

Hong Kong holiday

On a weekend getaway to the island, Margaret McKenzie enjoys great food, Disney magic and her own Bond Girl moment.



Whether it's a long layover between flights or a two-day respite from day-to-day life, 48 hours in Hong Kong can put a spring back in one's step — even if you're stepping up one of the city's notoriously steep inclines.

If the weather gods are smiling, you'll be able to scale mountains, enjoy a dip in the ocean, ride a wild roller-coaster and dine al fresco under the stars, all in the space of one short weekend.

As a US expat who has spent most of my life on one coast or another, I was experiencing serious sea-breeze withdrawal after six months in Beijing.

Thus, stepping out of Hong Kong's airport heading to the Le Meridien Cyberport Hotel on the island, I am instantly back in my happy place, as the verdant hills, flower-bedecked trees and moisture-laden air greet me warmly.

I'd been advised to opt for the bus as opposed to the airport express train on this, my first visit to the city: The A-10 offered tiers of seating and breathtaking views of the harbors, islands and peaks that make Hong Kong so beautiful. Not only that, but at HK\$42 (\$5.42), the fare is less than half that of the train, though the bus takes a little longer.

I come armed with a wish list for the weekend, starting with dipping my toes in the waters of Repulse Bay or Stanley Beach. So after check-in I take another bus to Repulse Bay.

Though the lifeguard stations are reassuringly stationed every 10 meters or so, the only one wading in the bracingly cold water is me. Everywhere I look is a postcard-worthy vista, and the strand is dotted with sightseers in street clothes capturing the awe-inspiring beauty with their cameras. Just south of the luxury high-rises encircling the bay are the red-and-yellow pagodas and bridges of Tin Hau Temple, whose



A good way to feel Hong Kong's vitality is to take a boat ride across Victoria Harbor.

LI PENG / XINHUA

statues are dedicated to protecting the local fishing fleet.

Next I take the tram to Victoria Peak, which affords a panoramic though occasionally hazy view of the downtown. A quick cab ride later, I land another bus to Repulse Bay, which in a mere 10 minutes deposits me at upscale Kowloon and its glitzy malls.

After a stroll, I opt to dine at the Greyhound Cafe near the harbor, a trendy Thai chain with branches in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing. Its tasty Waterfall Grilled Lamb, served on skewers and washed down with an ice-cold Singha beer,

hits the spot and gives me the energy to find my way back to the hotel.

The next day dawns hot and clear. Although the little kid in me is lobbying for an immediate departure to Lantau Island (and Disneyland), my grown-up self needs caffeine. I ride up one of the mid-level escalators from Hong Kong's Central district, where I find not only a picturesque cafe but also a street dedicated to fresh produce of all kinds. The fresh, crunchy apple I purchase proves the perfect finish to my croissant-and-coffee breakfast, and the bustling, twisty streets are exactly as I have pictured exotic Hong Kong to be.

The ride to Lantau is fast and effi-

cient, and the Disney train is a happy place indeed: brimming with children of all ages and decorated with mouse-ear shaped windows and hand-holds. Although compact, HK Disney offers bang for the buck in several ways: Its celebrated fireworks go off nightly behind Cinderella's Castle, and at \$58, the tariff at the gate is about 40 percent cheaper than ticket prices in the US.

Despite its smaller size, I find all of my old favorites — Space Mountain, It's a Small World, Dumbo the Flying Elephant — along with a new one: Grizzly Mountain Runaway Mine Cars, an exciting coaster that speeds forwards and backwards around "sandstone" cliffs.

Another popular attraction on Lantau is the Tian Tan Buddha. At 250 tons and 34 meters high, it's the world's largest Buddha statue and reachable on the same Tung Chung express train that goes to Disney.

By late afternoon, I am back in Central district in pursuit of a cooling beverage at the iconic Mandarin Oriental hotel. Using the futuristic, enclosed walkways Hong Kong is famous for, I head straight through the lobby to the elegant bar, where — feeling like a Bond Girl in the swanky surroundings — I am soon served a somewhat pricey but very delicious whiskey sour.

To make my final night in Hong Kong special, I snag a reservation at Quemo, a happening Spanish tapas restaurant I've read about online. As advertised, the food is incredible and the small penthouse space is buzzing with conversation as bottles of wine and sizzling pans of paella whisk past. The staff is attentive and friendly. After dinner, I enjoy a chat with blue-eyed Catalan head chef Angel Pascual, who shows me around the restaurant, including a charming rooftop drinks terrace.

On the relaxing cab ride back to the hotel, stirred by the floral scents and happy chatter that surround me in Hong Kong, I am busy planning my return to *Xiang Gang* — China's Fragrant Harbor.

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YU FANGPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Disneyland attracts both children and adults.



chengdureport

Partnership could create exhibition powerhouse

By XU XIAO
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Chengdu's exhibition industry looks set to strengthen after the city signed a memorandum with UBM, the world's second largest exhibition company.

The Chengdu Bureau of Exposition completed the deal on May 29, during the third Beijing Fair for Trade in Services.

Fu Yonglin, deputy major of Chengdu, and Tim Cobbold, chief executive officer of UBM, witnessed the project-signing ceremony.

"The strategic cooperation memorandum signed between

Philip Chapnick, group chief representative of UBM China.

"Internationalization is the gap between Chengdu's exhibition industry and that of the country's front runners. This is also where our potential lies," said Mu Tao, director of the Chengdu Bureau of Exposition.

"To strengthen cooperation with world-renowned exhibition companies is the way for us to speed up development. Such partnerships can help Chengdu share the international giants' information and resources and broaden international cooperation," said Philip

Chapnick, group chief representative of UBM China.

"This memorandum is another step along the road to extending our business westward and seeking to deepen our involvement in Chengdu. Our goal is to work closely with the city to determine the best types of exhibition and resources from both parties to build world class leading exhibition events," Chapnick said.

Chengdu has partnered with world-renowned exhibition companies before in deals including the Chinese operations of German's Koelnmesse and Britain's Reed Exhibitions.

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UBM has never signed a cooperation agreement with a Chinese city before so the Chengdu memorandum marks a milestone.

Chapnick said that UBM ran a successful edition of Routes Aisa in Chengdu in 2012. That was his first visit to the city, where he said he "experienced first-hand, not only the great assets of the city, but the expertise and professionalism of the exhibition bureau and local government officials."

Chapnick said UBM selected Chengdu as a strategic partner for several reasons.

He said firstly, Chengdu was one of the most important Chinese gateways to the West, a key part of the modern Silk Road that connects China to European and Asian economies.

"It has excellent exhibition facilities, a robust transportation infrastructure, including the largest railway hub in southern China, a modern and developing airport with good and increasingly international connectivity, and great hotels and visitors' serving facilities," he said.

Chapnick also said that due to the ambassadorial work of the panda community, Chengdu was increasingly well known to the international community, who is starting to view it as a prime destination.

He said that Chengdu had the potential to become the most important exhibition hub in West China.

Chapnick said the second reason for choosing Chengdu



Jimé Essink (left, first row), president and chief executive officer of UBM Asia, and Mu Tao (right, first row), director of the Chengdu Bureau of Exposition, signed the cooperation agreement on May 27. Fu Yonglin (right, second row), deputy major of Chengdu, and Tim Cobbold (left, second row), chief executive officer of UBM, witnessed the project-signing ceremony.

was that the city has a population of more than 10 million. It has a strongly developing economy in key sectors including high tech, automotive, agribusiness, pharmaceuticals, food and beverage, logistics and research.

Statistics showed that more than 20 percent of the world's top 500 companies have facilities in Chengdu. Many of these set up research and development facilities to take advantage of the city's reputation for learning and education.

Chapnick noted that the third reason was that Chengdu was a laid-back city and people enjoyed good lifestyles.

"That attention to quality of life naturally has an impact in an industry that is highly dependent on the quality of

personal service," he said.

"The Chengdu people understand deeply what it means to provide high quality service and make an experience the best it can be," he added.

Chapnick said his UBM colleagues who had experienced the city were impressed with the professionalism, spirit, drive and high caliber of the people they met and worked with in Chengdu.

"We think Chengdu understands what quality in a service industry means. From the professionals we have met in the city's exposition bureau, through to the caterers and stand constructors and the servers at tea houses, Chengdu is a city with the right attitude for service industries — like exhibitions — to do well,"



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DIRECTOR OF CHENGDU BUREAU OF EXPOSITION

he said.

This March, UBM announced that after three rounds of intense competition with four other airports, Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport was selected to host World Routes 2016.

Chapnick said in coming years UBM could create new events specifically for the city. "We believe that Chengdu is a great city — and has huge potential to become the exhibition powerhouse for Southern China," he said.



The 22nd World Route Development Forum will be held in Chengdu's Shuangliu International Airport.