



Hong Kong is a small island just off the southern coast of the Chinese mainland. It's a model of free enterprise. A bustling metropolis. And one of the world's most important financial centers. But it is also a focal point for traditional Chinese history and culture. Chinese music. Chinese art. Chinese theater. And Chinese food. And that unusual blend of western high-tech with Chinese high-touch has made Hong Kong the most important tourist destination in Asia. Over ten million visitors come to Hong Kong each year.

The north side of the island of Hong Kong, facing the mainland, is the home of the central business district. The best way to see the place is to hop on one of the double-decker trams, sit up top and up front and see the city. But don't take your tram ride during the morning or evening rush hours. The traffic is unbearable.

A ride on the funicular railway to Victoria Peak, puts you at the highest spot on Hong Kong island, from both the geographic and social viewpoints. This is *the* place to live in Hong Kong. If you are at the top of your game, you live on the top of the peak.

Hong Kong is also the home of a district called Western. It was the first place settled by the British in the 1840s, but they soon moved out and left it to the Chinese who were moving in to get



work. Today Western is a typical, colorful, urban Chinese community. It's the place to see the most traditional Chinese craftsmen at work. Mahjong set makers. Chop carvers. Jade workers. Fan makers. Potters. And egg roll bakers. It's also the neighborhood of the Chinese herbalists.

Ladder Street is lined with some of the city's oldest buildings. It's thought to have been constructed with its broad stones in order to make it easier for

men carrying people in sedan chairs to make it up and down the hill from Hollywood Road.

The sedan chairs are gone, but Hollywood Road is still here and it's a great spot for antiques, furniture, snuff bottles, and porcelain.



WINNIE CHAN

Hollywood got its name because the second governor, Sir John Davids, named this road according to his home in England called Hollywood Tower, so he named this road Hollywood Road.

When you are looking at jade carvings in the shops, the carving itself is very important. Even though you might have a piece of the best jade, if you mess up with the carving it's not worth much. The carving itself is very important. It's like cutting a diamond.

Another item you will find in the antique shops is a large basket. In olden times, a bride's family carried the dowry to the groom's home and they put everything in a huge basket. In the basket would be silks, food, money, and gold.

The island of Hong Kong is also the site of Wanchai, known also as the "Wanch," and it's home to one of Hong Kong's great markets. In one of the oldest Chinese bakeries you can see all of these colorful cakes

are wedding cakes. You give those to someone who's having a wedding. You give it away, it's a sort of an announcement, it's especially given out by the bride's family to say that their daughter is marrying. The colors are all lucky colors. Yellow represents wealth, pink is power, red is happiness. They have different stuffing inside. And you don't normally get just one. You normally have a set.

Hong Kong's commitment to its Chinese heritage is expressed throughout the society. The population continues to take part in all of the traditional Chinese holidays and follows the customs associated with paying respect to ancient gods and ancestors. The Man



Mo Temple was built in the early 1840s. When you first come to the temple you see a very beautiful door. Years ago only very important people could go through the door,

everyone else would go around it.

The temple is for Man and Mo, two gods. The civil god controls the destiny of the civil servant. And Mo is actually marshal and we also named him the god of the war. First we're going to get some incense and then we do bison, that means worship the gods. You put money in the donation box and then just help yourself to a pack of incense. That always comes in three sets, three sticks in one set. It represents the heaven, the universe and the hell. Once you offer, you offer to God, human being and evil spirit.

The incense comes in different sizes, the biggest one is the better one.



Communication with God is a private matter. So, if you have a question or doubt in your mind, you bow and you say your prayer. You don't have to say it out loud, you just say to yourself

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whatever wishes you want. After you finish your prayer, you put the incense down with the rest.

There is a reason for all the different incense. If a family, people, worshippers want to have a blessing they normally burn a large incense. The big circular ones last for two weeks. The smaller one lasts for ten days and you normally write your wish on the red tag underneath it. Wishes are usually for things like happiness and successful business. Last, but not least, you can put a donation in the temple box. That allows you to hit the drum and the bell which will bring you good luck.

LITTLE ISLAND

People have been living on Hong Kong for over six thousand years, and until the middle of the 1800s it was a quiet place with a small population that made a living from the sea.



But that is no longer the case. These days Hong Kong is one of the busiest and most modern cities in the world. And perhaps because it is physically so small -- only seventeen square miles -- it loves the idea of being big in every other way.

It has the busiest container port in the world. It is the world's largest exporter of clothing, watches and fashion jewelry. It is one of the world's largest banking centers. It has the world's largest Chinese restaurant, which you might expect, but it also has the world's busiest McDonald's. It has constructed the world's longest outdoor escalator.

Hong Kong is also one of the world's top centers for trade. Which is only fitting, since Hong Kong's growth began as the result of a trade war between England and China in the middle of the 1800s. And trade has been the source of Hong Kong's growth ever since.

But where does all this economic success come from? What are the origins of Hong Kong's wealth and power?

Hong Kong has no vast agricultural areas. Hong Kong has no wealth of raw materials. Hong Kong has no reserve of valuable minerals. It would seem that Hong Kong has none of the things that traditionally

make a community wealthy. But Hong Kong does have two things that make up for everything that's missing. The first is a unique geographic position. Hong Kong is at the crossroads of Asia and it is the commercial entrance gate to the Chinese mainland. To take advantage of its geography, Hong Kong has built itself one of the most modern ports in the world.

The second thing that Hong Kong has is a population with a cultural tradition that loves "efficiency." Efficiency is basic to the Chinese character and it comes out in everything that is a basic part of Chinese life.

For thousands of years the Chinese have cooked in woks. A wok is easy to make. Easy to store. Easy to use, and most important, it is very efficient in terms of fuel. Most Chinese recipes are masterpieces of gastronomic efficiency. Lots of well-balanced nutrients for the least cost.

The Chinese junk is an amazing example of efficient nautical design. Easy to build, it carries a large amount of cargo space and makes almost perfect use of the local winds. The Chinese also invented the magnetic compass, which was certainly a great step toward more efficient travel.



And with all due respect to Mr. Gutenberg and his bible, the Chinese had movable type centuries before the Europeans. They also invented paper, which gave them the original prize for efficient information storage. And next time you open up your wallet, please bear in mind that it was the Chinese who came up with the idea of paper money.

NINE DRAGONS

Across the harbor from the island of Hong Kong is Kowloon. The distance is only a mile and you can cover it by car in the harbor tunnel, but the most interesting way to make the passage is on the Star Ferry. These ferries have been running up and back on Hong Kong harbor since 1898, and these days they

run every few minutes. And at 25 cents per ride it's one of the best transportation deals in the world.



The word Kowloon means nine dragons. The folklore that goes along with the name tells the story of a boy emperor in the Sung dynasty who was forced to this tip of land by the invading Mongols. While he lived here, he noticed that the peninsula had eight hills. He called them the eight dragons. An adviser to the emperor pointed out that an emperor was also a dragon and so he included himself and called the place nine dragons, Kowloon.

Kowloon has a land surface of only three square miles, but it's the center of Hong Kong's shoppers' paradise. The place to start is at the Chinese Arts and Crafts Store in Star House.

In China, tea is very important, but the equipment that the tea is made in is just as important. Particularly the pot.

Visit the jade department. Jade is very important in Chinese culture because jade is thought to have the power to lengthen your life and to keep away evil spirits. When you're buying jade, if you're lucky enough to be doing that someday, you want to look



for jade that has a deep green color and the color should be very even. Color and evenness are more important than size. A piece that is

a really deep green color and whose color is even, will be worth more than a piece that doesn't have the depth of color and is uneven. I guess you've got to assume that the deeper the color the more expensive the jade, the more evil spirits it will keep away.

In the department of traditional Chinese clothing, the clothing's ready to wear. Although I'm not sure that I'm ready to wear it. Dresses look fine --

certainly would fit in any western wardrobe. Red's a very important color. It means good luck. And I think all of the women's clothing here is nice. The men's clothing, it's a little trickier. A traditional men's garment looks very comfortable. But I'm not exactly sure where one would wear it. And I'm afraid that if I wore it once, it's so recognizable, they'd know it when I wore it a second time. They have an area where they reproduce the clothing of the emperors. Only emperors were allowed to wear gold, so they wore it as often as possible. And then there's The Golden Mile on Nathan Road.

THE NEW TERRITORIES

The third area making up greater Hong Kong is known as The New Territories, and it's just up the peninsula from Kowloon. And though it isn't visited very often by tourists, its worth the half hour trip just to take a look at the nightly fish market in the small town of Sam Tung. And finally, there are the Outlying Islands, a good place to see what this area actually has looked like for the past six thousand years.

Observers of the Hong Kong scene are quick to describe the community as addicted to commerce. But



the real addiction for the people of Hong Kong is Mahjong. Mahjong is a board game played by Chinese all over the world. It originated during the Sung Dynasty about a thousand years ago. In the beginning it was played with cards but these days small tiles are used. Chinese characters are engraved on the blocks and the game is similar to gin rummy. Get your matching suits together and get out. Each player also has a pack of one hundred betting chips which are assigned a value by the players. Millions of dollars change hands at Hong Kong Mahjong games each year. It's a game that is noisy, fast and, to the eyes of a westerner, a bit aggressive. It is sometimes used to test the strength and intelligence of a newcomer to a group, a new employee, a merger partner, or a prospective bridegroom.

Hong Kong

I learned about Mahjong when I was six years old. I have no idea why, but every Thursday night my mother and three of her friends would play Mahjong. The game wasn't particularly important to me but on Mahjong nights she would serve a bowl of chocolate-covered raisins, a big bowl, and that made Mahjong special.

Hong Kong is a wealthy city. It has the world's third-highest per capita gross national product. It has the largest gold reserves in Asia. It has the largest per capita ownership of Rolls Royce cars. It also has an appetite that goes along with its assets. Hong Kong is the world's largest importer of cognac. It is one of the world's leading consumers of protein. And it has the world's highest per capita ratio of restaurants. In Hong Kong, there is one restaurant for every eight hundred people. Whatever it is that you want to eat or drink, this town will get it for you.

But when all of the fads and fashions of international gastronomy have been pushed off to the back burner where they belong, and it's time to settle down to some good eating and drinking, Hong Kong's heart is Chinese and Hong Kong is home to some of the best Chinese cooking in the world.

The majority of the people who live in this city are of Cantonese heritage, and Canton is a part of China with an ancient reputation for good food. The Cantonese kitchen is based on fresh foods of high quality that are prepared in ways that preserve their original appearance and natural flavors. Dishes include barbecued meats, minced beef and egg flower soup, crabmeat and sweet corn soup, steamed shrimp, pan-fried boneless chicken with lemon sauce, baked salted chicken, sautéed diced chicken with chili, grouper filet with a sweet corn sauce, and broccoli with crabmeat.

Of all the gastronomic contributions of the Cantonese, perhaps the most significant is dim sum. Dim sum translates as "a point on the heart" or "touching the heart." And what does the touching is a collection of small foods designed to be taken with

tea.

The best way to experience this tradition is to visit a restaurant that specializes in dim sum. The Ocean City restaurant in the New World Center is one of the world's great presenters of dim sum. A dim sum restaurant should be huge, well lit, packed with eaters, noisy and somewhat chaotic. Carts carrying steam baskets and dishes of food are wheeled around the tables by women. Each basket or dish contains a particular food. As they move through the restaurant, they describe the food on their trolley. The diners yell for what they want, and the servers serve. Each dish has a specific price, and each table has a card. Your card is stamped for each dish that you take. At the end of the meal, the waiter adds up the stamps and you find out what your meal cost. You can eat as much or as little as you like. But if you want to eat dim sum at its best, it's important to get to the restaurant early. If the place opens at noon, try and be there about fifteen minutes before. The food will be at its point of perfection and you will get a table for the first round of service. The later you come in, the more limited the selection. Dim sum is at its most magnificent on Sunday morning, when it is a traditional family meal, a gastronomic bedlam, and lots of fun.



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