

MAC Travel Advisory for Taiwanese Persons Visiting Hong Kong and Macau during Lunar New Year Holiday

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The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) states that Hong Kong and Macau have always been popular oversea destinations for Taiwanese traveler, and that as the peak tourist season approaches with the nine-day Lunar New Year holiday this year (2013), Taiwanese people traveling to Hong Kong during the period should use Hong Kong's free online service to apply for pre-arrival registration. The MAC also advises travelers not to bring stun guns or other controlled items when traveling to Hong Kong or Macau, and that in events of emergency, travelers could request help from Taiwan representative offices in Hong Kong and Macau.

The MAC indicates that, in response to requests by the Taiwan side, the Hong Kong government implemented measures on September 1, 2012 to allow Taiwanese travelers to apply for pre-arrival registration through a free online system. Qualified travelers no longer need to apply for pre-arrival registration through designated airlines or travel agencies when visiting Hong Kong, but may register through the online system instead. Once registration is proven successful, travelers may print out the registration form for customs inspection upon entering and exiting Hong Kong, which will save both time and cost for travelers. The validity of registration and duration of stay through the online system are the same as those of the existing Taiwan "iPermit" system (registration valid for two months and two entries permitted, with a stay period up to 30 days per entry).

The MAC reminds the Taiwanese public that Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau

differ on regulations over the types of prohibited or controlled items carried across borders, therefore travelers should avoid carrying such items to prevent unnecessary trouble that may cause delay in travels. Gas sprayers, stun guns, extendable batons, brass knuckles, switchblades, and other items are treated as general offensive weapons by both Hong Kong and Macau; possession of such items is illegal and could lead to prosecution by the local police. Laws of Hong Kong and Macau further stipulate that it is illegal to transit in Hong Kong and Macau with such items, including not only the carrying of these items on an individual, but also may not be packed into carry-on or checked baggage; travelers will be prosecuted if such items are seized during customs clearance.

One such case occurred in Hong Kong in mid-January of 2013. The customs authorities at Hong Kong International Airport confiscated an extendable baton carried by a Taiwanese citizen transiting at the airport en route to Taiwan from the Mainland and imposed a fine of about NT\$6000. However, the Taiwanese traveler had insufficient cash on hand to pay the fine and was therefore placed into custody at a detention center by the Hong Kong Police. The traveler was only released and able to return to Taiwan after family members paid the fine with assistance from Taiwan's representative office in Hong Kong.

The MAC states that, in order to enhance emergency services provided to Taiwanese travelers in Hong Kong and Macau, representative offices in Hong Kong and Macau have established 24-hour hotlines for cases of emergency. Taiwanese people who face emergency events in Hong Kong or Macau may reach the MAC Bureau of Hong Kong Affairs hotline at (852) 9314-0130 or (852) 6143-9012—or the MAC Office of Macau Affairs hotline at (853) 6687-2557. The MAC also hereby wishes the Taiwanese people a happy New Year's holiday and safe travels.