



Outlying Islands

Lamma p176

The quickest island escape from downtown Hong Kong, laid-back Lamma exudes a bohemian charm and is home to many a commuter who prefers more space and greenery.

Lantau p180

The largest of the islands boasts bountiful sights and recreational possibilities: country parks, hiking trails, fishing villages, beaches, monasteries and the unmissable Big Buddha.

Cheung Chau p188

Think seafood and seafaring culture on this bustling isle with great windsurfing beaches and temples dedicated to water deities. The annual Bun Festival is a highlight.



TOP SIGHT PO LIN MONASTERY & BIG BUDDHA

No trip to Hong Kong is complete without visiting Ngong Ping Plateau for the seated Tian Tan Buddha statue, the biggest of its kind in the world. It can be seen aerially as you fly into Hong Kong, or on a clear day from Macau, but nothing beats coming up close and personal with this much-loved spiritual icon over 500m up in the western hills of Lantau.

Commonly known as the 'Big Buddha', the Tian Tan Buddha is a representation of Lord Gautama some 23m high (or 26.4m with the lotus), or just under 34m if you include the podium. It was unveiled in 1993, and still holds the honour as the tallest seated bronze Buddha statue in the world. It's well worth climbing the 268 steps for a closer look at the statue and the surrounding views. The Buddha's birthday, a public holiday in April or May, is a lively time to visit when thousands make the pilgrimage. Visitors are requested to observe some decorum in dress and behaviour. It is forbidden to bring meat or alcohol into the grounds.

On the second level of the podium is a small **museum** containing oil paintings and ceramic plaques of the Buddha's life and teachings.

Po Lin Monastery, a huge Buddhist complex built in 1924, is more of a tourist honeypot than a religious retreat, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors a year and it's still being expanded. Most of the buildings you'll see on arrival are new, with the older, simpler ones tucked away behind them. Po Lin Vegetarian Restaurant (p186) in the monastery is famed for its inexpensive but filling vegetarian food.

The most spectacular way to get to the plateau is by the 5.7km **Ngong Ping 360** (昂平360纜車; Map p181; adult/child/concession one way HK\$130/65/90, return HK\$185/95/130; ☀10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6.30pm Sat, Sun & public holidays), a cable car linking Ngong Ping with the centre of Tung Chung (downhill and to the north). The journey over the bay and the mountains takes 25 minutes, with each glassed-in gondola carrying 17 passengers. The upper station is at the skippable theme-park-like Ngong Ping Village just west of the monastery.

DON'T MISS

- ◆ Tian Tan Buddha
- ◆ Ngong Ping 360

PRACTICALITIES

- ◆ 寶蓮禪寺
- ◆ Map p181, C3
- ◆ ☎852 2985 5248
- ◆ Lantau Island
- ◆ ☀9am-6pm