

# HONG KONG

## ENCOUNTER

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Hong Kong Encounter

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## PIERA CHEN

Hong Kong writer Piera has been visiting Macau since she was six years old. Half of her family was born there and the other half just thought that sipping Mateus rosé while sitting on the old sea-wall was incredibly romantic. Later, while working in Hong Kong, it was poetry readings, *fado* concerts and, most of all, a masterfully executed *pato de cabidela* (duck stewed in its own blood) that kept luring her back. Piera has also written the Hong Kong and Macau chapters of the 12th edition of Lonely Planet's *China*, and co-authored the 14th *Hong Kong & Macau* city guide.



## PIERA'S THANKS

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## THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Greg Elms completed a Bachelor of Arts in Photography at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, then embarked on a travel odyssey across Australia, Southeast Asia, India, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. He has been the photographer for numerous award-winning books, and has worked for magazines, ad agencies, designers and, of course, book publishers such as Lonely Planet.

**Our readers** Many thanks to the travellers who wrote to us with helpful hints, useful advice and interesting anecdotes. Luke Armstrong, Nelson Chen, James Cridland, Denis Howe, Penny Lattey, Ryan Macdicken, Joris van der Meer, Helen Or, Devon Peavoy, Jacalyn Soo, Lois Warner, Rachel Willcocks, Susan Williams, Anke Werschnik.

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Take in the sights aboard one of Hong Kong's unique double-decker trams (p13)

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# THIS IS HONG KONG

A city that forces you to make some rapid adjustments. From the calm and cool of a Kowloon hotel lobby, the heat and hustle of teeming streets engulf you. You fight your way through multitudes only to stumble into sudden shade, greenery and space.

Hong Kong is a place that provokes questions, some without answers. Those five-star hotels and soaring skyscrapers are first world, but those crumbling tenements look third world, don't they? Where has all the oil-slick slow traffic come from and where on earth is it going? How do seven million people fit on this tiny speck of land? And how do they decide where to eat in the City of 10,000 Restaurants? How can a simmering tureen of tripe stock look so evil yet smell so good? And what, exactly, is in the food product you saw in the supermarket labelled 'vegetarian gizzard'?

Pondering, you reach the water and stare across to Hong Kong Island. Nothing has quite prepared you for the spectacle up close: freighters and motor junks forever plying their harbour trade and, beyond them, a *Futurama* cityscape rising from near-vertical jungle slopes.

After this sensory wave has rolled over you, there's no option but to start swimming with the tide in this energetic city of merchants, chancers and grifters. You soon learn that Hong Kong rewards those who grab experience by the scruff of the neck, who try that bowl of shredded jellyfish, who consume conspicuously, who roar with the Happy Valley punters as the winner thunders home. It rewards, too, those with the yen to explore centuries-old temples in half-deserted walled villages or to stroll surf-beaten beaches far from all the neon and steel and people.

It's an intoxicating place – spectacular, exotic and accessible. If you're visiting for business, you'll find pleasure sneaks up on you. If you're visiting for pleasure, there's no shortage of locals who make it their business to please.

**Top** Stroll through the serene Hong Kong Zoological & Botanical Gardens (p43) **Bottom** Jump aboard a traditional Chinese-style boat to get an excellent vantage point from which to take in the spectacle of the city