

## Visit Hong Kong

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Thursday, 02 November 2006

During a trip to Asia with my husband, we saw quite a bit of Japan and China. We also took a few days to visit Hong Kong. This city is one of the most fascinating places to spend time in and I would recommend it to anyone. The first thing to hit you is the energy of the place. It's a noisy, chaotic throng of people and has wonderful contrasting elements. The Chinese tradition rubs along with the Western influences. Sometimes a run down apartment block is immediately behind a modern glass fronted skyscraper.

We flew in from Tokyo and got into Kowloon, which is just across the water from the central part of the city. When you visit Hong Kong, you need to walk the narrow streets and give yourself time to acclimatize. Several buildings were covered in scaffolding. This is noteworthy because they use bamboo scaffolding in this part of the world. It looks somewhat fragile but it seems to do the job. We found a small, cheap hotel to stay in run by a man with the unlikely name of Charlie Chan. Next morning, we woke fresh and eager to explore but first we needed breakfast. If you visit Hong Kong, anything is possible and we found a welcoming Irish bar that served a full English fry up.

We then took in some of the sights and smells, the very English looking buses, the food stalls full of seafood and vegetables we didn't know the name of, and the advertising hoardings and giant video screens. We had to go to the Foreign Affairs Office to apply for our visas to allow us into China for the next stage of our trip. Thankfully, this was done speedily and efficiently. The next stop was to visit friends who live at the top of a gated complex up in the hills. They used to visit Hong Kong and then decided to stay. The view from their balcony is amazing. That evening, we all went bar hopping, enjoyed some live music, and met some other residents. To visit Hong Kong is to have a cosmopolitan experience, as lots of British, American, and Australian people live and work there.

Next day, we went into the New Territories and the Monastery of Ten Thousand Buddhas. This is one of the places when you visit Hong Kong where you can take a breather from the city and enjoy some tranquility. The Monastery is high up in the hills near the town of Sha Tin, and you have to climb up four hundred steps to get to it. Life-size Buddha statues line the way. It's worth the climb, when you see the giant pagoda at the top and the temple. The interior of the temple is truly breathtaking with small statues of Buddhas lining the walls numbering not 10,000 but actually 13,000.

After this, we went back to Kowloon and looked round a very exclusive shop selling items made from mammoth ivory. No one should visit Hong Kong without spending time on the Waterfront, so we went down after dark and marveled at the skyscrapers. These buildings contain some of the most expensive office spaces in the world. Our last night in our visit to Hong Kong was spent looking at the twinkling lights from the boats in the harbor, reflected in the water. Next morning, we flew to Beijing but that's another story!