

AFCD launches Hing Chun Alliance Heritage Trail (with photos)

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (May 23) launched the first section of the Hing Chun Alliance Heritage Trail in collaboration with Lai Chi Wo village, Mui Tsz Lam village and Kop Tong village, further promoting the history, culture and life stories of the Hong Kong Geopark communities while providing an in-depth travel experience for visitors.

An AFCD spokesman said, "The first section of the Hing Chun Alliance Heritage Trail links Lai Chi Wo, Mui Tsz Lam and Kop Tong, totalling approximately 3.7 kilometres in length. The Trail, featuring 28 interpretation panels and three map boards, was planned along the existing footpath. It connects many important historical and cultural relics, portraying the history, culture and interesting life stories of the villages. Through historical photos and drawings, the Trail presents the lifestyle of the Hing Chun Alliance in the past to visitors."

Dating back over 300 years, the Hing Chun Alliance in Sha Tau Kok is made up of seven Hakka villages in the northeastern New Territories, namely Lai Chi Wo, Mui Tsz Lam, Kop Tong, So Lo Pun, Sam A, Ngau Shi Wu and Siu Tan. In the old days, these remote rural villages formed an alliance known as "yeuk" in Chinese to maintain law and order. They watched over each other and jointly built facilities, provided education and organised large-scale events, such as the annual Kwan Tai Festival and the decennial Hing Chun Alliance Tai Ping Ching Chiu Festival.

As the centre of the seven Hing Chun Alliance villages, Lai Chi Wo used to serve as the hub of education, economy and traditional festivities. The Lai Chi Wo village square was originally the sportsground of the former Siu Ying School. Mui Tsz Lam, the origin of the Tsang clan of several Hing Chun Alliance villages, was a major Chinese New Year tangerine production area in the 1960s with an annual yield of tens of thousands of cabbages. Kop Tong is a self-sufficient village at the foot of Tiu Tang Lung, offering an abundant supply of fruits and vegetables as well as chicken farms in the 1960s.

In addition, to promote the human history of the Hing Chun Alliance, the seven Hing Chun Alliance villages partnered with the Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark (Hong Kong Geopark), the Lions Nature Education Foundation and the Chinachem Group to jointly launch "The Seven Villages of the Hing Chun Alliance – Our Stories" website (ourstories.hk). Life stories including lifestyle, festivities and wedding customs of the Hing Chun Alliance were collected from over 60 villagers and presented through oral history and songs.

In 2017, the AFCD initiated the Same Roots, Same Origins Project, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Geopark communities, to discover and

conserve its cultural heritage and transform it into rich educational and green tourism resources, thereby revitalising rural villages and promoting sustainable development in remote areas. The Project covers the seven Hing Chun Alliance villages, Ap Chau, Kat O, Kau Sai Village and High Island. More than 100 local and overseas villagers have been interviewed to date, five Story Rooms have been set up and two books were published on Ap Chau and Kat O. In 2021, the AFCD launched the Kat O Heritage Trail and assisted the seven Hing Chun Alliance villages in setting up the Siu Ying Story Room and the Lai Chi Wo Story Room. The second section of the Hing Chun Alliance Heritage Trail, connecting Sam A and Siu Tan, is expected to be launched in the first quarter next year.

The spokesman appeals to visitors to Hong Kong Geopark to respect the local culture, avoid disturbing residents, conserve the nature and take their litter home.

With the launch of the Second Phase Opening-up of Sha Tau Kok, in addition to kaito ferry services sailing from Ma Liu Shui and Tai Shui Hang Landing, any visitor holding a valid Sha Tau Kok Frontier Closed Area Permit can travel to Lai Chi Wo by kaito ferry from the Sha Tau Kok Pier. The voyage will take about half an hour.

Details of the Hing Chun Alliance Heritage Trail can be found at www.geopark.gov.hk/Hing-Chun-Alliance-Heritage-Trail.



