



Relocation Guide to Hong Kong

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HONG KONG OVERVIEW



Photo by [David Iliff](#)

Hong Kong (香港 Heūng góng in Cantonese, meaning 'fragrant harbour') is a city with multiple personalities. It is a combination of both Cantonese Chinese culture and a contemporary ex-British influence. Today, the former British colony is a major tourism destination for China's increasingly affluent mainland population. It is also an important hub in East Asia with global connections to many of the world's cities. Hong Kong is a unique destination that has absorbed people and cultural influences from places as diverse as Vietnam and Vancouver, and proudly proclaims itself to be Asia's World City.

Hong Kong is the second Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, after Macau. Before the transfer of sovereignty over to China in 1997, Hong Kong had been a British Colony for 99 years. As such, most of the infrastructure inherits the design and standards in Britain. The city is a leading financial center in East Asia, and is famous for its transition port. Politically and legally independent of China, Hong Kong is known as the Oriental Pearl with a twist of British influence in the culture.

Hong Kong is much more than a harbor city. This territory is mostly a rural landscape. In fact, Hong Kong has 21 country parks, 17 reservoirs and 235 scattered islands that are mostly uninhabited and undeveloped. Much of the countryside is classified as Country Park and, although 7 million people are never far away, it is possible to find pockets of wilderness that will reward the more intrepid expat.

Climate

Hong Kong has a sub-tropical climate, but the sea keeps it cool during the winter. Summer (June to September) is long, humid and hot. Temperatures often exceed 32°C (90°F) during the day and generally do not drop below 25°C (77°F) at night. Typhoons usually occur between June and September and can bring a halt to local business activities for a day or so.

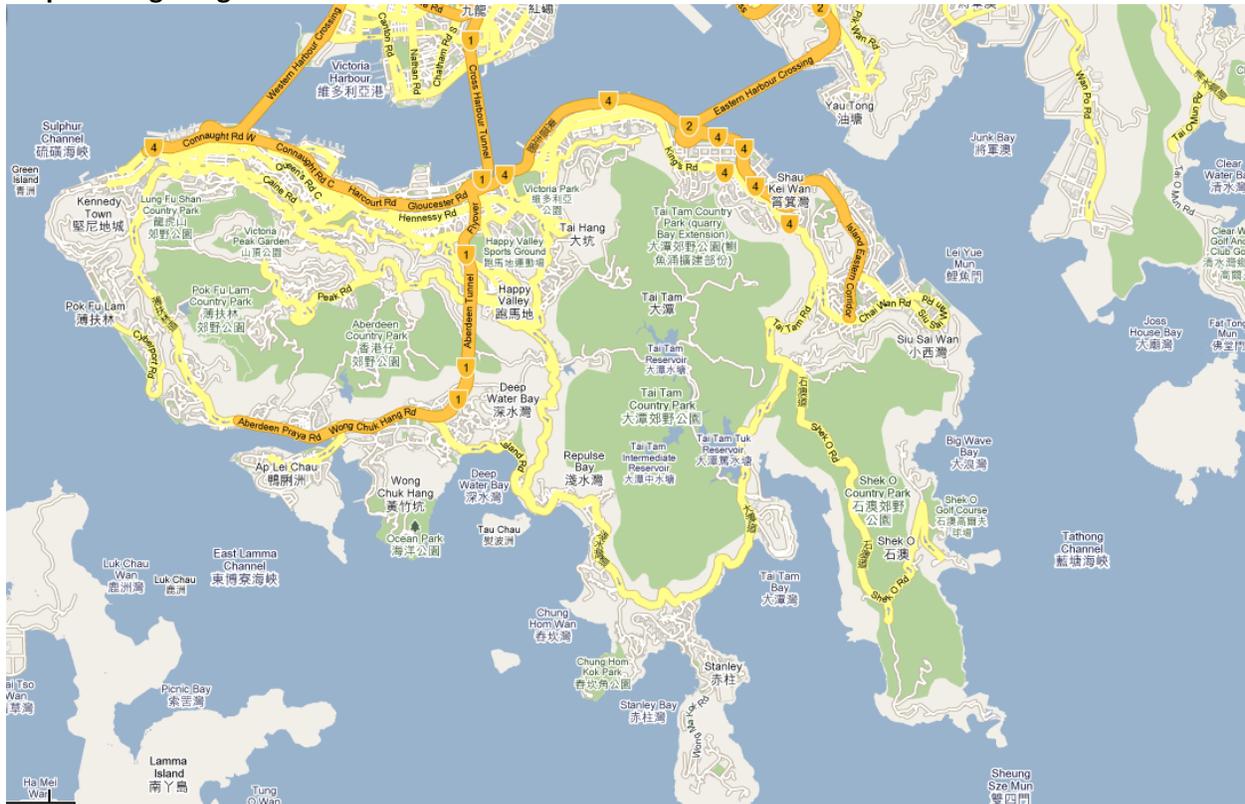
Winters are generally very mild. During the day temperatures average around 18-22°C (64-71°F), but dip to ~10°C (50°F) at night. Christmas in Hong Kong is considered warm compared to many other Northern

Hemisphere countries. However Chinese New Year (also known as Spring Festival and usually takes place between late January and late February) is notoriously cold (10°C/ 50°F).

Spring (March-May) and autumn (September-November/December) have average temperature between 21-24°C (70-75°F). Autumn is probably a more comfortable season as spring tends to be more humid and rainy.

Although most buildings in Hong Kong have air-conditioning, heating is something of a novelty. During the coldest days, most locals simply wear more layers even indoors. In a restaurant for example, it is not unusual to see customers eating with their jackets and scarves on.

Map of Hong Kong



DAILY LIVING TIPS

For additional cultural insights, go to [IOR Global Services Knowledge Center](#)

Your IOR DS Consultant can assist with these items and any questions; please call for assistance.

Also please note that the customs advice portion of this section consists of recommendations; not all native Hong Kong people will agree with them. Do what feels right, and keep this advice in mind.

- Movie theatres have assigned seating
- The voltage in Hong Kong is 220 volts for a single phase or 220/380 volts 3 phase 4 wires on 50 Hertz. The British-style rectangular blade 3-pin plug is the standard plug in Hong Kong and if you have small appliances from Europe they should work as long as you have the correct adapter. However large appliances such as TVs, refrigerators, voltage regulator /computer or Hi-Fi may have difficulty. Our DSC advises people to bring their favorite coffee maker or hair dryer but the rest they can buy here for reasonable prices.
- You will quickly annoy locals if you suggest that Hong Kongers are subjected to propaganda in the same way as people who live in Mainland China. Questions such as "Can you use Facebook in Hong Kong?" will also make you sound ignorant and silly.
- In general, during a conversation, it is best to avoid subjects of politics. If you are asked your opinion, best to be neutral about it.
- Hong Kong is a fast-paced society where the phrase "m goi" (唔該, "m" sounds like "hmm"), which literally means "I should not (bother you)", is used pervasively in a situation that you would say "Excuse me" or "Thank you".
- When you get a cough, always cover your mouth with the inner side of your elbow, as that area of your arm does not frequently come in contact with other people, thus avoiding the spread of pathogens. When having a fever, wear a mask. Spitting and littering, an offence subject to a penalty of \$1,500, is considered rude because it disturbs others. Speaking loudly and obnoxiously in person or over the phone will be viewed as egocentric and boorish.
- Line-jumping is a taboo and you may be denied service if you do so, because everyone wants to go orderly and speedily on their way with the least disturbances. When smoking in front of a non-smoker, always ask for permission because they may think you are trying to disturb their health.
- When you give or receive a business card, always do it with both hands and with a slight dip of your head or you will be seen either disrespectful or ignorant.
- Hong Kong water does conform to WHO standards but it is not recommended drinking outright from the tap. People, especially expats, boil or filter water or subscribe to a supplier for the distilled or mineral water. We are generally wary of drinking straight out of taps for several reasons. Although Hong Kong water is safer than that of Mainland China, cautionary measures should still be taken.

Government

Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Following British rule from 1842 to 1997, China assumed sovereignty under the 'one country, two systems' principle. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's constitutional document, the Basic Law, ensures that the current political situation will remain in effect for 50 years. The rights and freedoms of people in Hong Kong are based on the impartial rule of law and an independent judiciary.

- Head of Government: Chief Executive
- Cabinet: Executive Council
- Legislature: Legislative Council, 70 seats
- Highest Court: Court of Final Appeal

[Hong Kong's Government structure](#)

[Basic Law](#)

[Hong Kong immigration HP](#)

Economy

Hong Kong's economy is characterized by free trade, low taxation and minimum government intervention. It is the world's 10th largest trading economy, with the mainland of China as its most significant trading partner. Hong Kong is also a major service economy, with particularly strong links to mainland China and the rest of the Asia-Pacific region.

- Currency: Hong Kong Dollar, KHD or HK\$

[More on Hong Kong's economy](#)

Language

Cantonese Chinese and English are the official languages of Hong Kong. English is widely used in the Government by the legal, professional and business sectors. Trilingual professionals who speak English, Cantonese and Mandarin (Putonghua) play a vital role in the numerous enterprises trading in Hong Kong or doing business with mainland China and Taiwan.

- Cantonese speakers: 89.5% of population
- Mandarin speakers: 1.4% of population
- Other Chinese dialect speakers: 4% of population
- English speakers: 3.5% of population
- Other language speakers: 1.6% of population

Government offices – Passes and Permits

- [Education Bureau](#)
- [Department of Health](#)
- [Department of Labor](#)
- [Hong Kong Visa Guide](#)
- [Immigration Website](#)

Newspapers

Chinese Newspapers:

- [Headline Daily](#)
- [Oriental Daily News](#)
- [Apple Daily](#)
- [Sun Daily](#)
- [Hong Kong Economic Times](#) (the best-selling financial newspaper)
- [Ming Pao](#)
- [China Daily](#) (free circulation)
- [The Standard](#) (free circulation)

English Newspapers:

- [The Standard](#), a free tabloid with a mass market strategy, is the most widely-circulated English newspaper by a significant margin.
- [South China Morning Post](#) has the most paid subscribers among English-language papers in Hong Kong.

According to independent surveys conducted by The Chinese University of Hong Kong, South China Morning Post and Ming Pao are the most trusted newspapers in Hong Kong (see above for links).

Post Office

Postal services are efficient and of high quality. You will find post offices in major city areas and outside of opening hours you will be able to find coin-operated stamp vending machines. You can buy stamps from many convenience stores such as 7-Eleven or Circle K. It is relatively inexpensive to ship your purchases back home from any Post Office.

HOUSING AND UTILITIES

Real estate in Hong Kong is limited, and flats are notorious for being tiny and pricey. If you're looking to decide where to live, you need to address the following concerns:

- What is your budget?
- How close do you want to be to work?
- How will you get to work?
- Do you have space for children?

Once you determine what areas work for you and your family, you will need to contact a broker. Most real-estate listings, whether to rent or buy, are done via a broker in Hong Kong.

Neighborhoods

Hong Kong is divided into three main areas with their own set of diverse neighborhoods:

- Hong Kong Island: generally wealthier than other parts of the city. It is also home to some of the more expensive real estate in the city, such as the Peak and Happy Valley. Hong Kong Island is also home to most large business.
- Kowloon is more affordable, but West Kowloon and Olympic are increasingly pricey.
- New Territories is a popular option for families as the homes tend to be larger and more reasonably priced, although it is more separated from the Hong Kong Metro.

Popular, expensive expatriate neighborhoods include The Peak, Repulse Bay, Shouson Hill, Tai Tam, Stanley, Chung Hom Kok and Mid-Levels (the area about halfway up Victoria Peak from the harbor, south of Central). Others in the medium range are Mid-Levels West, Pokfulam, Happy Valley, Discovery Bay, Kowloon and New Territories, a popular option with the East and West Rail providing convenient connection across the territory and into southern China.

For families with young children, Discovery Bay on Lantau Island, and Repulse Bay, South Bay and Deep Water Bay, all on the south side of Hong Kong Island, are options boasting homes with more space as well as proximity to notable international schools.

Finding a Broker

Local realty agencies are camped out throughout the city and specialize in the areas they are located in. Actual offices will have the most up-to-date information, but websites give a good idea of what's on the market.

Some of the larger residential real-estate agencies are:

- [Colliers](#)
- [Midland](#)
- [Centaline](#)
- [Ricacorp Properties](#)

- [Century 21](#)
- [Savills](#)

Keep in mind the cost of renting a place depends on:

- **Location.** Popular residential areas are close to the central business district.
- **Size and condition** of the place.
- **Amenities.** Condominiums with full facilities may command a higher price. Rent also depends on whether the place is furnished, partially furnished or unfurnished.

Tips for Renting a Home:

- Rental contracts in Hong Kong typically run two years.
- In the second year, though, either the tenant or landlord can often choose to terminate the lease penalty-free by giving two months' notice. Also known as a "break clause".
- A common tenant-unfriendly agreement will make the tenant responsible for wear and tear of the flat. Landlords are generally accustomed to negotiating clauses and terms in the lease, including rent price, furniture and appliances, and minor renovations. Your broker or a lawyer can often help with negotiations.
- Find out if your apartment is under mortgage and if the landlord has bank consent to rent it to tenants. If there is no bank consent and a landlord defaults on the mortgage, the bank has the right to ask tenants to vacate immediately. Individual owners might not have bank consent because there is a slight premium on a bank-consented rental mortgage. The rental mortgage is considered investment property.
- Furnished apartments are rare except if they are studio sized, or very small.

Fees

The broker's commission is usually equal to one month's rent, split 50-50 between the landlord and tenant. Most landlords require two months' worth of rent for a deposit and the first month's rent paid up front.

Government rates and building management fees usually tack on an additional 10% to 15% each month, though it is common practice for the rent to cover these charges. When the lease is signed, the two parties split payment of the government stamp duty in half, calculated, as of 2010, as 0.5% of the annual rent.

Documents

You can expedite the process by having your passport or Hong Kong ID, employment letter and contract on hand. Prospective tenants often have to put down a deposit and sign a provisional agreement to hold onto an apartment. These agreements can be broken, however, and should not be taken as a promise.

Source: <http://guides.wsj.com/hong-kong/guide-to-hong-kong/housing/>

Utilities

Tenants are usually responsible to pay for utilities, including water, electricity and gas.

Electricity

When setting up electric service in Hong Kong, there are two main providers:

- Hong Kong Electric Holdings Ltd: services Lamma Island and Hong Kong Island
[Hong Kong Electric Holdings Ltd](#) (HEH)
9/F Electric Centre, 28 City Garden Road, North Point, Hong Kong
24-hour Emergency Hotline: 2555 4000
Customer Services: 852 2887 3411 (office hours)
- China Light and Power: services the outlying islands, New Territories, and Kowloon.
[China Light and Power](#)
8 Laguna Verde Avenue, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2678 8111
E-mail: clp_info@clp.com.hk

Gas

Towngas supplies 85% of households in Hong Kong. There are numerous Customer Service Centers throughout Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories. See their website for details.

- [Town Gas](#)
Shop 9A, Lee Theatre Plaza, 99 Percival Street, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong
Emergency Hotline Tel: 2880 6999
Sales Enquiry Hotline Tel: 2963 3000
Customer Service Hotline Tel: 2880 6988

[You can find more information on payment and processes for utilities here:](#)

Water

[Water Supplies Department](#)

Wan Chai Customer Enquiry Centre
1st Floor, Immigration Tower, 7 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai.

[Other locations](#)

Telecommunications

Hong Kong is one of the most connected cities in the world with an extensive network of mobile and internet services widely available.

Telephone service providers:

- [PCCW](#)

Telephone repair/fault reporting	Tel: 109
Customer Service	Tel: 2888 2888
Application Hotline	Tel: 1000
- [Hutchison Global Communications](#)

Customer Service 24 Hour Hotline	Tel: 1220
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- [Wharf T&T](#)

Customer Hotline	Tel: 2112 1133
General Enquiries	Tel: 2112 1121

EMERGENCY

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

POLICE - DIAL 999 (toll-free)

For

EMERGENCIES/AMBULANCE/FIRE BRIGADE – DIAL 995 (toll-free)

They will ask for the following information so keep this page close to your phone:

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

Other Important Numbers:

- American Consulate:
 - 26 Garden Road
 - Tel: 2523 9011
- British Consulate
 - 1 Supreme Court Road
 - 2901 3000
- [List of Consulates](#)
- Police Hotline: 852 2527 7177
- Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong: 852 2807 0707
- Hong Kong Tourism Board Visitor Hotline 852 2508 1234
- Hong Kong International Airport 852 2181 8888
- Hong Kong Immigration Department 852 2824 6111
- Consumer Council 852 2929 2222
- Department of Health 852 2961 8989
- Customs Department 24-Hour Hotline 852 2815 7711
- Hong Kong Post 852 2921 2222
- HK Observatory (for weather information) 852 1878 200

Source: [Useful Numbers | Hong Kong Tourism Board](#)

HEALTH FACILITIES

The quality of medical care in Hong Kong is excellent but expensive for those who do not qualify for a government subsidy. In cases of emergency, treatment is guaranteed, but you will be billed later if you cannot pay immediately.

Waiting times at hospital emergency rooms can be lengthy for non-emergency patients, since people are prioritized according to their situation. If you have a problem making payment in public hospitals, you can apply for financial assistance but you will need to prove your economic status to social workers based in the hospital.

One common cause of sickness is the extreme temperature change between 35°C/95°F humid summer weather outdoors and 18°C/64°F air-conditioned buildings and shopping malls. Some people experience cold symptoms after moving between the two extremes. You are recommended to carry a sweater even in the summer-time.

Heat stroke is also common when hiking. Carry enough water and take scheduled rests before you feel unwell.

Air Pollution

Air pollution is a big problem due to a high population density and industrial pollution from mainland China. It is not uncommon for visibility to be reduced during periods of extreme air pollution. If you have a serious respiratory problem, seek medical advice and make sure to be stocked with ample supplies of relevant medication.

Medical Facilities

- Hong Kong is known for having some of the highest-standards of health service facilities in the world. Finding a foreign or English-proficient doctor is usually not an issue.
- Seeing a professional is as easy as walking off the street and making an appointment with the receptionist. Generally you will be seen within an hour or less, but take note of the opening times displayed at the window of the office.
- A straightforward consultation for a minor ailment might cost around HKD300 to HKD800, depending on the doctor being a specialist or GP and the location of the clinic or hospital.
- In Hong Kong, it is normal for a professional to sell you medicine. Most surgeries and hospitals will accept credit cards.

Public hospitals in Hong Kong

In order to be eligible for public hospitals in Hong Kong, you must be the holder of a Hong Kong Identity Card (more on this in the Registrations section) or a child under 11 years old age with Hong Kong resident status. Eligibility does not denote right of access to public hospitals, but rather eligibility for government-subsidized discounts.

The Hospital Authority manages 41 public hospitals and institutions, 48 Specialist Out-patient Clinics, and 74 General Out-patient Clinics that are divided into seven hospital clusters by location. These clusters help maintain a standard of high-quality care within the area and during a patient's illness.

Private hospitals in Hong Kong

The island has 12 private hospitals, which have partnered with the United Kingdom for international healthcare accreditation. The Department of Health ensures these clinics and hospitals follow relevant regulations thorough inspections and manage complaints from the public. All in all, private hospitals are of high-quality in Hong Kong.

[Matilda Hospital](#)

41 Mount Kellett Road, The Peak, Hong Kong

Email: info@matilda.org

Tel: 2849 0111

[Adventist Hospital](#) is a popular expat hospital

40 Stubbs Road, Hong Kong

Email: hkahinfo@hkah.org.hk

Tel: 3651 8888

Health Insurance

In Hong Kong, there are two types of health insurance: Local and International. Local health insurance is only valid in Hong Kong, so you will need to purchase additional travel insurance when traveling. Local health insurance does not come with a guarantee of acceptance, so your application can be rejected if your health condition changes. International medical insurance is often more expensive, but, compared to local health insurance, expat medical insurance is more versatile and provides better coverage.

There are many products out there catering to the many different needs of the expats. Choosing the right one can be very challenging, so it's wise to use the services of an independent insurance broker.

Childcare

Hong Kong only guarantees 10 weeks of paid maternity leave to working mothers, which may come as a surprise depending on your country of origin. Maternity leave usually begins between 2 and 4 weeks before the baby's due date. During this time, you receive 80% of your monthly income of the last 12 months. Unfortunately, there are no legal provisions in Hong Kong which allow fathers to take parental leave. If you are a father who would like to care for his newborn during the first weeks, you will need to ask for time off from your employer. On the upside, women who are having a baby in Hong Kong receive excellent medical care.

Finding a Kindergarten

The average Hong Kong kindergarten admits children from age two years and eight months. Most children start schooling very early and thus, nurseries for 18 month olds are common and they are part of a pre-school. All of them are privately run, either by non-profit organizations or by private enterprises, but are registered with the Hong Kong Education Bureau and receive at least some state funding. The Education Bureau also sets certain standards for all kindergartens and does regular inspections.

More information on child care services, including Special Child Care Centers and Occasional Child Care Services [can be found here](#).

Education

There are also a few local schools that have English instruction streams. These should be carefully researched, as many local schools advertise as English schools but conduct the majority of classes in Cantonese. These schools would just be an extra challenge for non-Chinese speaking children and parents.

Foreign System Schools, or International Schools, offer you the opportunity to pursue an education similar to the one in your country of origin. Hong Kong has a number of International Schools granting admission to foreign students and permanent residents. Some International Schools impose minimum requirements for admission, such as language proficiency or nationality. The criteria vary with each school. School fees per year vary for lower and upper grades from schools to schools. Academic calendars for each school also differ.

It should be noted however that international schools are increasingly in demand by both locals and expats. Entrance exams, waiting lists and rejections are common. Enrolling students in the best schools is often nearly impossible; however the good news is international companies sometimes reserve spots for their employees' kids. If you have a family, you should apply for school places immediately and talk to your employer about connections they may have with local schools.

[You can read more on the application process for international schools here](#).

Tuition and costs

The English School Foundation runs 20 Hong Kong schools, partly subsidized by the government, and tuition is upwards of HKD12,500 per annum for secondary school. Strictly private international schools can be considerably more expensive: HKD120,000-HKD250,000 for 10 months. These fees will sometimes be covered by corporate expat packages, although this is becoming less common.

Websites of main International Schools:

- [Hong Kong International School](#)
- [Canadian International School](#)
- [English Schools Foundation](#)
- [Lycee Francais International](#)
- [German Swiss International School](#)
- [Kellet British School](#)
- [Hong Kong Academy](#)
- [Yew Chung International School](#)
- [Victoria Shanghai Academy](#)
- [Harrow International School](#)
- [American School Hong Kong](#)
- [International Montessori School](#)
- [Woodland Preschools](#)
- [Discovery Bay International School](#)
- [Carmel School](#)

For more information on Hong Kong Education and Schools, consult your IOR Destination Services Consultant.

BANKING & MONEY MATTERS

The official currency of Hong Kong is the Hong Kong dollar (HKD). In Chinese, one dollar is known formally as the Yuan (圓) and colloquially as the men (蚊) in Cantonese. You can safely assume that the '\$' sign used in the territory refers to HKD unless it includes other initials (e.g. US\$ to stand for US Dollar).

The official exchange rate is fixed at 7.80 HKD to 1 USD, although bank rates may fluctuate slightly. When exchanging currency at a big bank, be prepared to pay a small fixed commission, usually about 40 HKD per transaction. Be wary of using independent exchangers outside banking hours because without competition from big banks, their rates may become very uncompetitive.

Typically, the best banks for foreigners to use are [HSBC](#), [Hang Seng](#) and [Standard Chartered](#), and ATM machines from those banks are widespread.

You can find a [full list of banks in Hong Kong here](#)

Octopus card

The Octopus card provides instant electronic access to Hong Kong's public transport system. As the world's first contactless smart debit card, it can be tapped onto a reader to transfer fare from the passenger to the carrier.

In addition to being used for all forms of public transport (except most of the red-top minibuses and taxis), Octopus is also accepted for payment in almost all convenience stores, restaurant chains like McDonald's and Cafe de Coral, many vending machines, all roadside parking and some car parks. Some housing estates and schools use the card for identification at entry.

When travelling by the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) and some bus routes, payment by Octopus card can sometimes be cheaper than cash because carriers frequently offer discounts to Octopus users (such as the route between the airport and the city). You should consider getting one if you use ferries, buses, minibuses or the MTR on a daily bases.

By Bus

There are three types of bus available in Hong Kong, operated by a multitude of companies. While generally easy to use (especially with Octopus), signage in English can be sparse and finding your bus stop can get difficult. Timetable information for buses is unreliable, especially for those running in Kowloon and New Territories. Buses rarely come as the timetable scheduled and you have to wait for a long period.

The MTR also maintains a fleet of feeder buses. MTR passengers can enjoy a free feeder service if the payment is made by Octopus.

Note that if paying in cash, the exact fare is required and no change can be given. Paying by Octopus is much more convenient. The exception to this rule is if you use a red minibus, Octopus cards are not accepted on red minibus services, but they do give you change.

By Mass Transit Railway (MTR)

Hong Kong's Mass Transit Railway network of underground and suburban rail is the fastest way to get around the area. There are five underground lines (Kwun Tong, Tsuen Wan, Island, Tung Chung and Tseung Kwan O lines), three suburban rail lines (West, East and Ma On Shan lines), and the Airport Express, plus a network of modern tram lines in the North West New Territories.

Most underground MTR stations have one Hang Seng Bank branch (except for the massive Hong Kong/Central station, which has two). Since they're a common feature, unambiguous and easy to find, they're a good place to tell people to meet you.

There are also trains that go to New Territories and China via the MTR. More information can be found [here](#).

By Taxi

Taxis are plentiful, clean and efficient in Hong Kong. There are three types of taxis (identified by their color):

- The Urban (red) taxis can travel anywhere within Hong Kong, and also the most expensive. The meter starts at HKD22 for the first 2 kilometers (1.25miles), and a further HKD1.60 for every 200m (.15 miles) thereafter, and \$1.00 each ticking when the fare goes above \$72.50.
- NT (green) taxis are slightly cheaper than the red ones but are fundamentally confined to rural areas in the New Territories, the airport, Hong Kong Disneyland.
- Lantau (blue) taxis (the cheapest of the three) operate only on Lantau Island (including the airport and Hong Kong Disneyland). Be particular cautious if you are choosing from one of the three kinds of taxis when you are finding your way out of the airport, though there is usually attendants there to assist you. When in doubt, just take a red taxi.

Notes:

Tipping is usually not required or expected, however the driver will usually round the fare up to the nearest dollar. Drivers are required to provide change for HKD100 notes, but not for higher denominations. If you only have a HKD500 or HKD1000 note and are going through a tunnel, let the driver know beforehand and he will change it when paying at the toll booth. Selected taxis accept credit cards and Octopus cards to avoid hassles with small change; these are usually indicated by a sticker in the windshield.

Harbor crossing passengers (Hong Kong Island to Kowloon or vice versa) are expected to pay the return tolls. But you can use this to your advantage by picking a homebound taxi from a cross-harbor taxi rank in places like the Star Ferry pier or Hung Hom station. In these cross-harbor taxi stands only single toll charge will be applied to the taxi fare.

All taxi drivers are required to display inside the vehicle an official name card that includes the driver's photograph and the license plate number. Unless a taxi has an out of service sign displayed, they are legally required to take you to your destination. You can file complaints to the Transport Complaints Unit Complaint Hotline (Voice mail service after office hours) at 2889-9999.

It is good practice to get a local person to write the name or address of your destination in Chinese for you to hand to the taxi driver, as many drivers speak limited English and Mandarin. For example, if you wish take a journey back to your hotel, ask a receptionist for the hotel's business card. Nevertheless, even if you don't, most taxi drivers know enough English to communicate the basics.

By Car

Hong Kong allows most foreigners to drive with an International Driving Permit (IDP). In fact, if one possesses a driving license which is written in English, he/she can drive in Hong Kong for a temporary period of time. **Anyone who drives for more than 12 months is required to get a Hong Kong license issued by the Department of Transportation.**

Hong Kong follows traffic rules as well as signage similar to the United Kingdom. As a former British colony, Hong Kong follows the United Kingdom in driving on the left. The majority of Hongkongers will exceed the speed limit by around 10 km/h which is the tolerated threshold. However, they most probably will not yield to pedestrians at crossings without traffic lights.

Traffic lights are always observed. Wearing a seatbelt is mandatory for every passenger who has a seatbelt provided. Rush hour traffic can be severe around the Cross Harbour Tunnel, which is generally congested from 8am-11am and 4pm-10pm and even sometimes up until midnight.

Traffic rules are enforced seriously and the penalty for breaking rules can be severe. Signs are written in both Chinese and English.

If you wish to drive to mainland China, your vehicle must have a second set of number plates issued by the Guangdong authorities. These are issued in limited numbers to people investing in the mainland, and the price for a second hand plate can be as high as HKD300,000.

You will also need to acquire a mainland Chinese driving license. Hong Kong, Macau or foreign licenses will not be accepted. You will also need to change sides of the road to the right at the border.

By Plane

[Hong Kong International Airport](#) is the main port for visitors to Hong Kong by air. Designed by Sir Norman Foster, this modern and efficient building opened in July 1998 and has since been named "World's Best Airport" by Skytrax in annual ratings five times.

There are many direct flights to Hong Kong from every continent in the world. Most major cities in Oceania, Europe and North America are all served with at least one daily flight, and flights between Hong Kong and other major Asian cities are also frequent. Cathay Pacific operates one of the longest air routes in the world, linking Hong Kong and New York (JFK).

For destinations within mainland China, it is often cheaper to fly from Shenzhen than from Hong Kong, as flights between the mainland and Hong Kong are considered to be international flights and priced accordingly. There are also flights between Hong Kong and several mid-Pacific islands and nations.

[You can read more on Hong Kong transportation here](#)

Identity Card

Getting a Hong Kong ID card is not a very complicated endeavor. For example, health examinations, as in mainland China, are not required. However, there are two types of identity cards – one for temporary residents and one for permanent residents.

Once you have arrived with a valid visa, registering for a Hong Kong ID card guarantees you the right to remain in the country. All of your dependent family members must apply for a card as well. Children do not need one if they are younger than 11 years of age. Make sure to complete the registration process for your residence permit within 30 days of your arrival. Short-term expats staying less than six months **don't** need an ID.

All you need to register for the Hong Kong ID card is your valid travel document and your visa. This proves that you have legally entered the country and are permitted to stay for a certain period. You can apply for the Hong Kong ID card at any Registration of Persons Office in Hong Kong.

[You can download the application form](#) for the Hong Kong ID card and fill it out beforehand. To avoid waiting times at the office, you can also book an appointment online. You do not have to pay a fee when you first register for an identity card. The only time you will be charged is when you need a replacement or if you want to change your personal data.

Hong Kong law requires you to carry your new ID card with you at all times. From time to time, the police make spot checks. Therefore, if you are still waiting for your ID card, make sure to carry your passport as well as the document that shows you have applied for the ID card. If you plan to leave Hong Kong for three months or longer, you have to inform the Registration of Persons office. You might be required to hand in your Hong Kong ID card before leaving.

Driver's License

Driving licenses in Hong Kong are issued by the Transport Department in Hong Kong. A full driving license is usually valid for 10 years, costs HKD900, and is compulsory in order to drive a motor vehicle. Most driving licenses are issued after the applicant passed a driving test for the respective type of vehicles. They may be issued without a test if the applicant is a holder of an overseas driving license issued on passing a driving test by one of the approved countries.

[You can find the application for a Hong Kong Driver's License online here](#)

SHOPPING

Tipping

Tipping is only practiced in limited situations by local people and it's not expected for every little service such as a taxi driver, or a waiter. People will not reject any tips you care to hand them. Tipping is a matter of personal choice, but visitors should take into account that locals usually do not leave a tip. Visitors should also know that it is common for bar and restaurant owners to keep some, or all, of the money given as tips.

No Sales Tax

Fierce competition, no sales tax or VAT, and some wealthy consumers all add up to make Hong Kong an excellent destination for shopping. Choices are plentiful at a competitive price.

Credit and Debit Cards

Many shops will accept credit cards. When accepting credit cards, the merchant will look carefully at the signature rather than looking at the picture ID. In addition, merchants will not accept credit cards with a different name than the person presenting it. Most shops will also accept debit cards and ATM cards as payment. The term used for debit card payment is EPS.

Shopping Malls

- IFC Mall – Located near the Star Ferry and Outlying Islands Ferry Piers in Central.
- Pacific Place – Also a big shopping center with mainly high-end brands, and has a wonderful cinema. Take the MTR to Admiralty.
- Festival Walk – A big shopping center with a mix of expensive brands and smaller chains. There is also an ice skating rink there. Take the MTR East Rail to Kowloon Tong.
- Cityplaza – A similarly large shopping center, also with an ice-skating rink. Take the MTR to Taikoo on the Island Line.
- Landmark – Many luxury brands have shops here such as Gucci, Dior, Fendi, Vuitton, etc. Located at Central, Pedder Street.
- APM – All new 24hr Shopping center in Kwun Tong. Take the MTR to the Kwun Tong station.

Street Markets

Street markets are common in Hong Kong, usually selling regular groceries, clothes, bags or some cheap electronic knockoffs.

- Ladies Market – don't be fooled by the name. It is for both sexes for finding cheap clothes, toys, knockoff and fake labels. Located in Mong Kok and accessible by MTR or bus.



[Ladies Market](http://ladies-market.hk)

- Temple Street – Sold items are the same as in the Ladies Market, but there are more street food vendors, a handful of fortune tellers and a few Chinese opera singers. Illustrated in hundreds of Cantonese films, this street is seen as a must by most tourists.
- Flower Market – Prince Edward. Follow your nose to the sweet scents of a hundred different varieties of flowers.
- Goldfish Market- A whole street full of shops selling small fish in plastic bags and accessories. Tung Choi Street, Mong Kok.
- Bird Market – MTR Station Prince Edward, exit "Mong Kok Police Station". Walk down Prince Edward Road West until you reach Yuen Po Street "Bird Garden".
- Apliu Street – MTR Station Shum Shui Po, this is the place where you can find cheap computer goods, peripherals and accessories. However, this is the worst place to buy a mobile phone, as they tend to be even dodgier than small stores in Mongkok.

Supermarkets and Convenience Stores

There is an abundance of convenience stores and supermarkets to be found in Hong Kong. These include [7-Eleven](#), [Circle K](#) (referred to as 'OK' by locals) and V>nGO. Convenience stores are typically open 24-7 and sell a wide variety of snacks and household products. There are a number of supermarket chains that have branches in nearly every neighborhood. They include: [Park 'n' Shop](#) (includes Fusion and International), [Wellcome](#), Taste, [Market Place](#), [Citysuper](#), [Great](#), 360. In urban areas, these stores are sometimes located underground and offer a wide product choice.

Imported Food Markets, Bakeries, and Wet Markets

There are number of delis in the city such as [Olivers](#), and [Il Bel Paese](#) that sell imported frozen, package and bottled products and fresh bread and fruit and vegetables. There are also plenty of bakeries in Hong Kong selling beautiful cakes, cookies, bread varieties, Western style but local Chinese bakeries all over as well. [La Rose Noire](#) sells artisan bread besides the typical bakery items. Finally, although wet markets (traditional markets) are dying out, there are still big ones in Wanchai, Shek Tong Tsui and in Mongkok lingering on.



[Hong Kong Skyline](#)

CULTURE & RECREATION

Festivals

Lunar Month	Festival
First Moon	Chinese New Year
	Birthday of Che Kung
	Spring Lantern Festival
Second Moon	Hung Shing Festival
Third Moon	Ching Ming Festival
	Birthday of Tin Hau
Fourth Moon	Cheung Chau Bun Festival
	Birthday of Buddha
	Birthday of Tam Kung
Fifth Moon	Dragon Boat Festival
Sixth Moon	Birthday of Kwan Tai
Seventh Moon	Seven Sisters Festival
	The Hungry Ghost Festival
Eighth Moon	Mid-Autumn Festival
	Monkey God Festival
	Birthday of Confucius
Ninth Moon	Chung Yeung Festival
Eleventh Moon	Winter Solstice Festival

[Source](#)



[Spring Lantern Festival](#)

Beaches

You are never far away from a beach in Hong Kong. However, if you want a really good beach, then it is worth making the effort to travel, possibly on foot, and seek out the beaches of the New Territories. All public beaches that are open are maintained by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and will have life guards from 9am-6pm, showers, and changing rooms. Also, there will be kiosks selling beach apparel, sand toys, drinking water, soft drinks, snacks and some even hire out surf boards and tents depending how popular and where the beach is located.

The best beaches include:

- Repulse Bay is a large urban beach on the south side of Hong Kong Island. It has upgraded its facilities and will appeal to those who have young children.



[Repulse Bay](#)

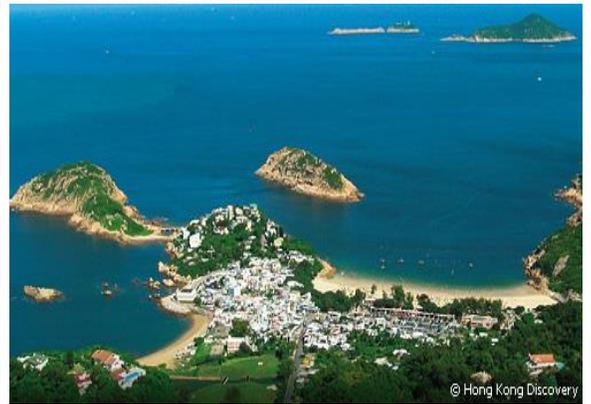
- Middle Bay is popular with gay people and is a 20 minute walk from the crowds at Repulse Bay. Middle Bay has lifeguards, showers, changing rooms, shark nets and a decent cafe serving drinks and snacks.
- Shek O is a beach popular with many young Hong Kong people. It is away from the bustle of the city but is well served by restaurants and has a good bus service from the north side of the island. The Thai restaurant close to the beach is worth a try.
- Big Wave Bay is smaller than others on Hong Kong Island but still has good services which include a number of small cafes close to the beach. Big Wave Bay, as the name suggests, has the sort of waves that appeal to surfers. From Big Wave Bay it is possible to take the coastal footpath to Chai Wan where you can find the MTR and buses. The walk to Chai Wan is about one hour, or more if you are not used to the steep climb up the mountain.
- Hung Shing Yeh Beach is highly regarded as the most popular beach and is located on Lamma Island. This beach is Grade 1 and shows off powdery, fine sand as well as clear water. To arrive at this beach, take the ferryboat from Central Pier to Yung Shue Wan. Expect to walk around 20 minutes from the ferry terminal to the beach (buses and taxis are not an option on Lamma).

Please see [Hong Kong Beaches](#) for more information.

Hiking and Camping

There are several trails in the Hong Kong SAR:

- [Dragon's Back](#) the path rolling along the ridges from Shek O Peak to Wan Cham Shan
- [Lantau Trail](#) on Lantau.
- [MacLehose Trail](#) through the New Territories.
- [Wilson Trail](#) starting on Hong Kong Island and finishing in the New Territories.
- Get a stunning view of Hong Kong Island on [Victoria Peak](#) atop the giant, wok-shaped Peak Tower!
- [More Hikes](#)



[Dragon's Back](#)

Museums

There are a variety of museums in Hong Kong with different themes:

- [The Hong Kong Museum of History](#) in Kowloon gives an excellent overview of Hong Kong's fascinating past. Innovative galleries such as a mock-up of a colonial era street make history come to life. Allow about two hours to view everything in detail.
- [The International Hobby and Toy Museum](#).
- [Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum](#)
- [Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences](#), which shows how the healthcare system evolved from traditional Chinese medicine to modern Western medicine, and Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre.
- [Hong Kong Heritage Museum](#), which will appeal to those who have a serious interest in Chinese culture, and the Hong Kong Railway Museum.

More information on Museums in Hong Kong can be found either through the [Leisure and Cultural Services Department](#) or the [Hong Kong Public Museum HP](#).

INTERNATIONAL GROUPS/CLUBS

- [Hong Kong GeoExpat](#)
One of the most popular Hong Kong Expat websites, you can find all sorts of resources here, including a forum to talk with other expats!
- [Hong Kong Asia Xpat](#)
You can use the forums to talk with other expats about meetups/common issues that arise.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

Hong Kong provides two types of public holidays: statutory and general holidays. Statutory holidays are mandated under the Employment Ordinance and must be provided to all employees. General holidays include every Sunday, all statutory holidays, and an additional 5 holidays.

Working week: Monday to Saturday

Most local and international companies' employees work five days per week. However, most shops, museums, and cinemas are open on Saturday and Sunday. Commercial establishments including consumer banking and consumer telecommunication branches are generally open throughout the weekend and on most public holidays.

General Holidays

The following list of general holidays for 2017:

The day following the first day of January	2 January
Lunar New Year's Day*	28 January
The third day of Lunar New Year	30 January
The fourth day of Lunar New Year	31 January
Ching Ming Festival	4 April
Good Friday	14 April
The day following Good Friday	15 April
Easter Monday	17 April
Labour Day	1 May
The Birthday of the Buddha	3 May
Tuen Ng Festival	30 May
The day following National Day	2 October
The day following the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival	5 October
Chung Yeung Festival	28 October
Christmas Day	25 December
The first weekday after Christmas Day	26 December

[Source](#)

* Chinese Lunar New Year has 3 (first, second and third days) holidays and this date changes and moves between mid-January – mid-February.