

Historic Hong Kong



Historic pockets live on in modern Hong Kong

Look beyond the glass and steel of Hong Kong's commercial heart to find a cultural landscape in which the city's Chinese roots and colonial connections are entwined. Explore Hong Kong history with these tips.

SIGHTS **Béthanie**

(hkapa.edu; 139 Pok Fu Lam Rd, Pok Fu Lam)

Perched on hilly Pok Fu Lam, this beautiful restoration is a highlight. The complex, which now houses a film school, was built by the Paris Foreign Mission in 1875 as a sanatorium for priests who needed to rest and recover from tropical diseases before they returned to their posts.

Crown Wine Cellars
(crownwinecellars.com; 18 Deep Water Bay Drive, Shouson Hill)

The WWII bunkers on Shouson Hill have been transformed into a top-notch wine cellar, with a restaurant in a glasshouse surrounded by towering trees. You can also book a history tour of the surrounding area.

Dr Sun Yat-Sen Museum
(hk.drsunyatzen.museum; 7 Castle Rd, Mid-Levels)

Dr Sun Yat-Sen was a key figure in the fight to establish a Chinese republic and was its first president in the days after the Revolution of 1911, later founding the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party). Housed in a grand Edwardian building, this museum of archival material dedicated to his life explains why Sun Yat-Sen is considered the father of modern China.

Hong Kong Maritime Museum
(hkmaritimemuseum.org; Central Ferry Pier 8)

This multilayered museum recounts 2,000 years of Chinese maritime history and the development of the Port of Hong

Kong. Exhibits include ceramics from China's ancient sea trade, shipwreck treasures and old nautical instruments.

Hong Kong Museum of History

(100 Chatham Rd S, Tsim Sha Tsui)
Prepare to be whisked through millennia of Hong Kong's history at this extraordinary museum, starting with prehistory and ending with the territory's return to China in 1997. Highlights of the 'Hong Kong Story' include a re-creation of an entire arcaded street in Central from 1881, a fishing junk and informative video theatre exhibits.

Hung Shing Temple
(Hung Shing St, Ap Lei Chau)

Renovated many times since it was built by local fishermen in 1773, Ap Lei Chau's main temple is dedicated to Hung Shing, the protector of seafarers. Its major features are a sea-facing sculpture (believed to promote good feng shui), fine Shiwan pottery figures on the roof and two timber 'dragon poles', which are said to counter the 'death-like aura' of the hill across the water, on which Aberdeen Police Station sits.

Lui Seng Chun
(scm.hkbu.edu.hk; 119 Lai Chi Kok Rd, cnr Tong Mi Rd, Mong Kok)

Hugging a street corner, this beautiful four-storey 'shophouse' – that is, built with a store on the ground floor and apartments above – now belongs to a school of Chinese medicine. Constructed circa 1931, it features a mix of Chinese and European architectural styles – verandahs, urn-shaped balustrades and other fanciful takes on a Neoclassical Italian villa.

Shanghai Street
(Yau Ma Tei)

A stroll down this street will return you to times long gone. Once Kowloon's main drag, it's flanked by stores selling Chinese wedding gowns, sandalwood incense and Buddha statues. This is a terrific place for souvenirs – snap up wooden mooncake moulds stamped with images of fish or pigs or lucky sayings, bamboo steamer baskets and long chopsticks for stirring pots.

St Stephen's College Heritage Trail
(sc.edu.hk; 22 Tung Tau Wan Rd)

The beautiful campus of St Stephen's College sits right next to Stanley Military Cemetery. Founded in 1903, the school was turned into an emergency military hospital on the eve of the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong in 1941 and became an internment camp when the city fell. The two-hour guided tour by students takes you to eight sites on the campus, with poignant reminders of the war, including the colonial School House, the site of what has become known as the St Stephen's College Massacre – well worth learning about.

Stilt Houses
(Kat Hing St, Tai O, Lantau)

Tai O's remaining stilt houses stand over the waterway, scrunched against each other for support. They have a history going back over two centuries. The earliest were made with pine bark, palm leaves and granite pillars quarried in Chek Lap Kok, where the modern airport stands. During typhoons, they had to be secured with rope or the sea would wash them away.

Don't miss

You can't say you've 'done' Hong Kong until you've taken a ride on a **Star Ferry**, that wonderful fleet of electric-diesel vessels with names such as *Morning Star*, *Celestial Star* and *Twinkling Star*. Try to take your first trip on a clear night from Kowloon to Central (starferry.com.hk; Central Pier 7).



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Attitude on Granville

Best for eclectic décor
(attitudegranville.com)

This wacky hotel mixes a nostalgic Hong Kong aesthetic with pop art, murals and, er, model sheep.

Auberge

Best for great views
(aubergediscoverybay.com)

Stay here for the spacious rooms, fabulous bathrooms – many with rain showers – and views of the bay or the hills.

££

Hotel Icon

Best for a high-end stay
(hotel-icon.com)

Guests heap praise on this gorgeous hotel with luxurious rooms, sweeping harbour views and a rooftop pool.

££

Mini Hotel Central

Best for a central sleep
(minihotel.hk/central)

This is an excellent deal: stylish and modern, with lovely marbled bathrooms. It has the feel of a more expensive hotel.

£££

Mojo Nomad

Best for value
(mojonomad.com)

One of Hong Kong's best budget options, with two locations, both offering far-reaching views seen through wall-to-wall windows.

££

Pottinger

Best for classic elegance
(thepottinger.com)

In the heart of Central, this boutique hotel's rooms have a white and cream palette; there are also several restaurants.

£

£££



FURTHER READING

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