China / Hong Kong Industry Focus HK Property Sector (Hotels)

Refer to important disclosures at the end of this report

DBS Group Research . Equity

17 Jan 2024

Recovery not over

- Post-COVID recovery of inbound tourism is half-way through and progressing unevenly
- Hotel RevPAR expected to surpass pre-COVID level in 2024
- Hotel room growth virtually non-existent
- BUY <u>Far East Consortium (35 HK)</u>, <u>Regal REIT</u> (<u>1881 HK)</u> & <u>Langham Hospitality Investment</u> (<u>1270 HK</u>) for attractive valuations

Post-COVID recovery of inbound tourism is half-way through and progressing unevenly partly due to flight capacity constraints. In 11M23, Mainland Chinese tourist arrivals have rebounded to 51.9% of pre-COVID levels, and compares favourably with non-Chinese tourists. Short haul markets exhibited stronger recovery than long haul counterparts. Among short haul markets, Southeast Asia notably outperformed North Asia in terms of recovery. With continued recovery in flight capacity, we project visitor arrivals to grow by another 20-25% in 2024.

Tourist spending more on hotel accommodation. Overnight visitors showed stronger recovery than day-trippers in a post-COVID era. Moreover, they spent more on hotel accommodation on average when compared to pre-COVID times, Mainland tourists in particular. This should underpin strong post pandemic recovery of the hotel sector. Hotel RevPAR rebounded 62% in 11M23, equivalent to 91% of the level in 11M18. This was led by High Tariff A hotels (five-star rated hotels) which saw their room rates surpassing pre-COVID levels. We project hotel RevPAR to rise by 10-15% in 2024 to exceed pre-COVID level.

Hotel room growth virtually non-existent. We forecast hotel room inventory to rise at a 3-year CAGR of only 1% in 2023-26. With virtually no new hotel investments made during COVID, new hotel room growth should taper off after 2026. Moreover, some hotels are being converted into student residence or redeveloped into residential use. This would reduce hotel rooms available for tourists in future years.

Stock recommendation. Far East Consortium is seeing remarkable benefits from ongoing hotel sector recovery. The upcoming opening of Dorsett Kai Tak should add momentum to its hotel earnings expansion. BUY with HK\$2.0 TP. Following the heavy sell-off, long-term value of Regal REIT is surfacing. We recommend to BUY on Langham Hospitality Investment which offers distribution yields of >12% for FY24.



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Recommendation & valuation

Company	Price	Target Price	Mkt Cap	Recom
Property Investors	HK\$	HK\$	HK\$bn	
Far East Consortium (35 HK)	1.33	2.00	3.6	BUY
Langham Hospitality Investments (1270 HK)	0.67	1.21	2.1	BUY
Regal REIT (1881 HK)	0.60	0.82	1.9	BUY

Source: Thomson Reuters, DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Limited ("DBS HK")

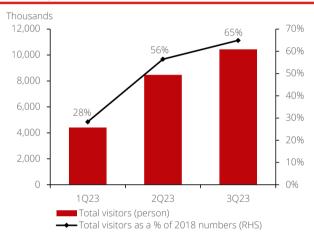


Header Top

Inbound tourism recovery is half-way through and

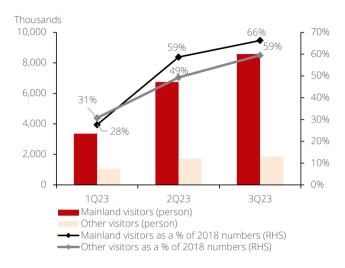
progressing unevenly. Following the relaxation of travel restrictions, Hong Kong's inbound tourism staged a robust recovery in 2023. In 11M23, total visitor arrivals reached 30.1m, or 51.3% of the 11M18 level. In 1Q23, 2Q23 and 3Q23, Hong Kong welcomed 4.4m, 8.5m and 10.4m tourists respectively. This represented 28.3%, 56.5% and 64.9% of corresponding quarters in 2018. Nonetheless, the recovery momentum has been exhibiting signs of moderation after the summer vacation.

Quarterly visitor arrivals (2023 vs 2018)



Source: CEIC

Quarterly visitor arrivals (2023 vs 2018)



Source: CEIC

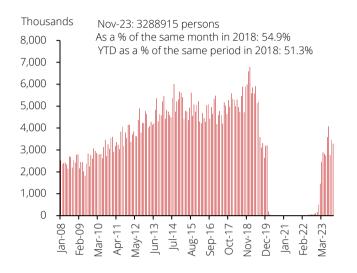
Monthly visitor arrivals (2023 vs 2018)



HK Property Sector (Hotels)



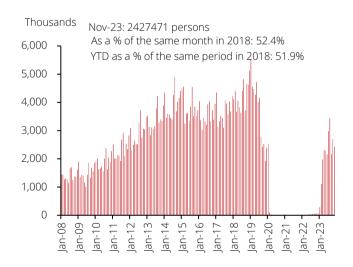
Monthly visitor arrivals (overall)



Source: CEIC

China tourists recovering at a faster pace. Thanks to the border re-opening with Mainland China, China tourists rebounded faster than non-China tourists. In 11M23, Mainland tourists numbered 23.8m, which made up 79% of the total and represented 51.9% of the level in 11M18.

Monthly visitor arrivals (Mainland China)



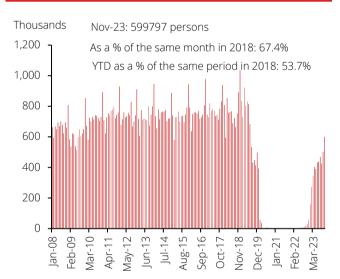
Source: CEIC

Short haul market staged swifter recovery than long haul

market. The number of visitors from the short haul market reached 4.4m in 11M23, equivalent to 53.7% of 11M18's level. The recovery, though swifter, has been uneven. Among short haul markets, Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore have shown the most notable recovery to 81.7%, 75.5% and 62.1% of 11M18's figures, while Japan and South Korea underperformed other short haul markets, recovering to only 26% and 25.6% of 11M18's level respectively.

On the other hand, the long haul market has lagged. There were 1.8m tourists from long haul markets in 11M23. This represented only 41.5% of the level in 11M18, which compares unfavourably with other source markets. This was mainly impacted by flight capacity constraints. Cathay Pacific Group operated only c.70% of its pre-Covid passenger flight capacity by the end of 2023.

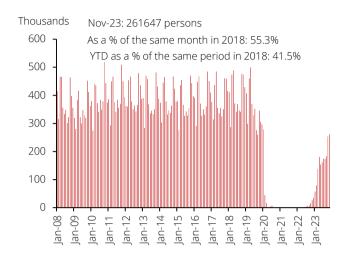
Monthly visitor arrivals (Short Haul Market)





HK Property Sector (Hotels)

Monthly visitor arrivals (Long Haul Market)

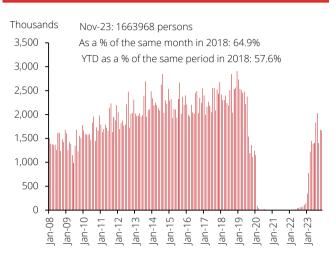


Source: CEIC

Overnight visitors led the recovery. In 3Q23, there were 5.3m overnight visitors, accounting for 50.5% of the total. This also represented 71.2% of 3Q18's number. In 11M23, total overnight visitors numbered 15.2m, recovering to 57.6% of 11M18's level. On the other hand, Hong Kong welcomed 14.9m day trippers representing 46.2% of the level in 11M18. Among Mainland China tourists, overnight visitors staged better recovery than same day travellers. Overnight tourists from Mainland China totalled 11.1m in 11M23, representing 61.9% of 11M18's level. On the other hand, day trippers from Mainland China reached 12.7m in 11M23 or 45.4% of 11M18's. Nonetheless, the recovery pace of both overnight visitors and same-day travellers have been moderating of late.

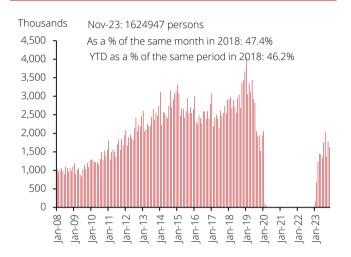
With gradual improvement in flight capacity, we forecast total visitor arrivals to grow 20-25% in 2024. The Hong Kong government is in talks with China government to resume the multiple entry visa scheme for Shenzhen residents which could add further spice to inbound tourism recovery.

Monthly visitor arrivals (Overnight Visitors)



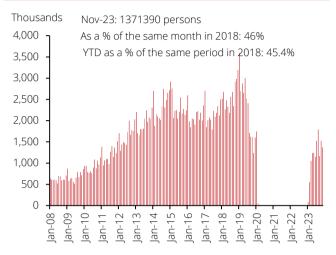


Monthly visitor arrivals (Same Day Visitors)



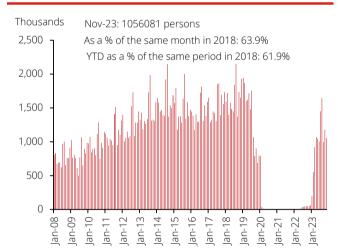
Source: CEIC

Monthly visitor arrivals (Same Day Visitors from Mainland China)



Source: CEIC

Monthly visitor arrivals (Overnight Visitors from Mainland China)



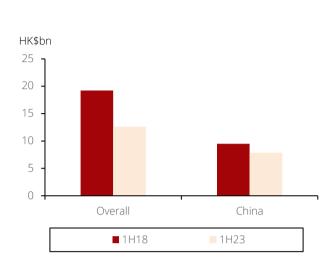
Source: CEIC

Tourists spending more on hotel bills. Overnight visitors spent HK\$12.6bn on hotel accommodation in 1H23, representing 65.7% of 1H18's level. On per head basis, overnight visitors spent 38% more on hotel accommodation. Mainland overnight visitors' hotel bills reached HK\$7.9bn in 1H23. This represented 21.6% of their total spending, compared to 14.2% in 1H18. The average hotel bill was 60% higher when compared to 1H18. This also reflects a change in spending patterns. The trend bodes well for post-COVID recovery of the hotel industry, the high-end segment in particular.

Hotel Bills

HK Property Sector (Hotels)





Source: CEIC

Hotel Bills per head

HK\$/person 2500 2000 1500 500 0 Overall China 1H18 1H23

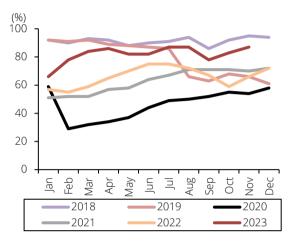
Source: CEIC

Hotel industry staged robust but divergent post pandemic

recovery. In 11M23, overall hotel occupancy jumped 17ppts to 82%. High Tariff A Hotels (five-star rated hotels) led the recovery with occupancy surging 20ppts to 75% in 11M23. Occupancies of High Tariff B hotels (four-star rated hotels) and Medium Tariff hotels (three-star rated hotels) both reached 84%, up from 71% and 65% in 11M22.

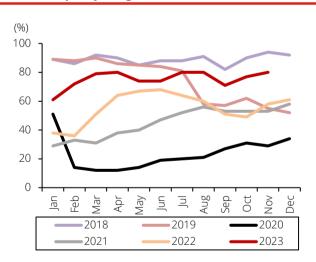
Despite a noticeable improvement, hotel occupancies for all categories have yet to return to the pre-pandemic level in 11M18.

Hotel occupancy – Overall



Source: CEIC

Hotel occupancy – High Tariff A



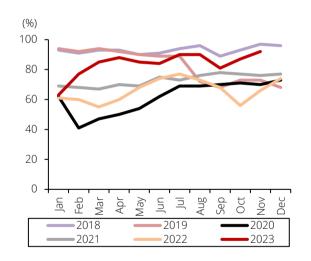
Hotel occupancy - High Tariff B



(%) 100 80 60 40 20 0 -ep Aug Sep Ξ OCt 202 Dec Mar Apr ЧN |a∕ Jan 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023

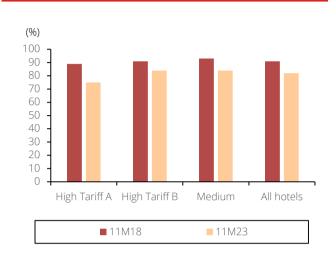
Source: CEIC

Hotel occupancy – Medium Tariff



Source: CEIC

Hotel occupancy (11M18 vs 11M23)



Source: CEIC

Hotel room rates for all hotels grew by 28.8% to HK\$1,369 in 11M23, surpassing the pre-COVID level in 11M18. The stellar growth was primarily driven by High Tariff A Hotels. Room rates of High Tariff A hotels improved 36.4% to HK\$2,312, 8% above11M18's. Those for High Tariff B hotels also gained 31.1% in 11M23 but remained 7% below pre-COVID levels. On the other hand, Medium Tariff Hotels recorded only 7% increase in room rates in 11M23 as the previous year's figures were largely inflated by some hotels that were designated quarantine hotels and served as Community Isolation Facilities. They remained 8% below 11M18's.

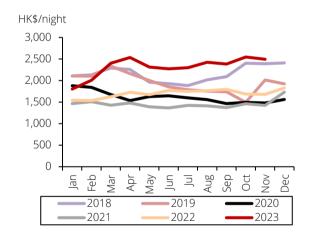
Hotel room rate - Overall



HK\$/night 1,800 1,600 1,400 1,200 1,000 800 600 400 200 0 Aug UN Ę Sep No∨ Feb Oct Dec Jan Mar Apr May 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023

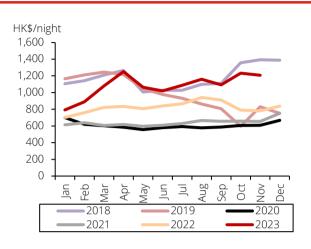
Source: CEIC

Hotel room rate - High Tariff A



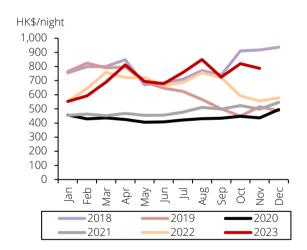
Source: CEIC

Hotel room rate - High Tariff B



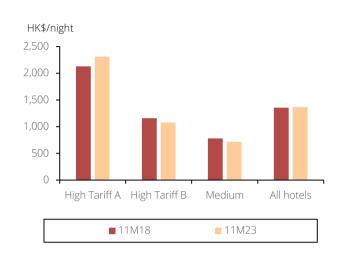
Source: CEIC

Hotel room rate- Medium Tariff



HK Property Sector (Hotels)



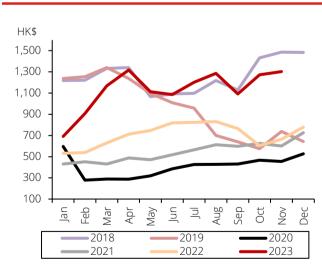


Hotel room rates (11M18 vs 11M23)

Source: CEIC

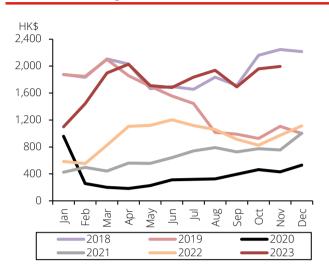
Overall hotel RevPAR surged 62% in 11M23, mainly led by an 86% RevPAR growth in High Tariff A Hotels. However, this remained 9% below 11M18's. This was because of lagging occupancies, despite the fact that its room rates have already exceeded 11M18's. High Tariff B and Medium Tariff Hotels also registered RevPAR growth of 55% and 38%, which were 14% and 17% below 11M18's.

Hotel RevPAR - overall



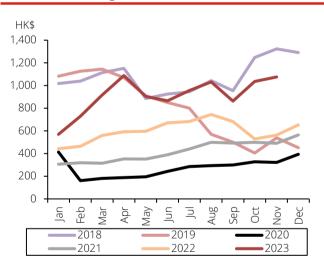
Source: CEIC

Hotel RevPAR – High Tariff A

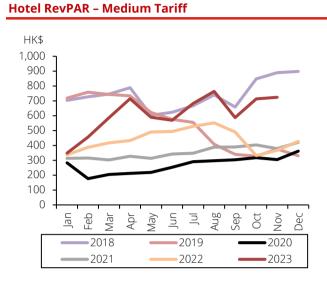


Source: CEIC

Hotel RevPAR – High Tariff B

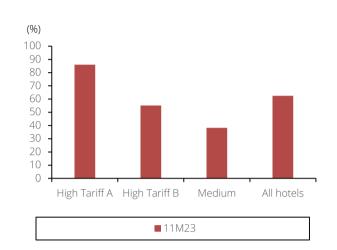






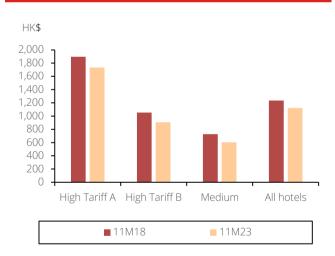
Hotel RevPAR Growth

Source: CEIC



Source: CEIC

Hotel RevPAR

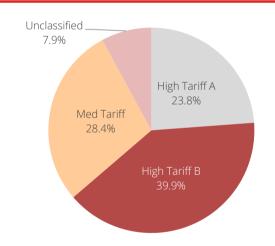




An eye on hotel supply. As of Nov-23, there were 321 hotels, with 90,150 rooms, up 1.1% from Dec-22. Greenwich Hotel in Mongkok and The Stellar in North Point opened for business in Aug-23, adding 169 and 164 rooms to the hotel room inventory respectively.

Developed by SHKP, the newly built 843-room Townplace West Kowloon in Cheung Sha Wan offers flexible daily or monthly leasing terms with hotel services-on-demand option, catering to the accommodation needs of young professionals. The first two batches of 285 rooms are fully leased. This aparthotel is scheduled for official opening in Feb-24.

High Tariff A and High Tariff B hotels accounted for 23.8% and 39.9% of total hotel room inventory respectively. Medium Tariff hotels made up 28.4% of the total, with the balance (7.9%) being unclassified hotels. By location, 20% of total room inventory is in Tsim Sha Tsui as at Sep-23, followed by New Territories (18.3%). Including guesthouses, total number of guest rooms reached 101,391 as at Nov-23, up 0.7% from Dec-22's.

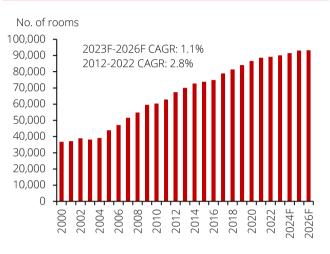


Breakdown of hotel rooms by type (as of Nov-23)

Source: CEIC

We forecast that the number of new hotel rooms will expand at a 3-year CAGR of 1.1% in 2023-26. Key new supply will come from China Travel's hotel project in Hung Hom, Dorsett Kai Tak, Choi Hung Road hotel project in San Po Kong, The Mariners' Club redevelopment in Tsim Sha Tsui and Hopewell Centre II in Wan Chai. Due to the uncertain business prospects caused by the Covid outbreak, there was virtually no significant investment in new hotel projects during that period. Consequently, this should lead to a shortage in new hotel rooms after 2026.

Hotel Supply

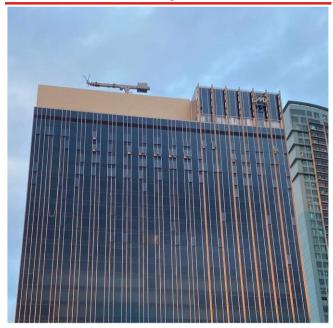


Source: CEIC

China Travel International Investment Hong Kong is expanding its hotel portfolio with a new hotel in Hung Hom that is redeveloped from Hip Kee Godown (No.3) in Hung Hom. In 2018, China Travel converted the property into hotel use after paying a land premium of HK\$699m or HK\$3,061psf. The hotel offers >500 guest rooms with GFA of 0.23msf. The hotel enjoys excellent transportation connectivity, as it is situated close to Hung Hom MTR Station, an interchange for Tuen Ma Line and East Rail. From Hung Hom MTR station, it takes approximately 40 minutes to Lo Wu or Lok Ma Chau by subway. Moreover, the hotel is also situated close to the Hong Kong Coliseum where major sport events or concerts are held. With interior fitting out works nearing completion, the new hotel is on track to begin trial operations in early 2024.



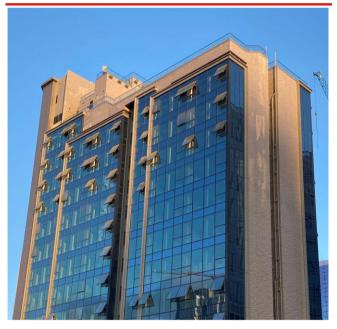
China travel's hotel in Hung Hom



Source: DBS HK

Far East Consortium is developing a "Dorsett" branded hotel in Kai Tak, situated adjacent to the Kai Tak Sports Park which is expected to be completed before the end of 2024. The hotel is about a 10-minute walk from both Sung Wong Toi MTR Station and Kai Tak MTR Station. Construction works are nearing completion. Dorsett Kai Tak will provide 373 guest rooms with a soft opening to held sometime in 2024. This would increase Far East Consortium's hotel room inventory in Hong Kong by 13% to 3,240 rooms.

Dorsett Kai Tak



Source: DBS HK

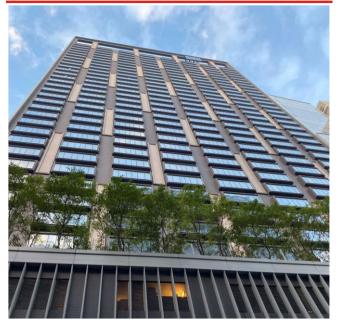
A private investor is redeveloping Paxar Building on Choi Hung Road in San Po Kong into a 483-room hotel, with completion expected to be in 2024. This hotel is a fiveminute walk from Diamond Hill MTR Station, an interchange for Kwun Tong Line and Tuen Ma Line. Back in 2017, this industrial building was converted into hotel use following the payment of a land premium of HK\$213m or HK\$1,250psf.

Wang On Property is carrying out renovations to convert Pentahotel Hong Kong, Kowloon in San Po Kong into a student residence for colleague students, offering 1,400 places in c.720 rooms. The property, which will be branded "Sunny House", is expected to re-open in 1Q24. In Dec-22, Wang On Property teamed up with Angelo, Gordon & Co to acquire this three-star rated hotel for HK\$2bn. Wang On Property has a 35% stake with the balance held by Angelo, Gordon & Co.

HK Property Sector (Hotels)



Sunny House (formerly known as Pentahotel Hong Kong, Kowloon)



Source: DBS HK

Since early last year, Hong Kong Metropolitan University has been looking to purchase a hotel for conversion into a dormitory for Mainland and exchange students.

As stated in the Policy Address announced in Oct-23, the government will increase the admission quota of non-local students to government-funded post-secondary institutions. Starting from the academic year in 2024/25, the admission quota of non-local students will double to 40%. With institutions taking steps to welcome more non-local students, especially those from the Belt and Road countries and Mainland China, the demand for student accommodation is set to increase. In addition to building new student hostels, converting existing hotels into student residences is an effective way to meet the growing demand from the additional intake. However, this would in turn dilute the net growth of hotel rooms for inbound travellers.

A private investor has sold Butterfly on Victoria Boutique Hotel Causeway Bay to K.Wah International for HK\$468m or HK\$3.55m/room in Jun-23. Located on 31-33 King's Road, this hotel is a 5-minute walk from Tin Hau MTR Station, four stops from Central. Opened in 2012, Butterfly on Victoria Boutique Hotel contains 132 guest rooms. The buyer, K.Wah, plans to redevelop the hotel into a residential project with GFA of 43,000sf. This implies an accommodation value of c.HK\$10,880psf. This would reduce the hotel inventory in Wan Chai/Causeway Bay.

Butterfly on Victoria Boutique Hotel



Source: DBS HK

Tang's Living continues to offload its hotels in Hong Kong. Following the disposals of Bay Bridge Hong Kong in Yau Kam Tau and a boutique hotel in Jordan, Tang's Living is now offering the 598-room Hotel Cozi Harbour View in Kwun Tong for sale via tender. Billion Development is also offering Hotel Cozi Wetland in Tin Shui Wai for sale.

Stock recommendation. Far East Consortium is benefitting from the ongoing revival in the hotel industry in Hong Kong with a portfolio of 2,867 rooms. The upcoming completion of Dorsett Kai Tak should further widen its hotel earnings base. Moreover, the company is also benefitting from post-pandemic recovery of hotel accommodation demand in China, Singapore, UK, Australia and Malaysia with its exposure there. The stock is trading at 86% discount to our appraised current NAV with estimated dividend yield of 10.5% for FY24. We recommend BUY with HK\$2.0 TP. Regal REIT sees higher base rents or fixed rents for its "Regal" and "iclub" branded hotels in FY24 but the prevailing high HIBOR



should weigh on its near-term earnings as all its borrowings are on a floating rate basis. Following the heavy sell-off, Regal REIT is trading at a distribution yield of 9.4% for FY25. Long-term value is surfacing and hence our BUY call with HK\$0.82 TP. Elsewhere, we also have a BUY rating on Langham Hospitality Investment which is trading at distribution yield of >12% for FY23-24. Our TP is HK\$1.21.

HK Property Sector (Hotels)



DBS HK recommendations are based on an Absolute Total Return* Rating system, defined as follows:

STRONG BUY (>20% total return over the next 3 months, with identifiable share price catalysts within this time frame)

BUY (>15% total return over the next 12 months for small caps, >10% for large caps)

HOLD (-10% to +15% total return over the next 12 months for small caps, -10% to +10% for large caps)

FULLY VALUED (negative total return, i.e., > -10% over the next 12 months)

SELL (negative total return of > -20% over the next 3 months, with identifiable share price catalysts within this time frame)

*Share price appreciation + dividends

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Sources for all charts and tables are DBS HK unless otherwise specified.

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HK Property Sector (Hotels)



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