

Hong Kong Part 2: A Gentle Introduction To A New Part of the World (Part 2)

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

This is a follow-up to the [article in the June 12 issue](#) which looked in general terms at what you can expect when you visit Hong Kong...

Hong Kong attracts millions of visitors each year, many crossing the border from mainland China, but many also arriving from countries around the globe. So, apart from being a convenient stopping point on the way to places like Australia and New Zealand, what is there to see and do in the territory?

There are literally hundreds of things to see, but you won't be able to fit it all in unless you have a long time to spend visiting. We failed miserably to see everything we wanted to on our seven night stay. Therefore, it's important to pick out the priorities that really are "must sees" during any visit here. Fortunately, there are some very obvious ones that most visitors - and indeed most guidebooks - would agree on.

As much of Hong Kong is exceptionally hilly, it's no surprise to learn that one of those hills offers some superb views over Hong Kong Island and further afield to Kowloon, just on the opposite side of the harbour. Victoria Peak, or "The Peak," as it's more commonly known, is probably the island's biggest tourist attraction. Standing at around 400 meters/1,312 ft. above sea level, it's reached by the Peak Tramway, which has operated since 1888.

Despite its name, it's actually a funicular railway that travels up some pretty impressive gradients during the seven minute ride. Unfortunately, because it dates from more than 100 years ago, it wasn't designed to take the volume of visitors that want to head to The Peak today. Each tram only has two cars and can only take 72 people, which can lead to long waits, particularly in busier months and at weekends.

Having said that, it's definitely worth the wait for the view you get when you reach the top. You can either opt to pay to visit the viewing platform at the top of the new Peak Tower, which we did on our first visit up there -- and it's certainly worth the entrance fee - or you can just choose to wander around, taking in the views from outside or from one of the many restaurants in the Peak Tower.

It's certainly a tourist trap and it's very clear as soon as you arrive that

everything here has been designed to make money, with numerous shops and places to eat just waiting to take your hard earned cash from you, but for the view you get, you can almost forgive that. We ended up visiting The Peak twice during our stay, once during the day and once again for a night time view, and both are very different but equally rewarding.

Another way to get a great view of the city is to head for the Bank of China Tower, which has an observation deck on the 46th floor. It's not something they advertise, even in the lobby, but it is there and it gives a beautiful -- and very different -- perspective to the views you get from The Peak.

When something makes it into the Guinness Book of World Records, you know it's something you need to see - and that's exactly what's happened with the Symphony of Lights. It takes place every night, using the buildings of the Hong Kong Island skyline as its base. This 18 minute sound and light show sees many of the key buildings on the skyline light up in turn in a range of colors, which are then complimented by the use of lights and lasers from the top of these buildings. It's a beautiful sight, although for any Disney fan familiar with the strong music they use in their fireworks displays, the accompanying soundtrack does leave a little to be desired!

Nearly every city and destination visitor's center in the world recommends that you visit some of the local museums, but interestingly, Hong Kong doesn't make a big deal of its museums - and one of them is an absolute hidden gem. Its Museum of History takes you back in time thousands of years to the creation of the territory, and then the journey fast forwards through its life as part of the various Chinese dynasties, Hong Kong's hand-over to Britain following the Opium Wars, Japanese occupation in World War Two, and finally its hand-over back to the Chinese. Exhibits include a three-story set of buildings, housing shops of days gone by. It's a fascinating place and really does set a standard for other museums around the world.

Whenever I visit somewhere, I always like to explore the aspects of the place that make it unique and Hong Kong was no different. It's famed for its shopping opportunities and in particular, its markets. The Flower Market is another "must see" with some stunning sights and smells, while the Jade Market is well worth a look, particularly if you want to pick up a bargain to take home. Another passion in Hong Kong is horse racing and, as foreign visitors, you can take various tours not open to the locals. We chose to take the night-time tour, which takes you to the Happy Valley race course, where the racing is held on a Wednesday night between September and June. There's also daytime racing over at

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the Sha Tin race course on weekends during the season. Millions of Hong Kong dollars are spent on horse racing each season, and it's something well worth seeing so you'll understand for yourself just how passionate the locals get about this passtime.

There's so much more to see and do in Hong Kong, and this is really only a small appetizer, but it gives you a good idea of just how many things there are to see and do, and where to start on any visit to this fascinating city.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

Article last updated: 6/26/2008

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