

ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

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HONG KONG

THE SKY UNLIMITED



NAMED FOR THE STORES of sandalwood incense that once perfumed its export docks, Hong Kong—that is, “fragrant harbor”—remains an intoxicating meeting place of East and West.

British forces raised the Union Jack over Possession Point in 1841 during the First Opium War, fought to protect the Queen's trade of the narcotic. That flag would fly over the island for 156 years, until a ceremonial hand-off that saw the final British governor, Chris Patten, in tears, and reduced Prince Charles to angry diarist mode. “Appalling old waxworks,” he called the new Chinese masters.

Fourteen years since, Hong Kong remains an intriguing example of exuberant capitalism within a communist state. The dominant image of Hong Kong is its spectacular skyline; the enduring sentiment, the voracious urbanism that skyline evinces. Among other superlatives, Hong Kong claims the highest percentage of residents living above 14 floors of any city. That skyline also attests to Hong Kong's rapacious appetite for the new: Few examples of traditional Chinese or more recent colonial architecture stand outside of museums, while contemporary works by Norman Foster and I.M. Pei figure prominently. The vertical city-

scape belies the fact that around 40% of Hong Kong is official park land, with wildlife reserves holding Chinese porcupines, macaques, leopards and wild boar. It's well appreciated from atop Victoria Peak, deservedly one of the city's top attractions.

Hong Kong has long battled Shanghai and Singapore for the crown of Asia's financial, cultural and tourism center. And while it's maintaining front-runner status in those power realms, it's also becoming a premier destination spot for adventurous foodies. Hong Kong is unique in its democratic exaltation, with street vendor grills celebrated alongside a growing number of restaurants conceived by celebrity European chefs. As conundrums go, it's a happy one—and best debated over a meal of barbecued pork buns at Tim Ho Wan, one of the least expensive Michelin-starred restaurants in the world. The common thread between these eateries is a tangible love of making food.

Trust the city to manage a poke at its competitors when possible: A spring-opening Ritz-Carlton hotel will feature the world's highest infinity pool. As rivalries go, it's a profitable one, at least for the guests lounging poolside, 118 floors above the earth's surface. —*Diane Vadino*

PLUS, DON'T MISS...

- **Luk Yu Tea House:** Since 1933, the most iconic dim sum and tea emporium in the city set in an Art Deco-era space. 852-2523-5464
- **The Luxe Manor:** An artsy-surreal but luxurious boutique hotel that houses the bizarre-o Dada bar. theluxemanor.com
- **Happy Valley Racecourse:** 8 This iconic horse track is best experienced at night, a gambling-giddy, flood-lit “Field of Dreams” surrounded by Hong Kong Island high rises. happyvalleyracecourse.com
- **HealthWorks:** There are now 23 of these minimalist-chic herbal tea remedy throughout the city. health-wks.com
- **Lung King Keen:** 7 Dine beneath the undulating silver-leaf ceiling of this three-Michelin-star Cantonese mecca in the Four Seasons, overlooking Victoria Harbour. 852-3196-8880

Andrew Rowat (6); Sevva; Lily; Borchi Massimo/4Corners Images (market)



The Fashion Insider:

Carol Lim
New York-based co-founder of the Opening Ceremony brand (with partner Humberto Leon); frequent Hong Kong visitor

Twenties Revival: 6 Lily and Bloom. The two-story Prohibition Era-inspired space is gorgeous. Upstairs is Lily, a cigar and whisky room. Downstairs is Bloom, a raw bar and brasserie. I particularly love their oyster selection. LKF Tower, 33 Wyndham St., lily-bloom.com

Late Bites: Tsui Wah Restaurant. For after-hours eating, this franchise location is the spot where all the night owls go for inexpensive, tasty food. My favorite dish is cheese-baked rice with crispy pork chops. 15-19 Wellington St., tsuiwahrestaurant.com

Two for the Road: 1 Sevva and Feather Boa. Sevva's great for fantastic skyline views. Feather Boa is more discreet; there's no entrance sign at this late-19th-century salon that serves cocktails like “choco-straw martinis.” Sevva: *Prince's Building, 25th floor, 10 Chater Rd., sevva.hk*; Feather Boa: 38 Staunton St., 852-2857-2586

Shopping Tour: Rise Commercial Building. This micro-mall features cool local designers, retro-jewelry and I can always find home accessories there. 5-11 Granville Circuit, Tsim Sha Tsui, off Granville Rd.

Show-Stopping Hotel: 5 The Mandarin Oriental. It's nothing short of spectacular. Its Clipper Lounge has one of the best high teas in the city and the Man Wah restaurant is gorgeous. 5 Connaught Rd., mandarinoriental.com/hongkong



The Architect:

Daniel Libeskind
Designer of the Creative Media Centre for the City University of Hong Kong (opening this year)

Thrill Ride: 3 The Star Ferry. Taking this scenic ride back and forth over the Victoria Harbour is cheap and as exciting as anything in “Casablanca” for the shifting perspectives of people and faces. 852-2367-7065, starferry.com.hk

Bank Job: 2 HSBC Main Building. It was designed by Norman Foster, and was one of the most expensive bank buildings built in the '80s. Its awe-inspiring lobby was designed with the help of feng shui consultants. It's still breathtaking 26 years later. 1 Queen's Rd. Central, 852-2822-1111

Loo with a View: Felix, in the Peninsula Hotel. The Philippe Starck-designed space is on the 28th floor—a feast of lights—and the men's bathrooms have sculptural granite urinals that look out over Kowloon. *Salisbury Rd., Kowloon, 852-2920-2888, peninsula.com*

Cuisine Royale: Fook Lam Moon. This place has the best duck, and thousand-year-old eggs! It's where you expect James Bond to walk in at any moment. 35-45 Johnston Rd., fooklam-moon-grp.com

Cheap Eats: Lei Yuen Noodle and Congee Restaurant. Any hole-in-the-wall café works for excellent dim sum day or night—but this one's a favorite. You can sit all day while having endless cups of Lapsang Souchong tea. 539 Lockhart Rd., 852-2832-4978



The Chef:

Alain Ducasse
Michelin-starred chef and principal of Spoon by Alain Ducasse at the InterContinental Hotel, Hong Kong

Secret Ingredients: Yau Ma Tei. The city's local food markets provide a unique insight into the Chinese culinary culture. There is no better place than this to discover all the ingredients used in cooking there. *Reclamation St. and Waterloo Rd.*

Precious Ceramics: Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Museum of Tea Ware. The museum has more than 15,000 Chinese art treasures, and the branch museum is the place to learn about the art of Chinese tea drinking, while having tea yourself. *Hong Kong Museum: 10 Salisbury Rd., hk.art.museum; Tea Ware: 10 Cotton Tree Drive, 852-2869-0690*

Shell Game: Tim Ho Wan. During fall's hairy crab season, I enjoy this delicacy there the most. It serves classic Hangzhou cuisine from the Yangtze River Delta—like freshwater Longjing shrimp stir-fried with tea leaves and wine. *Shop 8, 2-20 Kwong Wa St., 852-2332-2896*

Sum Like It Hot: Tin Heung Lau. A new local restaurant, it serves delicious spicy dim sum, exclusively. It's very small and extremely casual. 18C Austin Ave., 852-2366-2414

Final Frontiers: Hong Kong Space Museum. This planetarium dome is amazing, filled with spacecraft replicas. Through Feb. 28, the OMNIMAX theatre is showing “Under the Sea,” featuring bizarre sea creatures. 10 Salisbury Rd., hk.space.museum



The Restaurateur:

Alan Lo
Co-owner of The Pawn, The Press Room, Classified and SML, all in Hong Kong

Barbecue Joint: Joy Hing Roasted Meat. Order a regular plate of char siu, which is a tad more expensive, but you get the best cut, and a rice bowl. Drizzle both with the signature sauce—divine. 265-267 Hennessy Rd., 852-2519-6639

Upper Crust: 208 Duecento Otto. Designed by Istanbul's Autoban, this Italian restaurant has excellent cocktails and to-die-for Neopolitan pizzas. It's favored by the fashionable Sheung Wan [neighborhood] set. 208 Hollywood Rd., 208.com.hk

Hitting the Links: 4 Wan Chai Market. It's one of the only remaining street-level wet markets, as our city government is trying to move the stalls to indoor municipal buildings. It's a must-go-to for items like Chinese dried-sausage and fresh eggs. *Cross St. and Wan Chai Rd., 852-2572-6945*

Sweet Sensations: Yiu Fung Store. They make everything from artistic fruit and confectioner creations to preserved “super” plums favored by the locals. I go for the lovely dried apricots. 3 Fu Ming St., yiufungstore.com

Creative Hub: Para/Site Art Space. This contemporary gallery, which opened in 1996, continues to showcase great upcoming and established artists. The political cartoonist Dan Perjovschi's solo show just opened. 4 Po Yan St., para-site.org.hk