Kong.

Let's see what new things this forthcoming year is bound to bring us in the world of tourism. But if the past is a reliable indicator of the future, it really would seem that for some years to come all paths will lead to Hong Kong.

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