



ILLUSTRATION: ANNA SIMMONS

LIKE A LOCAL

I ♥ Hong Kong

What's not to love about this former British colony? Pull up a pew at the latest 'bar of the moment'; eat your way through sensational seafood; and lose yourself amid lanes lined with teahouses and old-fashioned shops in a city with a rich, cultural tapestry. Hong Kong is hitting its stride, so dig deep and dive right in

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LIKE A LOCAL



Fly into Hong Kong on business and you'll find a frenetic commercial hub, a blitz of dizzying skyscrapers swollen with sure-footed financiers; a place where Manolo Blahniks clack across colossal hotel lobbies while multi-million dollar deals are brokered over dim sum nearby. Stay a while though, and you'll realise you don't have to have a Black Amex and a bespoke suit to get the best out of Hong Kong — this isn't how most of its seven million locals live after all.

At ground level, kudos comes from being in the know; whether it's being outfitted at a hip new boutique that doubles as a hairdressers, snagging a table at the latest subterranean restaurant where bookings can only be made by text — if at all — or simply knowing the home of the best *naai cha* (milk tea) in the hood. And when Hong Kongers do hit on that hot new rendezvous spot, expect them to whack it on WeChat, upload it to Instagram and fawn over it on Facebook — until the next big thing comes along that is. Or the next little thing as the case may be. For although Hong Kong has always had a love affair with the big, the bright and the shiny, there's a new appreciation for the old, the authentic and the out-of-the-way.

To catch a glimpse of past and present colliding, seek out Hong Kong's fascinating micro-districts. Visit the corner shops and *congee* restaurants of Tai Hang, a one-time Hakka fishing village where you can still hear the click of majong tiles during a mid-morning stroll. Get lost in the lanes and leafy gardens around Sheung Wan, where old-fashioned tea parlours, traditional printers and coffin makers compete with Viennese-style cafes, galleries and boutiques. Or wile away the hours searching out furniture makers and clothing markets on the back streets of Wan Chai.





Food glorious food

The current fad is for all things Spanish. Catalunya in Wan Chai channels classics like the bikini (an Iberian ham, cheese and truffle sandwich) as well as *patatas bravas* and sweetbreads with calamari. Going for Latin American Spanish are Brickhouse — a 'no reservations, no number' joint with the best tacos in town — and Peruvian restaurant Chicha which pumps out pisco sours and *picarones* (doughnut-like snacks) until 11pm.

Cantonese food, of course, never ever goes out of fashion. For hilariously grumpy service, garish lighting and a banquet of beggar's chicken, try the American Peking. Other long-time local favourites include Wah Lam which serves delicious beef brisket noodles, and the traditional *cha chaan teng* (tea restaurant) For Kee.

For something really special, take yourself out of the city. Hong Kong's beaches and fishing villages are littered with wooden shacks dishing up some of the best seafood you'll find anywhere in the world. Locals love to hire a junk, sailing around the South China Sea for the day, stopping off at the likes of family-run Fu Kee restaurant on Lamma for scallops drenched in garlic. There are plenty of great foodie days out that can be reached by bus or traditional sampan (from Stanley or Aberdeen). Combine a visit to Ming Kee restaurant on Po Toi with a hike around its rocky outcrops, or walk along the Dragon's Back trail in Shek O Country Park ending at the outdoor cafes in Tai Long Wan.

FOOD PICKS

Catalunya: Guardian House, Wan Chai. catalunya.hk

Chicha: 26 Peel Street, Central. conceptcreations.hk

Brickhouse: 20A D'Aguiar Street via Brick Lane, Central. brickhouse.com.hk

American Peking: 20 Lockhart Rd, Wan Chai. T: 00 852 2527 1000.

Wah Lam Noodle Restaurant: 5-11 Thomson Road, Wan Chai. T: 00 852 2527 2478.

For Kee: 200 Hollywood Road. T: 00 852 2546 8947.

Fu Kee: 9-10 First Street, Sok Kwu Wan. T: 00 852 2982 8516.

Ming Kee Restaurant: Lau Fau Shan, Po Toi Island. T: 00 852 2472 1408.

Party people

A work hard, play hard mantra is at the heart of Hong Kong living and you're going to need plenty of stamina to keep up. Most people's first stop is Lan Kwai Fong in Central, a small square of streets: it's really friendly and most of the lanes are pedestrianised, so the crowds spill out onto the main drag giving it a riotous carnival atmosphere.

It can be a bit cheesy though so seek out lesser-known options like Duddell's, a gallery, restaurant and bar at the top of the Shanghai Tang Mansion, or Feather Boa, a former antique shop on Staunton Street with goldfish bowl-sized daiquiris. Then slip across the water to the 20-seater cocktail den Butler on Kowloon side, where mixologists craft off-menu cocktails, served in fine crystal glasses.

It's also worth noting that happy hours and 'Ladies Nights' are a big thing here, with almost every bar having an offer on every day. In fact, if you're female it's possible to drink nearly every night of the week for free — check out the free *HK Magazine* for full listings. ➤

NIGHTLIFE PICKS

Mes Amis: 83 Lockhart Road. mesamis.com.hk

Club 97: 9 Lan Kwai Fong. epicurean.com.hk

Zinc: 35 D'Aguiar Street. zinchk.com

Duddell's: 1 Duddell Street, Central. duddells.co

Feather Boa: 28 Staunton Street, SoHo. T: 00 852 2857 2586.

Butler: 30 Mody Road, Tsim Sha Tsui. T: 00 852 2724 3828.

Armani/Privé: 2/F Chater House, 8 Connaught Road. armaniprive-hk.com

Ozone: 118/F, Ritz-Carlton, ICC, 1 Austin Road West, Kowloon. ritzcarlton.com



Clockwise from left: The Star Ferry crosses Victoria Harbour; restaurants in the Central district; Wah Lam's beef brisket noodles; Chicha bartender Gilbert Gaddi; Lan Kwai Fong quarter

TOP 10 LOCAL TIPS

- 01** The best time to visit is late autumn when it's warm enough to hit the beach but the heat isn't stifling.
- 02** Pick up an Octopus Card – similar to a London Oyster Card – at the Airport Express station. It costs HK\$150 (£12), which includes a refundable HK\$50 (£4) deposit and HK\$100 (£8) credit.
- 03** Have a day out at Ocean Park. Arrive early to beat the tour groups from the Chinese mainland. Make the Panda enclosure your first stop. oceanpark.com.hk
- 04** Potter around Peng Chau for the day. A regular ferry service takes you to its pretty beaches, gentle walking trails and temples.
- 05** Pick up some beers and marinated meats in town and head to Deep Water Bay for a day at the beach with its free BBQ pits.
- 06** Munch on dim sum served by old-style trolley-wielding waitresses at Maxim's Palace at City Hall in Central. maxims.com.hk
- 07** Visit Big Buddha. Take the cable car over and then the bus back to Mui Wo for a drink in the China Bear pub.
- 08** Stay at the Tai O Heritage Hotel, a captivating former police station in a traditional fishing village. taioheritagehotel.com
- 09** Seek solitude among the wooden temples and lotus ponds at the Chi Lin Nunnery in Diamond Hill.
- 10** Sail around Victoria Harbour in style on *Aqua Luna*, a junk with cherry-red sails and a bar. aqua.com.hk

Piles of style

Hong Kong has been at the centre of global trade for the best part of two centuries, so it's no surprise they have shopping down to a fine art here. The main retail hubs are the malls and markets around Central, Admiralty, Causeway Bay and Tsim Sha Tsui but you shouldn't be afraid to jump on a bus and explore further afield in places like Ap Lei Chau and Lantau, where you'll find a handful of enormous outlet malls.

Fashion lovers should make a beeline for Causeway Bay. Use the 12-storey Japanese department store Sogo on Hennessy Road as a jumping off point and venture into the streets behind where the real bargains are to be had. The nearby Island Beverly Centre is packed with over a hundred local, Japanese and Korean boutiques and is a goldmine for unique pieces. You've also got Jardine's Bazaar for cut-price T-shirts and costume jewellery. Cuffs on Lee Garden Road, meanwhile, is the place for gent's bespoke tailoring, with made-to-measure shirts from £40.

Design devotees will want to check out Hong Kong's cool-as-you-like concept stores. GOD is the island's foremost lifestyle brand and puts a post-modern slant on all things Sino — think fluffy panda sleep-masks and Save Our Sharks T-shirts.

Loveramics has beautiful contemporary crockery and Candies stocks kitschy Canto-inspired housewares and accessories — lucky cat phone cover anyone? The Sheung Wan district and Star Street, Sun Street and Moon Street in Wan Chai are also hotbeds for up-and-coming designers.

If it's just old-fashioned souvenirs you're after, then you can't go wrong with a trip to Temple Street Night Market; a bargain hunter's dream scene with brightly-lit rainbow-coloured stalls selling everything from reproduction antique timepieces to silk pyjamas and rip-off designer handbags. Don't forget to bargain hard.

SHOP PICKS

- Sogo:** 555 Hennessy Road. sogo.com.hk
- Island Beverly Centre:** 1 Great George St. T: 00 852 2890 6823.
- Cuffs:** 3/F, 27 Lee Garden Road. cuffs.hk
- Candies:** 2/F, 9B Sharp St. East, Causeway Bay. candies-gifts.com
- G.O.D.:** 48 Hollywood Road, Central. god.com.hk
- Loveramics:** 37 Tung Street, Sheung Wan. T: 00 852 2915 8018.
- Temple Street Night Market:** Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon.



Cuffs



MORE INFO

- On screen:** 1973 Bruce Lee classic *Enter the Dragon*; two Bond movies, *The Man with the Golden Gun* and *To Die Another Day*; and most recently *The Dark Knight* and *Contagion*.
- Books:** *The Monkey King* by Timothy Mo. RRP: £6.99 (Paddleless Press). *Gweilo* by Martin Booth. RRP: £8.99 (Bantam).
- Local blogs:** sassyhongkong.com
- e-tingfood.com
- Listings:** hkclubbing.com hk-magazine.com timeout.com.hk discoverhongkong.com