

WHERE IN THE WORLD?



YFU Information

Quick Facts:

Area: 1,092 sq. km

Population:

7,303,334

(July 2002 est.)

Languages: Chinese (Cantonese), English; both are official

Religion: eclectic mixture of local religions
90%, Christian 10%

Currency: Hong Kong Dollar (HKD)

YFU China's web site: www.gogbal.org.cn



Introduction

Just south of the tropic of Cancer at the south-eastern tip of China, Hong Kong adjoins the province of Guangdong (Canton). Steeped in history and with a fascinating culture, Hong Kong and the surrounding areas make for a very interesting visit.

Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region of China is formerly a British crown colony. The region comprises Hong Kong island, ceded by China in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanjing; Kowloon peninsula, ceded (with Stonecutters Island) in 1860 under the Beijing Convention; and the New Territories, a mountainous mainland area adjoining Kowloon, which, with Deep Bay on the west and Mirs Bay on the east and some 235 offshore islands, was leased from China in 1898 for 99 years. China regained sovereignty of the colony on July 1, 1997.

Short Facts

Area: Hong Kong is divided into four main areas, Kowloon, Hong Kong Island, the New Territories, and the Outlying Islands. Kowloon and the New Territories are on a peninsula of the Chinese mainland, on the northern side of Victoria Harbour; Hong Kong Island is on the southern side of the harbour facing Kowloon; the Outlying Islands simply refers to any of the other 234 islands. The New Territories has a 20km land border with China proper.

The capital, officially named Victoria but commonly called Hong Kong, is on the northwest shore of Hong Kong island.

Climate: Hong Kong's tropical latitude produces high temperatures most of the year and a short, mild winter. Spring is extremely wet, with an average temperature of 23°C. Summer is hot and humid with temperatures rising to +33°C. Autumn is dry, the temperature and humidity drop, normally the days are sunny and clear and the temperatures reach about 23°C. The most significant weather event is the typhoon season of late summer.

Population: Hong Kong's population is about 7,303,334. The tiny country has a large foreign population of about a half a million people. The top three nationalities come from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Canada.

Language: About 98% of the population are ethnic Chinese, Hong Kong has substantial British and American communities. Chinese and English are the official languages. Cantonese is the most widely spoken Chinese dialect, though Mandarin, Shanghainese, and other Chinese dialects are also spoken.

Religion: Hong Kong is a multicultural city, tolerance for the customs and traditions of all religions and ethnic groups is part of the city's philosophy. In Hong Kong, everyone is free to openly worship according to their own beliefs. Among the Chinese, followers of Buddhism and Taoism by far outnumber other groups.

Government: The Chief Executive heads the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China. He is advised on major policy decisions by the Executive Council. The systems practiced in Hong Kong are prescribed by the Basic Law, the constitutional document of the HKSAR that came into effect upon its establishment on July 1, 1997.

The HKSAR has a two-tier system of representative government. At the central level is the Legislative Council, which legislates, controls public expenditure, and monitors the performance of the Administration. At the district level, 18 district councils advise on the implementation of policies in their respective areas.

The Administration, the executive arm of the Government, is organized into the Government Secretariat and departments. Government Secretariat Bureau formulates policies and initiates legislative proposals. Departments implement laws and policies and provide direct services to the community. The HKSAR has an independent Judiciary. It is responsible for the administration of justice and interprets the laws enacted by the legislature.

History: The region of Hong Kong, which had long been barren, rocky, with many islands and inlets, a haven for coastal pirates, was occupied by the British during the Opium War (1839-42). The colony prospered as an east-west trading center, the commercial gateway to China. In 1921 the British agreed to limit the fortifications of the colony, and this contributed to its easy conquest by the



WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Hong Kong



Japanese. The British reoccupied it on Sept. 16, 1945. After 1949, when the Communists took control of mainland China, hundreds of thousands of refugees crossed the border, making Hong Kong's urban areas some of the most densely populated in the world. In May 1967, Hong Kong was struck by a wave of riots and strikes inspired by China's Cultural Revolution. The government reacted firmly, and, although the Chinese retaliated by briefly stopping the piping of water and by attacking British representatives in Beijing, relations between Hong Kong and China soon resumed the surface harmony that had existed since the late 1950s. After several years of negotiations, on Dec. 19, 1984, Britain and the People's Republic of China agreed that Hong Kong would become a special administrative region of China as of July 1, 1997, when Britain's lease expired. Declaring a policy of "One Country, Two Systems," China agreed to give Hong Kong considerable autonomy, allowing its existing social and economic systems to remain unchanged for a period of 50 years.

Economy: Hong Kong has a bustling free market economy highly dependent on international trade. Natural resources are limited, and food and raw materials must be imported. Even before Hong Kong reverted to Chinese administration on 1 July 1997 it had extensive trade and investment ties with China. The widespread Asian economic difficulties in 1998 hit this trade-dependent economy quite hard. The economy, with growth of 10% in 2000, recovered rapidly from the Asian financial crisis, but the recent global downturn has badly hurt Hong Kong's exports. Exports include clothing, textiles, footwear, electrical appliances, watches and clocks, toys, plastics, and precious stones. Export partners are China, Japan, Taiwan, US, South Korea, and Singapore.

Education: There are nine years of free and universal basic education from Primary on to Secondary school. Schooling until the age of 15 is compulsory. Three-fifths of the schools from kindergarten to secondary are private, and about another third are either subsidized or aided by public funds. The number of public schools in Hong Kong is quite small. Numerous combinations of English and Chinese education are offered. Hong Kong has fine schools that offer completely bilingual English and Mandarin programs.

Family life: In some districts half a million people live in two-and-a-half sq. km. Most people live in apartments, and a block of apartments may contain as many as 30,000 people. Community relations become very important when thousands of people live together. Families may be forced to live very close together because of the shortage of housing, but they are also very united. It is quite normal for older brothers and sisters to care for the younger ones.

Children are usually more respectful to their elders than in the West. They are especially respectful to their grandparents, as old age is highly regarded among the Chinese. Modern children are growing more independent in Hong Kong, but close family ties are still very important to them.

Food: It has been said that if the Chinese encounter an animal never seen before or unheard of, the natural instinct would be to eat it. It is this very spirit of adventure that enables Chinese cuisine to be much loved by many or cautioned by others. Some Chinese dishes are simple and others exotic, but all are designed to satisfy your senses. The most popular styles of Chinese cooking in Hong Kong are Cantonese, Chiu Chow, and Shanghainese. Cantonese and Chiu Chow both originate from the same Chinese province of Guangdong but are vastly different in style and flavor.

Recreation: *Tai Chi* is Chinese shadow boxing and it is a fascinating sport to

Common Phrases

English	Cantonese
Good Morning	Jou san
Good Evening	Jou tau
How are you?	Nei hou ma?
Thank you	M'goi
Goodbye	Joi kin
Yes	Hai/Hou
No	M'hai/ M'hou

watch or participate in. Water-sports are popular in Hong Kong. With 41 beaches, Hong Kong offers some golden opportunities for sun and surf. The locals as well as visitors enjoy ball sports such as basketball, badminton, table tennis, and volleyball. Chinese Lunar New is the most important of all the Chinese festivals, with firework displays, lion (or dragon) dances, parades and much more fill the streets with their gaiety and color. One of the main horse racing events falls over Chinese New Year as well and this sport is certainly popular with locals and tourists alike.

YFU Greater China

YFU exchanges with the PRC began in 1992, when six American teenagers and a flight leader spend twenty days of the summer in China on a combination homestay and educational travel program. YFU's exchange with the PRC is organized in cooperation with China Advocates, an educational organization with offices in San Francisco, California, USA, and Beijing, PRC. The YFU Greater China National Office in Beijing is also the head office for Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Exchanges with: France, Germany, Korea, Switzerland, and the USA

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