

Welcome to Hong Kong

This enigmatic city of soaring towers, ancient rituals and action movies is safe, friendly and wonderfully well organised.

Neighbourhoods & Islands

The tantalising neighbourhoods and curious islands that make up Hong Kong are a sensory delight awaiting exploration. You can find yourself swaying along on a double-decker tramcar one moment, then cheering with the hordes at the city-centre horse races, or simply gazing out at the magnificent harbour. Over 70% of Hong Kong is mountains and sprawling country parks, some also home to geological gems. Escape the city limits on one of the world's best transport systems and spend your day wandering in a Song-dynasty village, hiking surf-beaten beaches or scouring for sea shards on a deserted island.

Cuisine

If there were a mosaic of all the smells and flavours of all the restaurants in Hong Kong, it would be close to a food nirvana. The city that lives to eat is home to many a demon in the kitchen, whether the deliciousness in the pot is Cantonese, Shanghainese, Vietnamese, French, Japanese or Italian. Whatever your preference, your gastronomic curiosities and desires will likely be sated in Hong Kong – over a bowl of noodles with beef brisket, a basket of vegetarian dim sum, your first-ever stinky tofu, a plate of freshly steamed prawns fragrant with garlic or the culinary creations of the latest celebrity chef.

Shopping

From ready-to-wear Chinese jackets to bespoke kitchen knives, the sheer range and variety of products on Hong Kong's shelves is mind-bending. Every whim, need and pocket is catered for in true enterprising spirit by an equally dazzling number of venues – swanky malls where the wealthy hang out, chic street-level boutiques, bazaars flaunting garments or gadgetry, warehouses chock full of furniture, and a colourful mix of markets where you can haggle to your heart's content. The city has no sales tax so prices are generally attractive to visitors.

Culture

Beyond the glass and steel of Hong Kong's commercial persona, the city also boasts a vibrant cultural scene that features the eclectic influences of its Chinese roots, colonial connections and a wondrous pool of homegrown talent. Here, you're just as likely to find yourself applauding at Asia's top film festival, as you are joining in dawn taichi or reading the couplets of a local poet to the drumbeat of a dragon boat. Culture could also mean indie music under the stars, an art walk, your first Cantonese opera – not to mention the exhibitions and events staged year-round at the many museums and concert halls.



Why I Love Hong Kong

By Piera Chen, Author

I love Hong Kong because it has a complexity that eludes definition, sometimes even by its own people. I can be soul-searching near the Chinese border, lunching with Sikhs at a Sikh temple, splurging on a set of kitchen knives, arguing with bohos about the merits of a dress – all within five hours – followed by a night of Cantonese opera, tango or karaoke, anywhere I choose. Hong Kong is so intense and so full of possibilities that I'm glad there's the Rule of Law (and an awesome transport system) to stop it from whirling into chaos. Though even then it might be a sweet chaos – who knows? But for me, Hong Kong's pretty darn perfect.

For more about our authors, see p384.