

Exploring Old Wan Chai through cultural tours

Wong Sau-ping, tour guide of Wan Chai Cinema Tours, narrated to those taking the trip: "In the past, there were over 40 cinemas in Wan Chai, like the Oriental Theatre, but few cinemas are left now, because of rapid urban regeneration in the district."

Wong, who has been living in Wan Chai for 30 years, shared her stories about the local cinemas with around 10 others, during the two-hour trip in Wan Chai.

Participants on the guided tour followed Wong around to where the old cinemas were located but most have been transformed into shopping malls. Only a few are still there.

Wong also showed photos of old cinemas, reminding them that watching movies was considered a luxury in the past and few people could enjoy this pastime. "We like to share our living experiences with visitors," Wong said. "We want to bring our audience into our community and promote the idea of cultural preservation."

Wong observed that those who joined the tours were mostly the young and the elderly. Young people join the tour in order to know more about the old times. For the elderly, they want to recall their younger times by revisiting their old haunts.

Jack Wong Kay-shing, a 32-year-old export manufacturer, was one of the participants on the Wan

Chai Cinema Tour. He describes these cultural tours as a platform for cultural education.

"I joined this tour as I am interested in understanding community culture and knowing more about my historical heritage," Wong said. "As the tour guides are decades-long residents of Wan Chai, they are even more professional than researchers or historians in telling stories about the place!"

Wan Chai Livelihood Museum has been organising cultural tours for two years. With themes ranging from food to mystery stories, these monthly tours provide visitors with a deeper look into the district's livelihood and culture.

Long-term Wan Chai residents take up the role of tour guides on these trips. The trip leaders plan the themes of the tours by consulting other local residents and doing research about the history of the district.

Tours covering street names, temples and entertainment in Wan Chai will be launched very soon, to give visitors a look at different aspects of the place, and the price for each tour is HK\$58 per person.

For more information, call Suki Chau at 2835 4376 or visit Wan Chai Livelihood Museum's website at <http://cds.sev227.001at.com/WLM/tour.html>. Sam Wong

1&2: Exhibitions inside Wan Chai Livelihood Museum.
3: Participants of cinema tours are following the tour guide around Wan Chai to explore locations of old cinemas.
4&5: Wong Sau-ping, tour guide of cinema tours, is showing the visitors photos of old Wan Chai.

