

Living In Hong Kong

Relocation to any new destination always brings with it advantages and disadvantages. Expats will soon find Hong Kong China is no different. The more prepared you are for living in Hong Kong, the more successful your move will prove to be.

The good news is that Hong Kong daily life makes it one expat destination where the upside seems to far outweigh the downside. Today, Hong Kong is a vibrant, dynamic city. It showcases the stark contrast between Asian and Western cultures while drawing upon both cultures to create the city the vigorous, energetic city it is.

Is Hong Kong A Good Place To Live?

This bustling city is typically described as one place where "East meets West", reflecting the local culture's effervescent mix of Chinese roots with influences carried over from its period of British rule.

Somehow, Hong Kong manages to maintain its delicate juggling act, balancing traditional Chinese practices alongside a frenetic, uber-modern lifestyle. However, this standard of living has not come without a cost. Hong Kong is ranked as Asia's third most expensive city to live after Tokyo and Seoul. Overall, food, accommodation and education costs for a typical family with children account for the major areas of day-to-day living expenses.

However, despite the surging crowds, high-rise lifestyle and its endemic high cost of living, Hong Kong continues to lure expats from around the globe with its siren song of financial success.

7 Reasons To Live In Hong Kong

Here is a list of the best aspects of living in Hong Kong:

1. Economics

Hong Kong is one of the wealthiest cities on the face of the planet, not just in China. The city continues its pattern of rapid growth and ever-expanding urban footprint. Some commentators see Hong Kong China as the New York or London of the East. Little wonder Hong Kong offers a plethora of fabulous professional employment opportunities and is a rich stomping ground for ex-pats.

However, the wealth of this shimmering city makes it an expensive city to live and work in. Consider the costs of living in New York or London. Although Hong Kong is tremendously wealthy, it still struggles to improve the lives of numerous impoverished citizens and even entire communities.

2. High Internet Speeds

For those of you addicted to your iPads and iPhones, a recent study by Ookla found Hong Kong's ISPs provide the fastest download speeds in the world. If you live a digital life, this aspect of life as an expat in Hong Kong could make Hong Kong your version of nirvana.

3. Cuisine

If there is one thing the residents of Hong Kong love about the city, its Hong Kong's thriving food scene. That brings with it good news and bad news. Food in Hong Kong remains as exotic as anything you will see on a foodie cable channel, with a strong dash of Western dishes from all the myriad cultures that have packed up and moved to Hong Kong. Life in Hong Kong for a foreigner is truly fabulous if you are a foodie, as you can find Chinese cuisine infused with French, Spanish, Italian, German and even American dishes.

4. Architecture

What's not to love about Hong Kong China? The city's wealth and inexorable expansion, has transformed Hong Kong into the most vertically oriented city on the globe. If you love architecture, expect to see some of the most amazing and signature works of architectural ambition erected anywhere on Mother Earth.

5. Travel

If your passion is travel, Hong Kong's position on the Southern edge of China makes it a wonderful jumping off point for travel across other parts of the Eastern hemisphere. From Hong Kong, you are only a couple hours away from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, South Korea, Mongolia, Japan and the Philippines. For those who love the bright lights and spinning roulette wheels of Las Vegas, you're only a short flight from Macao.

6. Climate

Hong Kong, with its warm subtropical climate and surrounding mountains, feels very exotic. No need for fleecy underwear, snow pants or winter jackets in Hong Kong. Just pack a light raincoat for the monsoon season.

7. Western Comforts

For many westerners, life as an expat in Hong Kong can be quite a culture shock. While there is an element of cultural dislocation attached to any overseas move and the presence of familiar Western comforts can help ease the transition shock and shorten the often-disorienting settling-in period.

Working In Hong Kong

Most business people speak excellent English, and all government signs are posted in both Chinese and English. Cantonese is the preferred spoken language

of choice, with the more widely known Mandarin used for communication with the Chinese mainland.

Traditional Chinese concepts such as Feng Shui remain at the centre of commercial decision-making and compliance with its guiding practices is often believed to make or break a potential commercial agreement.

Other traditional objects such as Ba Gua mirrors maintain a regular presence in business and social life to deflect evil spirits. Moreover, many major buildings lack a fourth floor, as the number when spoken " in Cantonese is eerily similar to "die.

Healthcare

There are approximately 13 private hospitals and more than 50 public hospitals serving Hong Kong's burgeoning population. The standard of healthcare available is high.

Once a resident has an ID card, they are eligible for subsidised state healthcare. Most large local and major international companies provide health and dental cover.

Climate

Hong Kong has a subtropical climate. Its summers are hot with high humidity and occasional heavy showers and thunderstorms. Typhoons regularly emerge from the South East and can threaten the city during these warm summer months. However, Hong Kong has an efficient, proven typhoon-warning system.

Winters are usually mild although the periodic cold fronts can bring with them sweeping, cold winds from the north. Hong Kong averages around 1,948 hours of sunshine annually. The highest and lowest temperatures ever recorded were 36.1C and 0.0C, respectively.

Cost of Living In Hong Kong

One of the challenges of living in Hong Kong is its high cost of accommodation. While the average cost varies according to the neighbourhood and the size of the apartment, it is much higher than, New York City. Most companies supporting expats offer subsidized housing, even if you are a local hire.

Similarly, the cost of education is also expensive, especially if you are looking to live in a nice area.

Hong Kong Daily Life

Depending on where you call home, life in Hong Kong can either seem very familiar to life back at home, or it can feel like you are living on another planet! In particular, for those Westerners, living in the Hong Kong cant present all kinds of fascinating differences to acclimatise to.

Here are seven revealing aspects that illustrate Hong Kong daily life:

1. Wake Up In An Apartment: Living space in Hong Kong is in short supply. Most Hong Kong residents live in high-rise residential apartments, ranging in height from twenty to forty floors and even higher. Most mid-range buildings are clustered together in massive developments limiting the view out of your window. These apartments are small, averaging roughly 50 square meters. Tight living spaces are one of the reasons Hong Kong's residents spend so much time out of their home, eating with friends, walking and hiking when not at work.
2. The Daily Commute: As with every other big city, the first challenge facing residents each morning is their commute to work. Happily, Hong Kong is comparatively compact and is well served with public transport such as the MTR subway system, ferries, trams, and buses. The average Hong Kong commute is around thirty minutes door to door
3. Mid-Levels Escalator: One of Hong Kong's more picturesque modes of transport, the escalator slides people down to work in the mornings, from the Mid-levels residential districts and SoHo with Central and back again in the evening. This is the world's longest outdoor escalator system
4. Workplace Skyscrapers: Most of Hong Kong's workforce occupies office-filled skyscrapers. Hong Kong now has the most skyscrapers on the face of the planet, eclipsing even that of New York
5. Office Hours: Hong Kong's workday usually runs from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday to Friday, with a half day on Saturday. Many people, however, typically work far longer hours
6. Shopping For Fresh Fruit At The Market: Good fresh ingredients are a must in Hong Kong's pervasive Cantonese cuisine. Frozen food, is uncommon and Hong Kong residents collect their fresh meat, fruit and vegetables daily from the local market
7. Retail Therapy: Shopping till you drop at the Mall. Shopping in Hong Kong is a passion and a lifestyle verging on an addiction. Evenings are often spent with friends and family trawling the shops and indulging in a little window-shopping. Shops are everywhere, packed into the classic areas like Causeway Bay and Mongkok's markets, typically not shutting after 10:00 pm in the evening. Hong Kong has some of the world's most opulent malls, bursting with chic boutiques and international brands.

Languages

Hong Kong has two official languages; Cantonese Chinese and English. Mandarin Chinese is also widely spoken and its use is increasing as the influence of the Chinese mainland on Hong Kong's daily life expands. All signs are in both Chinese and English and in the business world most people one speak English at least to some extent.

The Arts In Hong Kong

Hong Kong harbours aspirations to be a global cultural hub much like New York or London, the only two cities in the world generating larger revenues from art. However, the local scene continues to be a work in progress.

The Hong Kong Museum of Art is home to over 15,000 precious objects spanning Chinese antique bronzes and jade, calligraphy, historical paintings and works by prominent local artists.

Currently closed for a \$120 million dollar renovation, the museum will add glass atriums to the existing ground floor and rooftop, providing it with much-needed light and exhibition space.

Down the waterfront, the much-delayed West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) gradually takes shape, with a construction cost approaching \$4 billion. M+ the district's \$220 million "museum of visual culture," venue is planned to open in 2019. Its 40,000-square-meters of exhibition space places it on a similar scale to London's Tate Modern or New York's Museum of Modern Art.

The overall district strategy calls for a dozen other cultural venues, including a Chinese opera hall, to be housed in its environs together with the M+.

In the interim, the real art action is happening at art galleries, private museums and other independently run spaces across the city. One of the attractions of art in a city increasingly under control by Beijing is its ability to openly exhibit art featuring controversial or political content in public spaces.

This art-led resistance to authoritarianism is seen in venues as diverse as up-market auction houses and the graffiti and street art.

Hong Kong's Film And Cinema Industry

Hong Kong enjoys one of the world's largest and most dynamic film entertainment industries. It has achieved a prominent role one as one of the world's largest film and television content exporters, capturing a significant share of the regional market, particularly the Chinese mainland film market.

An increasing number of movies are now being co-produced by Hong Kong and mainland film production companies. In recent years, this accounted for 54 out of a total of 89 films granted co-production shooting permits.

Hong Kong also acts as the hub for buying and selling Chinese mainland films and TV dramas through its FILMART and it is increasingly being viewed as a remarkable platform to explore co-production across other Asian markets. In 2017, there were over 220 Chinese exhibitors at its FILMART festival.

Driving In Hong Kong

Life in Hong Kong for a foreigner gets interesting if you aspire to drive. Statistics suggest there are about 285 vehicles for every kilometre of road in Hong Kong.

Consequently, the streets are extremely crowded and traffic jams are a common experience.

Road signs are in both Chinese and English, so navigating around the city presents the same level of challenge as in any other major global city. Rush hour in Hong Kong is not for the faint-hearted driver. Traffic jams are endemic and the search for a parking spot is an eternal nightmare. Local petrol prices are also high and are generally on par with most European countries.

So, it's hardly surprising most people prefer to take advantage of the public transport system rather than drive. Despite the horrendous traffic or perhaps, because converging speeds are typically slow, the number of road fatalities per resident is lower than in other countries.

The high density of cars together with the limited amount of available space, combine to create difficulties in building new roads to accommodate the increasing numbers of vehicles.

Parking

Parking spots are also comparatively rare and very expensive. Happily, there are almost 18,000 parking meters and other short-term parking options. Be sure not to park illegally unless you want to risk having your wheel clamped or your car towed away.

Hong Kong's Traditions

Hong Kong has a long, lustrous and occasionally turbulent history. Contemporary Hong Kong has retained many of its rich traditions and cultural observances.

Festivals such as Chinese New Year, the Birthday of Tin Hay, the Spring Lantern Festival and The Hungry Ghost Festival all remain popular. In particular, life in Hong Kong for a foreigner comes alive during Chinese New Year. The city virtually shuts down to celebrate this important festival.

Another important festival is Tin Hau's Birthday, which is held on the 23rd day of the third lunar month. Tin Hau, Goddess of the Sea and patron saint of fishermen, enjoys a loyal following thanks to Hong Kong's maritime history. On her birthday, locals flock to over 70 temples dedicated to Tin Hau to pray for fine weather, safe fishing and full nets during the year ahead.

On the last day of the Chinese New Year celebrations, couples celebrate what's informally known as 'Chinese Valentine's Day during the Spring Lantern Festival. Traditionally, on this auspicious day singles would play matchmaking games.

Dragon Boat Racing

Each year, thousands of the world's leading dragon boat aficionados' compete at the CCB (Asia) Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races. This three

extravaganza fills Hong Kong Harbour with fast-paced action, a dazzling cacophony of colour, reverberating drumming and the shouts of desperate fans urging their paddlers on towards the finish line.

The Dragon Boat Races are also an excellent opportunity to explore the local fleet of food trucks and quench the summer heat with a hard-earned beer.

Final Observation

Hong Kong has always been a bustling, dynamic city where “East meets West” resulting in a local culture with a beguiling mix of Chinese roots with distinctive influences carried over from its period of British rule. Living in Hong Kong, despite its dizzyingly high cost of living continues to attract a steady stream of expats from around the globe with its siren song of economic success. Today’s Hong Kong is a vibrant, dynamic city, which has merged its many cultural influences to create a vigorous, energetic city.