

THE PRACTICAL NOMAD

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The Practical Nomad: How to Travel Around the World (3rd edition, 2004)
The Practical Nomad Guide to the Online Travel Marketplace (2001)
<http://www.practicalnomad.com>

17 January 2005

MTR Corporation Limited
MTR Tower, 33 Wai Yip Street
Kowloon Bay, Kowloon
Hong Kong SAR
CHINA

On Monday, 10 January 2005, I used the Island Line of the MTR to travel from North Point station to Central station, in order to check in for my flight home to the USA at the city check-in facility at Hong Kong Station and connect to the Airport Express Line to Hong Kong International Airport.

I had purchased a round trip Airport Express ticket. The printed "Airport Express Service Guide" advertises "Complimentary service exclusively for Airport Express Passengers", including "Free MTR connections... With the Octopus Card, you will enjoy free MTR connections.... (If you are using our in-town Check-in facilities, the MTR trip immediately before check-in is free.)"

There was no indication that these "complimentary" or "free" MTR rides required an additional purchase or payment, or that the referenced "Octopus Card" might require a separate purchase. But that turned out to be the case when I attempted to avail myself of the promised free MTR connections, by using my Airport Express ticket in the compatible card reader for MTR fare cards.

Providing free MTR connections for Airport Express passengers only if they have an Octopus Card -- a separately-purchased stored-value card with a minimum price of HK\$100, which residents are likely already to have but tourists are not -- is effectively to charge tourists more than local residents for MTR

connections from and to the Airport Express. You are certainly entitled to charge visitors more than locals, but if you do so, those prices should be clearly advertised. Aside from the bad impression this creates for visitors, it serves to discourage visitors from venturing further from the Airport Express stations, and thus goes against any goal of distributing visitors, and their spending, throughout more of Hong Kong.

I encourage you to correct your misleading service guide by adding "(for Octopus card holders only)", in equally large type, to the advertising of "Free MTR Connections". Or, much better, to fulfill your advertised commitment, and offer the same benefit to visitors as local residents, by making all types of Airport Express tickets valid for connecting MTR rides.

I also wish to commend the Customer Service officer and the Station Manager on duty at North Point MTR station at 15:00 on Monday, 10 January 2005. They dealt with my complaint promptly and courteously, acknowledged that the Airport Express Service Guide was misleading, and provided me with a complimentary single journey MTR ticket to Central station to connect to the Airport Express. Their actions allowed me to leave Hong Kong with the highest possible impression of the integrity of the MTR staff, and of their commitment to fair service to visitors.

Sincerely,

Edward Hasbrouck