

Understand Hong Kong

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Rising prices and an influx of mainland shoppers may stoke discontent, but the city is still one of Asia's most hospitable.

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Discover how the grave of Song dynasty's sunset emperors rose to become one of the world's richest cities.

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It's official: Hong Kong was never a cultural desert. In fact, the city's cultural landscape is lushier than ever.

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From the sublime to the slapstick, Hong Kong's film industry has entranced and entertained the world in equal measure.

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Beyond the shiny facade of skyscrapers, an endearing jumble of styles, eras and influences beckon.

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Hong Kongers are brought up surrounded by a variety of spiritual beliefs, even if many of them never profess to a religion.

Hong Kong Today

Just a decade ago, most Hong Kong residents would say return to Chinese rule in 1997 did not bring many changes, but since then, for many, things have gone downhill. Rising tensions with Běijīng dominate Hong Kong politics and public sentiment, putting the 'One Country, Two Systems' experiment in peril. Běijīng has politicised a city that was known for its political antipathy during 150 years of British rule.

Best on Film

Infernal Affairs (2002) The crime-thriller that inspired Scorsese's *The Departed*.

Election I and II (2005 and 2006) A complex two-part film noir about elections inside a Triad society.

Night and Fog (2010) Auteur Ann Hui's darkly realistic drama on domestic violence and the lives of migrant women.

The Grandmaster (2013) Wong Kar-wai's stylish martial-arts drama about the life of Wing Chun grandmaster Ip Man.

Comrades: Almost a Love Story (1996) Two mainland migrants take a reality check in the maddening city.

Trivisia (2016) Engaging and reflective action crime thriller produced by Johnnie To and Yau Nai-hoi, featuring three new directors.

Best in Print

City at the End of Time: Poems by Leung Ping-kwan (Ed Esther Cheung; 2012) Leung Ping-kwan aka Yesi was Hong Kong's unofficial poet laureate.

The Hungry Ghosts (Anne Berry; 2009) Restless spirits haunt this excellent tale.

Hong Kong: A Cultural History (Michael Ingham; 2007) The definitive title in this category.

The State of Play

Hong Kong has witnessed much political strife since the turn of the decade. Critics of the government have focused on a long list of increasingly intractable issues, from slow democratic reform and the perceived collusion between the government and big businesses, to stifling property prices and the perceived drain on public resources by mainland migrants. The involvement of Běijīng's Hong Kong-based proxies around Leung Chun-ying's ascent to the top post in town marks a definitive dynamics shift in the local political landscape, and serves as an ominous forewarning of worsening political turbulence.

The combination of divisive party politics and the lack of a democratic mandate has caused many to condemn the government as weak, and hopelessly so when faced with vested interests as strong as the largest developers.

Basic Economics

Inflation hit a 16-year high in 2011 and, while it has slowed down since, the truth is that for many, Hong Kong has become a depressingly expensive place to live. The city has more billionaires than most countries, but many more struggle to meet basic levels of subsistence. Despite reasonable economic growth in the past few years, Hong Kong's economy has become increasingly reliant on the financial sector and the spending power of mainland tourists.

A New Era

Once savvy and confident, many Hong Kongers are worried about what they see as Běijīng's attempt at homogenisation. The arrival of mainland visitors has bred discontent among critics as these tourists dominate shopping areas and the resulting rent hikes force